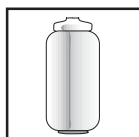


recognise the time of *our* visitation, and look earnestly for that Day Star to arise, “when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds” (2 Sam. 23:4), and when there will be a future outpouring of the Spirit.

The prophet Isaiah tells of this time yet to come when “the spirit [shall] be poured upon us from on high”, with the happy result that “the wilderness [shall] be a fruitful field, and the fruit-

ful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever” (32:15-17). How apt then will be those lovely words: “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14)!



Prophecy, History and Archaeology

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Universal worship and the temple in the age to come

Geoff Cave

THE PURPOSE OF this article is to examine the passages of Scripture listed below which speak of the nations going to worship the King at Jerusalem in the age to come, and to show how they are in harmony with the concept of a ‘small’ temple, as expounded in the series “Ezekiel’s visions of the Millennium”:¹

“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” (Isa. 2:2,3);

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem” (27:13);

“And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up

of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain” (Zech. 14:16,17).

What is meant by ‘Jerusalem’?

This is the first question to be addressed. In the terms of Ezekiel’s prophecy, is ‘Jerusalem’ just the temple described in chapters 40–43, or will it include the city Ezekiel describes in chapter 48?

In both Old and New Testament times ‘Jerusalem’ was more than just the temple and the surrounding area, and there is no reason to suggest it will be any different in the future. Concerning the future literal Jerusalem, Jesus himself declares: “it is the *city* of the great King” (Mt. 5:35).

Two separate locations are identified with Jerusalem in Old Testament times; the first is Mount Moriah, where Abraham was willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen. 22:2). This is also the place where Solomon built the temple: “Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite” (2 Chron. 3:1). Thus Moriah is associated with sacrifice for the nation of Israel.

1. [Dec. 2001](#) to [Jul. 2002](#).

The other place to consider within Jerusalem is Mount Zion, also known as the city of David: "And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, Thou shalt not come hither. Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion, which is the city of David" (1 Chron. 11:5). And again: "Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David" (2 Sam. 5:7). There can be no doubt that in Old Testament times Moriah and Zion were different locations within Jerusalem, before Solomon placed the ark in the temple on Mount Moriah. 1 Kings 8:1 records: "Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion". Moriah was the place of sacrifice, whereas Zion was where David reigned as king. Furthermore, any map of Jerusalem in Old Testament times will show that Zion is to the south of Moriah where Solomon built the temple.

It cannot be just coincidence that, in the holy oblation described by Ezekiel, the city called Yahweh Shammah is to the south of the sanctuary. See Ezekiel 48, where the land is divided up from the north to the south, with the holy oblation in which was the sanctuary appearing first, then the city to the south of it. Ezekiel does not give the same detail about this city as the sanctuary because his vision concentrates on the provision of sacrifice for the mortal nation of Israel.

Yahweh Shammah

Yahweh Shammah, as Ezekiel 48:35 shows, has the meaning, 'The LORD is there'. Yahweh will be there in the person of His exalted Son, who will reign as King of the earth from that city:

"At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the *name of the LORD* [Yahweh Shammah], to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart" (Jer. 3:17);

"In that time shall the present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the *place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion*" (Isa. 18:7).

The question may be asked, Where in Jerusalem will the throne of the Lord be? Will it be on Zion or Moriah? Or, in the terms of Ezekiel's

prophecy, will it be in the city Yahweh Shammah or in the temple? God says in Psalm 2:6: "Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of *Zion*"; and we read in Psalm 48:2: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount *Zion*, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King". These passages indicate that the Lord Jesus Christ will reign from the city and not the temple, this conclusion being confirmed by the fact that there is no throne where nations can come to worship the King mentioned in Ezekiel's description of the sanctuary. The phrase, "the place of My throne", does appear in Ezekiel 43:7, where it most likely refers to the glory of God in the form of the cherubim. The location here is the holy of holies in the temple, a place totally inaccessible to the people of all nations, including Israel.

Where will the nations go to worship the King?

In Isaiah 2:3 the phrase "mountain of the LORD" may be referring to the sanctuary or the city, or most likely both, whilst the phrase "house of the God of Jacob" most likely refers to the sanctuary. Two other passages are relevant here:

"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" (Ezek. 44:9);

"And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore" (37:28).

A suggested scenario is as follows. People of the nations go up to Jerusalem; upon arrival they learn that the sanctuary is a very holy place (Ezek. 37:28) and that only those who have joined themselves to the Lord, only those who are circumcised may enter. However, all must worship the King, who will be in the city Yahweh Shammah.

Zechariah speaks of those who worship the King also keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. Where might this be done? Deuteronomy 16:11, when describing the feasts of the Lord, states: "and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, *in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place His name there*", that is, Yahweh Shammah.

Thus all people of the nations who come to Jerusalem will go to the city to worship the King

and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, but only those who have separated themselves to the Lord will be allowed in the sanctuary. This is confirmed using a further two criteria. The first is the relative sizes of the city and sanctuary. The area of the city is more than eighty times greater than that of the sanctuary. The second relates to the varying degrees of holiness Ezekiel describes as being within the holy oblation. The oblation, which contains both city and sanctuary, is holy when compared with the rest of the land. Within the oblation, the portion for the priests is holy when compared with the portion for the city. The sanctuary is holy when compared with the portion of the priests. Within the sanctuary the degree of holiness increases from the outer court to the inner court and then into the temple. This will teach an important lesson, both for Israel and the rest of the nations, but it will also result in more people going to the city than into the sanctuary.

It has been suggested that *shammah* can also mean 'thither' or 'yonder', and the name of the city, 'The LORD is yonder or thither', refers to the fact that the Lord Jesus will reign from the sanctuary, which is 'yonder' in relation to the city. This idea raises the following difficulties:

- 1 This will mean in effect that the name of the city is 'The LORD is not there', because he is in the sanctuary. This is a rather strange name for a city to be called. There is no other example in Scripture of a city being given a name which relates to something else.
- 2 If the Lord reigns from the holy of holies in the sanctuary, as mentioned earlier, this will be inaccessible to almost the whole population of the world. How will people worship the King if it is not possible to approach his throne?
- 3 The Gesenius Hebrew lexicon states that the Hebrew word *shammah* means 'thither' when it is used after verbs of motion, and gives an example from 1 Samuel 2:14: "So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that *came* thither". In this example it is obvious that the people of Israel were *coming* to Shiloh. However, in Ezekiel 48:35 there is no verb of motion and there is no place other than 'the city' mentioned.

A house of prayer for all nations

Another passage often used to support universal worship in the sanctuary is Isaiah 56:7: "... 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". It is important here to look at the preceding verses to determine whom the prophet means by "them", those who will come to the holy mountain and whose sacrifices will be accepted.

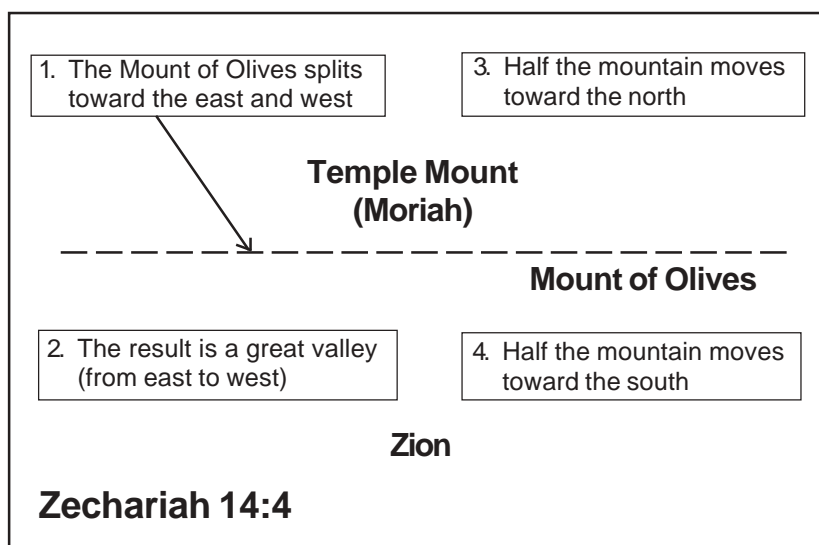
The overall context is in verses 3-8, but verse 6 will suffice to show that Isaiah is not speaking of universal worship: "Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant . . .". Therefore the phrase, "a house of prayer for all nations", does not mean a house of prayer for every person from all nations, but for those who wish to "join themselves to the LORD" out of all nations.

Jerusalem exalted above the hills

Isaiah speaks of Jerusalem being exalted above the hills; Zechariah gives the details: "All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses" (14:10). From Geba to the Rimmon south of Jerusalem (not to be confused with the Rimmon north of Jerusalem) is a distance of approximately fifty miles. Some of this land at present has mountains of a higher altitude than Jerusalem. All this land will be turned into "a plain", and "it", that is, Jerusalem, will be lifted up.

Zechariah emphasises the fact that it is Jerusalem which will be lifted up by describing some of the landmarks around the wall of Jerusalem. This area will include both the sanctuary and the city; it will be called "the mountain of the LORD", according to Micah 4:2: "And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem".

The physical elevation of Jerusalem will help to show the political and spiritual elevation of the holy mountain. The nations will learn that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is holy. They will learn this by degrees; they will see the awesome



further apart as half of the mount moves north and half moves south.

The distance at present between Moriah and Zion is less than half a mile, whereas the distance between the temple and the city in Ezekiel’s description is around two or three miles. The movements described by Zechariah in 14:4 may well change the distance between Moriah and Zion to suit Ezekiel’s description, but it leaves a great valley running through Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. Isaiah

splendour of the King in the city where God has chosen to place His Name.

Those who wish to come closer to Him, to become His sons and daughters, will learn that there is only one way for sin-stricken mankind to draw near to their Maker, and that is by sacrifice, the way prescribed from the days of Eden. The slaughtering of animals in the sanctuary will be a powerful aid to teach them what the King whom they have seen in his splendour had to endure in the days of his flesh to bring them back to God and to gain their salvation. They will learn that the King who is highly exalted first humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.

The topography of Israel in the Kingdom

The prophet Zechariah gives the most detailed description of how the land of Israel around Jerusalem will change as a result of the earthquake at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ:

“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south” (14:4).

This cleaving of the Mount of Olives will affect Jerusalem: this is implied in the description by the mention of Jerusalem. As the [diagram](#) shows, this may well have a dramatic effect on the relative positions of Moriah and Zion, that is, the temple and the city. They will be moved

speaks of Jerusalem being exalted above the hills; this is also the end result of Zechariah’s description later on in chapter 14, at verse 10 ([see above](#)).

One apparent difficulty emerges when comparing the description given by Zechariah with the well-known fault line of the great rift valley which is in fact the Jordan valley. This runs in a north-south direction, whereas Zechariah describes an east-west split. This apparent difficulty vanishes upon a closer look at the fault lines around Jerusalem. The *Atlas of Israel*² shows a number of fault lines that run in an east-west direction. One of these does run through the Mount of Olives. Here is remarkable evidence of the inspiration of Scripture.

Ezekiel also mentions the great earthquake which results in Jerusalem being exalted above the hills, but from another perspective:

“For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; so that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at My presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground” (38:19,20).

Thus the event which prepares Jerusalem for its future role in the earth will also cause all flesh

2. *Atlas of Israel*, 1985 edition, by Survey of Israel and published by Macmillan. ISBN 0-02095950-X.

to shake at the presence of the Lord. Ezekiel concludes by saying: “Thus will I magnify Myself, and sanctify Myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know

that I am the LORD” (v. 23). May this time soon come when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord and when all nations go to worship the King in Jerusalem.

Around the Sea of Galilee

5. The mystery of Bethsaida

Tony Benson

AFTER CAPERNAUM, Bethsaida is mentioned more times in the Gospels than any other of the towns which lined the Sea of Galilee. Yet there are difficulties involved. From secular history it is known that in New Testament times there was a city called Bethsaida Julias on the north side of the Sea of Galilee, but is this the Bethsaida of the Gospels? Some of the references to Bethsaida seem to refer to a town on the west side of the lake. A tel called et-Tell¹ is currently being excavated over a mile north of the Sea of Galilee, and is claimed to be the site of ancient Bethsaida, but is this really so? Some would dispute it. In this article we examine these questions.

Bethsaida in the Gospels

Bethsaida is mentioned seven times in the Gospels, and we will begin by looking at these passages.

In Matthew 11:20,21 we read: “Then began he [Jesus] to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes”. Luke 10:13 is similar. There is nothing here to indicate where Bethsaida was located. There is only one reference to Jesus performing a miracle in Bethsaida (see below), and nothing is said of any visit to Chorazin, which shows just how much of his ministry is left unrecorded. John 21:25 is relevant here.

In John 1 we read of Jesus going into Galilee and calling Philip, who is said to be “of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter” (vv. 43,44). Yet Andrew and Peter lived at Capernaum (Mk. 1:21,29). In John 12:21 we are told that Philip “was of Bethsaida of Galilee”. Yet Bethsaida Julias was not in the province of Galilee at that time;

according to Josephus it was built by the tetrarch Philip, son of Herod the Great, and brother of Herod Antipas the tetrarch of Galilee. Philip ruled territories known as Iturea and Trachonitis (Lk. 3:1).

Luke’s account of the feeding of the five thousand begins: “And he [Jesus] took them [the apostles], and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida” (9:10). The twelve disciples had just come back from their preaching mission and Jesus wanted to be able to have a quiet talk with them. Moreover, the previous verse says that Herod Antipas wanted to see Jesus, and it made sense for Jesus to take the disciples out of the territory of Antipas and into that ruled by Philip. The other Gospels do not say where they went, but Matthew and Mark say that it was to a “desert place”,² and all say that they went by boat (Mt. 14:13; Mk. 6:32; Jno. 6:1). We are not told from where they went, but since Matthew, Mark and Luke all refer to the twelve returning from their preaching mission just before they went it is likely that it was from Capernaum since this was Jesus’s base, and they would know to find him there.

Mark records that, after the miracle, Jesus “constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida” (Mk. 6:45), yet John 6:17 records that they “entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum”. The latter is consistent with an original

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1. ‘Tel’ in Hebrew and ‘tell’ in Arabic both mean ‘mound’, both words being used for the mounds which dot the landscape of Israel, marking the sites of ancient towns. The word ‘tel’ is often used today in relation to archaeological excavations, but uninhabited sites often have Arabic names incorporating the word ‘tell’.
 2. This refers to an uncultivated open area where there were no people, not a desert as we know it; Galilee has a good rainfall.