

Prophecy, History and Archaeology

EDITOR: Tony Benson, 26 Tiercel Avenue, Norwich,
NR7 8JN. Tel./Fax 01603 412978;
e-mail: rabenson@globalnet.co.uk

Ezekiel's visions of the Millennium

Geoff Cave

The purpose of this series is to look at the visions recorded in Ezekiel 40–48, where the prophet sees the nation of Israel established in the land promised to the fathers. In the midst of the land is the holy oblation, an area of land separated or set apart for the worship of Yahweh; and in the midst of the holy oblation is the sanctuary, described in considerable detail. The sanctuary had two courts: the outer court, where the priests who ministered to the people went about their business, and the inner court, where the priests who came before the Lord worked.

The overriding message which comes across is that of holiness and separation. The nation of Israel in the age to come will be separate from all other nations: "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); and the holy oblation in the midst of Israel will be set apart for the worship of the Lord.

The study will begin by looking at the borders of the land as described to Ezekiel, and how the land will be divided amongst the tribes. It will then focus in to view the holy oblation, then the sanctuary and the city, both of which will be within the oblation. After establishing the details of the land, the oblation and the sanctuary, consideration will be given to activities in these areas during the millennial age.

Some of the conclusions reached in this study will differ from the traditional interpretation. Comments will be welcome, but please wait to the end of the series. The author of these articles is convinced that it is not necessary to be an architect to understand the details given to Ezekiel. If this were so, it would run contrary to the principle that "All scripture . . . is profitable . . . that the man of God may be perfect [complete]" (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

1. The borders of the land

THE BORDERS of the land are described in Ezekiel 47:15-20. They are given concisely in the following order:

- 1 northern border (vv. 15-17)
- 2 eastern border (v. 18)
- 3 southern border (v. 19)
- 4 western border (v. 20).

We will seek to identify these borders by using the RSV, which is easier to understand; although, having grasped from the RSV what the prophet was told, it becomes evident that the AV is describing the same areas. It is possible to locate in any good Bible atlas, or a Bible with good maps, enough of the cities and areas mentioned by Ezekiel to get a reasonably accurate picture regarding the borders. Some places named in the text are cities or towns, whilst others are regions; the places on the map may be described as key towns or regions in identifying the borders of

the land. The map at [Figure 1](#) overleaf shows the main places named.

The northern border

"This shall be the boundary of the land: On the north side, from the Great Sea by way of Hethlon to the entrance of Hamath, and on to Zedad, Berothah, Sibraim (which lies on the border between Damascus and Hamath), as far as Hazer-hatticon, which is on the border of Hauran. So the boundary shall run from the sea to Hazar-enon, which is on the northern border of Damascus, with the border of Hamath to the north. This shall be the north side".

The city of Hamath, not shown on the map, lies in the centre of the Hamath region. The entrance of Hamath, as shown on the map, refers to the area between two mountain ranges, where it was easy to enter the Hamath area from the sea. Zedad is roughly on the same latitude as the

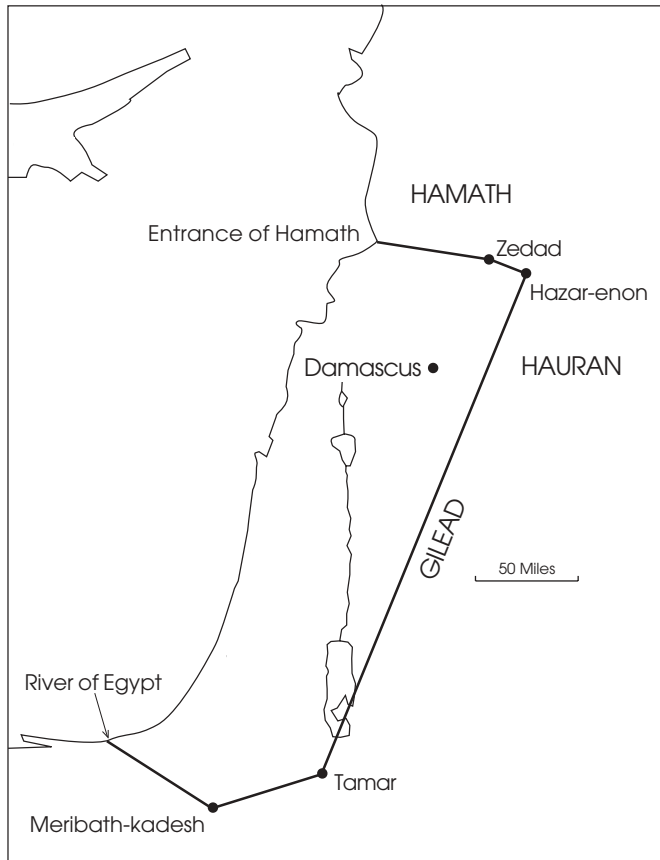


Fig. 1. Map showing the boundaries of the land in the Kingdom, as described in Ezekiel 47:15-20.

entrance of Hamath. Damascus is a city, as shown on the map, but the area around the city may be referred to as the region of Damascus, and seems to be what is being referred to here. Zedad, Berothah and Sibram lie on the border between the region of Damascus and the region of Hamath. Hazer-hatticon is between Zedad and Hazar-enon (Hazar-enan in AV).

Young's Concordance says that the meaning of the name Hazar-enon is 'court of the fountains', and adds the following note: "The spot at which the N. and E. boundaries of the promised land meet. The place has been identified with the modern *Kuryetein* ('the two cities'), a village more than 60 miles E.N.E. of Damascus. Here are large fountains, the only ones in that vast region". The promised land to which Young makes reference is most likely that recorded in Numbers 34, see verses 9 and 10 regarding Hazar-enan. A comparison of Ezekiel 47 and Numbers 34 shows a very similar land area.

The eastern border

"On the east side, the boundary shall run from Hazar-enon between Hauran and Damascus; along the Jordan between Gilead and the land of Israel; to the eastern sea and as far as Tamar. This shall be the east side".

The location of Hazar-enon has already been identified. From there the border runs between the regions of Hauran and Damascus. It then goes along, or parallel to, the Jordan between the region of Gilead and Israel down to the eastern or Dead Sea, and on to Tamar, which is about twenty-three miles south of the bottom end of the Dead Sea.

The southern border

"On the south side, it shall run from Tamar as far as the waters of Meribath-kadesh, thence along the Brook of Egypt to the Great Sea. This shall be the south side".

Meribath-kadesh is called in the AV, "the waters of strife in Kadesh". This is obviously the place where Moses smote the rock: "For ye rebelled against My commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify Me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin" (Num. 27:14). This is not far from the brook of Egypt, which completes the southern border.

It has been suggested that, as the AV in Ezekiel 47:19 simply says "the river" when describing the southern border, it must be the River Nile that is being referred to. This presents two problems. Firstly, as the Nile runs directly south-north, it would form part of a western border, not a southern border. Secondly, if the borders of the land extend to the Nile it means that, when the children of Israel were in the land of Goshen, they were in the promised land, so why did Joseph give commandment that his bones must be taken from Egypt to the land of promise (Gen. 50:24,25)?

The western border

"On the west side, the Great Sea shall be the boundary to a point opposite the entrance of Hamath. This shall be the west side".

This is simply completing the description of the boundaries, moving up the coast of the Mediterranean from the brook of Egypt back to the entrance of Hamath.

Is this too limited?

An immediate reaction to the above description of the borders may be that this is a very small area—less, in fact, than the area occupied in the days of David and Solomon. It is, however, difficult to reach any other conclusion from the description given by Ezekiel. This will doubtless be the borders of the land early in the Millennium, when Israel will be surrounded by other nations. Jeremiah states: “Fear not, O Jacob My servant, says the LORD, for I am with you. I will make a full end of all the nations to which I have driven you, but of you I will not make a full end. I will chasten you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished” (46:28, RSV). This suggests that at some time, possibly the end of the Millennium, all other nations will have surrendered their sovereignty to Jerusalem; the territory of Israel will then be the whole earth.

Genesis 15

Some have used Genesis 15 to support the idea that the borders of the land must extend in an easterly direction to the River Euphrates: “In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites” (vv. 18-21).

It should be noted that this promise in Genesis 15 was *not* to Abraham, but to his seed; it should also be noted that it was not an everlasting promise. The seed here are the natural descendants of Abraham, the same seed described earlier in the chapter: “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

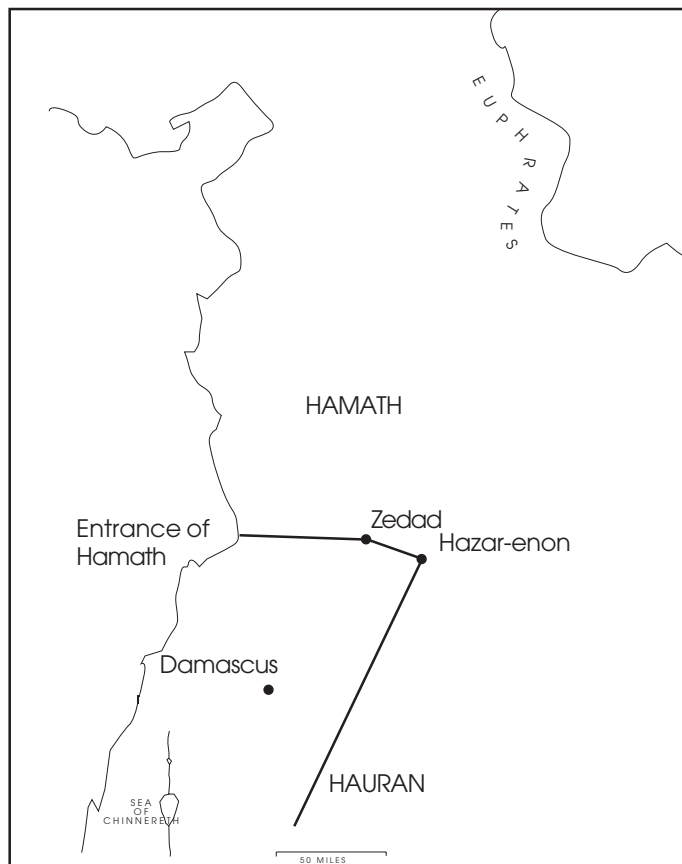


Fig. 2. Map showing the northern boundary of Israel in the Millennium and its distance from the Euphrates.

and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (vv. 13-16).

This is confirmed by Nehemiah 9:7,8: “Thou art the LORD the God, Who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; and foundest his heart faithful before Thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed Thy words; for Thou art righteous”.

The eternal promise made in Genesis 13 makes no mention of the River Euphrates: “And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look

from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (vv. 14-17). Abraham was invited (or was it a command?) to look round the land he would receive for an everlasting possession, and this he did, for he always obeyed. It is an interesting study to note the places Abraham visited after he was given this promise. They do in fact all fall within the borders described by Ezekiel. The most northerly recorded point he went to was Hobah, which is 175 miles from the Euphrates.

Original borders defined

The borders of the land to be occupied under Joshua were given by Moses and recorded in Numbers 34:1-12. These borders are very simi-

lar, if not identical, to those described by Ezekiel for the future inheritance. Moses also told Israel that if they were obedient to God's laws then they would become the head of the nations. This did happen, at least in part, under David and Solomon, and the borders of the land began to extend as they conquered the nations around. 2 Samuel 8:3 records: "David smote also Hadad-ezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates". Had the nation remained faithful they would doubtless have extended their borders further, but, sadly, they were faithless, and the kingdom of God with its capital in Jerusalem declined and was brought to an end.

When the king "whose right it is" reigns from Jerusalem the nation will remain faithful, and the territory of the Kingdom will extend not just to the River Euphrates, but the stone will grow until it fills the whole earth (Dan. 2:35).

The next article will consider the division of the land.

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

How should the Apocalypse be interpreted? (4)

Tony Benson

IN THE PREVIOUS articles we have looked at reasons for interpreting the Apocalypse as prophecy fulfilled progressively over the period since it was given, and have endeavoured to meet arguments advanced against this way of interpreting it. In this final article I would like mainly to look at three exhortational points which are made in each of the letters to the seven ecclesias in chapters 2 and 3 and which then recur throughout the rest of the book.

As shown in the first article, the Apocalypse was given "to shew unto his [Christ's] servants things which must shortly come to pass" (1:1), and it was proposed then that this best fitted a progressive fulfilment down the ages, so that all God's servants would have been able to have seen prophecy fulfilling in their days. Later in the chapter John is commanded: "Write the things which thou hast seen [the vision of chapter 1], and the things which are [the current state of the ecclesias as portrayed in chapters 2 and 3], and

the things which shall be hereafter [the reminder of the book, see 4:1]" (v. 19). There is no indication here of a 2,000-year gap before the rest of the book begins to be fulfilled, nor of an initial fulfilment which breaks off at some point, with the complete fulfilment coming later.

The three exhortations

The three exhortational points made in the seven letters of chapters 2 and 3 are as follows:

- 1 "I know thy works" (2:2);
- 2 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (v. 7);
- 3 "To him that overcometh will I give . . ." (v. 7).

The above references are to the first of the seven letters, that to Ephesus, but all three exhortations are given to each of the seven ecclesias, although for the last four ecclesias the order of 2 and 3 are reversed. In the case of the first, the particular strengths and weaknesses of each ec-