

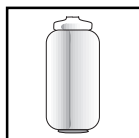
have a symbolic dimension, but all can be seen as having an ultimate fulfilment in the great day of God's wrath yet to come. Furthermore, the analogy drawn by Scripture between the Flood and the final judgement strongly suggests that God will impose His punishment on the wickedness of man by wholesale destruction of his environment and a consequent cleansing of the planet, which man has so polluted.

Of course, the Almighty Creator has all the resources of nature at His command, and it may well be that His judgements on the nations will be achieved in quite different ways. But it does seem significant that, at the very time in history when the prophetic signs of Christ's coming and the Day of Judgement are so powerful, men's eyes are turning with increasing concern to the heavens as a potential source of destruction and

disaster. Yet for those whose lives rest upon the God of Israel and His promises there is no cause for fear, but rather a message of encouragement and reassurance:

"Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (Isa. 26:20, 21);

"Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger" (Zeph. 2:3).



Prophecy, History and Archaeology

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Ezekiel's visions of the Millennium

5. The priests and the worshippers

Geoff Cave

THE PURPOSE of this article is to look at some of the information given in Ezekiel and elsewhere about the operations of the sanctuary in the age to come. It will concentrate on who will work in the sanctuary, and who will come to the sanctuary to worship and bring sacrifices.

The priests of Israel

Ezekiel 44 speaks of the two different priestly orders who will serve in the sanctuary: "the Levites that are gone away far from Me", and "the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok" (vv. 10,15). The first of these two groups is described thus: "And the Levites that are gone away far from Me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from Me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the

people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them" (vv. 10-12).

These priests fulfil two main roles: they are to be gatekeepers and to minister to the people. They will work in the outer court of the sanctuary only: "And they shall not come near unto Me, to do the office of a priest unto Me, nor to come near to any of My holy things, in the most holy place: but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed" (v. 13). These priests will take the sacrifices brought by the people, slay them and prepare them for sacrifice, but they will not be allowed to enter into the temple building.

The sons of Zadok

The sons of Zadok are the priests who minister in the inner court and in the temple: "But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near

to Me to minister unto Me, and they shall stand before Me to offer unto Me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD: they shall enter into My sanctuary, and they shall come near to My table, to minister unto Me, and they shall keep My charge” (vv. 15,16).

It has been suggested that these priests are immortal, that they are the saints. Those who take this view assert that verses 15 and 16 should be read in parenthesis, and that the following verses revert back to speaking about the Levites who went astray. This is a vital part of their argument, for if verses 17 to the end of the chapter follow on from verses 15 and 16 then the sons of Zadok are obviously mortal. Verse 22, for example, reads: “Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before”.

It is difficult to see any valid reason in the text for insisting that verses 15 and 16 are in parenthesis. However, there is evidence which quite clearly shows that verses 17 and onwards are describing the behaviour of the sons of Zadok. For example, verse 19 says: “And when they go forth into the utter court, even into the utter court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments”. These priests have two sets of garments. They will have linen garments to prevent them sweating (vv. 17,18) when they minister “within”, and when they go into the outer court to the people they will lay the linen garments in the holy chambers and put on other garments (v. 19).

Further to this, 42:13,14 states: “Then said he unto me, The north chambers and the south chambers, which are before the separate place, they be holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the LORD shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; for the place is holy. When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy place into the utter court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister; for they are holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to those things which are for the people”.

“The priests that approach unto the LORD” here are without doubt the sons of Zadok (44:15), in contrast to the Levites who went astray and as

a result “shall not come near unto Me” (v. 13). 42:13,14 clearly states that the priests lay their holy garments in the holy chambers before going out to the people. 44:19 gives the same information about priests who are mortal, who have wives (v. 22), whose relations can die (v. 25). Thus both orders of priests will be mortal in the millennial sanctuary.

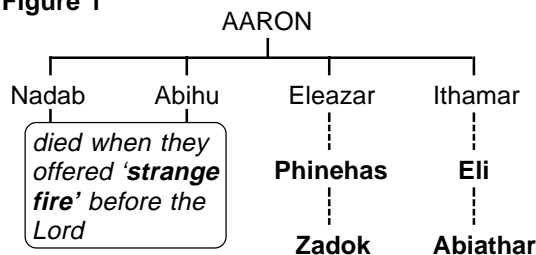
These passages teach that, although the sons of Zadok minister in the temple, they also go out into the outer court to the people, and they must change their garments before going out to the people in the outer court because the garments are holy and must not be worn before the people. The reason for them going out to the people is not given; there is no mention of these priests ministering to the people, but they do, however, need to pass through the outer court to leave the sanctuary.

When did Israel go astray?

The reason the Levites cannot come near to God and minister in the temple is given in 44:10: “And the Levites that are gone away far from Me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from Me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity”. Does this refer to one specific incident in the history of the nation, or is it a general comment on the behaviour of the nation, and certain of the priesthood in particular?

It is possibly a combination of the two which will lead to the dividing of the priesthood into two groups. [Figure 1](#) shows a simplified family tree of the descendents of Aaron, showing the two priestly lines from Eleazar and Ithamar, leading to Zadok and Abiathar, who were both priests in the days of David. Upon David’s death, when Solomon was made king, Adonijah revolted and was joined by Joab and Abiathar in the rebellion. 1 Kings 2:27 records that, as a result of this, “Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD; that he might fulfil the word of the LORD, which He spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh”.

Figure 1



It was Phinehas who acted decisively in the matter of Baal-peor, when the children of Israel went astray from the Lord. As a consequence God said of Phinehas: "Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned My wrath away from the children of Israel, *while he was zealous for My sake among them*, that I consumed not the children of Israel in My jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him My covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel" (Num. 25:11-13).

Concerning Eli, God said: "Wherefore kick ye at My sacrifice and at Mine offering, which I have commanded in My habitation; *and honourest thy sons above Me*, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel My people? Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before Me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from Me; for them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house" (1 Sam. 2:29-31).

When comparing Phinehas and Eli it becomes clear which priests will come near to the Lord in the sanctuary—not those who honour their sons above the Lord, but those who are zealous for His Name. The two priestly lines in Israel of old are surely typical of the two orders in the age to come.

Who will come to worship in the sanctuary?

In connection with this question the prophet Ezekiel reveals the following: "For in Mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve Me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; *and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen*" (20:40,41). The same idea of Israel being sanctified before the nations because of the sanctuary comes out in 37:28: "And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore". Link this with another statement made by Ezekiel: "Thus

saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into My sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel" (44:9).

From these passages it becomes clear that the whole house of Israel will be required to come to the sanctuary and bring offerings there, but strangers, even those who sojourn in Israel, may not. The nation of Israel will be holy to the Lord, and any stranger entering the sanctuary will pollute it (vv. 6,7).

A house of prayer for all nations

It may be argued that the above conclusions are not in accord with the statement in Isaiah 56:7: "for Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people". This phrase must be taken in its context. In order to do this it is necessary to quote the whole section of the prophecy:

"Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from His people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep My sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and take hold of My covenant; even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar; for Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord GOD Which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him" (vv. 3-8).

Linking this passage in Isaiah with the information given by Ezekiel, the following picture emerges. The whole of the mortal population in Israel will be required to come to the sanctuary and bring their offerings. The stranger who has not joined himself to the Lord and is uncircumcised will not be able to come into the sanctuary; such an action would pollute it. A stranger who has joined himself to the Lord may come into

the sanctuary and his offerings will be accepted. To summarise, the sanctuary is primarily for the mortal population of Israel, but it is also for the strangers (also mortal) who join themselves to the Lord. Thus a 'small' temple will be adequate.

There is another passage in Isaiah which requires some consideration:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (2:2,3).

The phrase 'all nations' does not necessarily mean all people of all nations. People will go to Jerusalem, as was shown in the second article in this series ([Jan. 2002, p. 26](#)). Jerusalem encompassed both the site of the sanctuary and the city of Zion. Zion is the city of the great King; all people will be able to enter therein to be taught God’s ways. They will learn, however, that the sanctuary is a holy place for the nation of Israel and those of the Gentiles who wish to join themselves to the Lord.

Zechariah speaks of “every one that is left of all the nations” coming to Jerusalem “to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles” (14:16). Neither of these activities will require entering the sanctuary; it will be necessary to enter the city to worship the King. This presumably is why the city is vastly larger than the sanctuary.

[\(To be continued\)](#)

Gleanings from the land

Preserving the bats

The bat is mentioned three times in Scripture, twice along with various types of birds in the lists of unclean creatures which the Jews were forbidden to eat, and once in Isaiah 2:20: “In that day a man shall cast his idols . . . to the moles and to the bats”, apparently a reference to the darkness in which these creatures live. There are no fewer than thirty-three species of bats in Israel, though I have never seen one there, partly because of visiting more in the winter months. I recall seeing a video taken by a brother and sister in summer in which they filmed large fruit-eating bats feasting on ripe fruit, however.

Fruit bats are large, and there is only one species in Israel, the Egyptian fruit bat. This may well be the one the Law had in mind, therefore, as it is fairly prominent and is large enough to eat. It is widely eaten in Africa today

and so may have been an item of diet familiar to Israel in Egypt. Since most fruit is picked unripe these days they do not do very well from fruit farms, and people in Israel are beginning to complain that they are coming into gardens, feasting on fruit trees and causing a mess with their droppings, resulting in the SPNI having to encourage people to tolerate them.

The other thirty-two species are insect-eating bats, much smaller and probably not worth eating. They are not generally well-known and some may by now be extinct. It became the practice after the State of Israel was established for caves containing roosting bats to be fumigated, because the more prominent fruit-eating ones were regarded as pests. This meant that the insect-eating ones were reduced as well, and the SPNI has fought to stop the destruction before it is too late, pointing

out that insect-eating bats perform a useful service.

Calculating the months

The Israeli calendar is based on lunar months, which are 29.5 days long, equating to a 354-day year, eleven days short of our solar year. The Muslim calendar is the same, and so their calendar slips back through the seasons, so that the feast of Ramadan can occur at any time of the year. This will not do for Jews, however, because the Jewish feasts are based on their harvest cycle; Passover can only be in spring and Tabernacles can only be in autumn.

How then do the Jews manage the calendar? The answer is that they have an extra month when needed, to bring the calendar and the seasons back into line. But when did the Jews of old have their extra month and how did they decide when to have it? They inserted it into