

that it will be on its way to a long-planned training event in Malaysian waters, code-named Exercise Flying Fish, to be held in June 2003. However there is little doubt that in the meantime it will have a role to play in the Gulf. The force will consist of the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal*, a Type 42 destroyer, a frigate, two supply vessels and a submarine. The *Ark Royal*, in addition to its 685-man crew, will have 600 Royal Marines and 366 aircrew on board.

The military buildup in the Middle East continues to provide evidence that the pieces of the prophetic jigsaw are fitting into place. Although such events may seem small compared with the

overall picture, they should not be despised, and they are there for our warning. They provide evidence of the nations being gathered into the Middle East and into the areas predicted by prophecy. It is during this process that Christ will return:

“For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev. 16: 14,15).



Correspondence

Comments on articles appearing in the magazine are always welcome, and should be addressed to the editor in whose section the article appears.

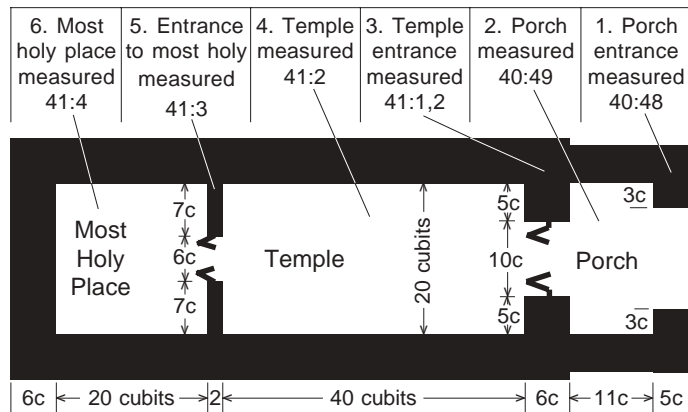
Ezekiel’s visions of the Millennium

The size and shape of the temple

In reply to Brother Carlo Barbaresi’s letter defending Brother Henry Sulley’s interpretation of Ezekiel 40–48 as applying to a large circular temple ([Dec. 2002, p. 446](#)), it was not the intention when writing the original series of articles to comment on the ideas put forward by Brother Henry Sulley on this subject, but this has now become necessary. All correspondents are in agreement that there will be a temple built at Jerusalem in the Kingdom age, and that animal sacrifices will be made in it to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. This letter looks at the size and shape of that temple.

- 2 The porch is measured (v. 49).
- 3 Ezekiel is taken into the temple; the entrance is measured (41:1,2).
- 4 The temple is measured at forty by twenty cubits (v. 2).
- 5 The angel enters the most holy place; the entrance is measured (v. 3).
- 6 The most holy place is measured at twenty by twenty cubits (v. 4).

The diagram gives the details of what Ezekiel is shown.



Square or circular?

The main evidence given from Scripture by Brother Sulley for the circular concept comes from the dimensions given in Ezekiel 41:3. A careful reading of Ezekiel 40:48–41:4 reveals the following sequence:

- 1 Ezekiel is brought to the porch of the temple; the entrance is measured (40:48).

The two dimensions Brother Sulley uses to support his idea that the temple is circular are the six cubits and seven cubits of 41:3. He applies the seven cubits to the temple entrance and the six cubits to what he shows as the exit to the temple. These two dimensions must apply to the entrance to the most holy, for the verse begins,

“Then went he inward, and measured . . .”. The angel had moved from the porch, through the holy place called the temple and was now entering the most holy.

Having applied the dimensions of six and seven cubits to the two ends of the temple, Brother Sulley arrives at a temple building which is slightly wedge-shaped. He then proceeds to multiply this shape many times over, although Scripture describes only one building. Placing the resulting series of wedge-shaped buildings side by side, he arrives at a circular building. The distance around this circular temple building he states to be in excess of three miles.

Regarding this building he states:

“The word *hekal*, translated Temple, involves the idea of *capacity*, and its general signification is any great and splendid edifice, palace, nave, or hall. The ‘twenty cubits of breadth, and twenty cubits of length’, which Ezekiel saw measured immediately after the doors of the Temple (verse 4) does not convey this idea, unless other features which imply a building of great extent are taken into consideration”.¹

He adds a footnote regarding *hekal*: “Sharp renders it in this passage, ‘Great Hall’”.

It must be said here, however, that Solomon’s temple is described in 1 Kings 6:17 using exactly the same word *hekal*: “And the house, that is, the temple before it, was forty cubits long”. The chapter describes a holy place and a most holy place having identical dimensions to those given by Ezekiel.

Examining the evidence

Returning to the idea of a circular temple, Brother Sulley submits mathematical proof to show his plan is correct. Several impressive looking pages of complex calculations are presented. These have convinced many that his concept must be correct. All that is proved, however, is that he had correctly calculated the dimensions of his plan to fill up the selected area. It does not prove that the dimensions have been correctly taken from the Scripture text. He has decided how many wedge-shaped sections there will be to form a circular temple (almost 400). He has also specified the dimensions of the sections according to his concept of the temple.

The other proof submitted for a circular temple is the use of the phrase ‘round about’. Brother Barbaresi states: “Here the word ‘round’ means a circle, being derived from a word meaning ‘to

revolve’”. He is referring to Ezekiel 43:12, which, however, is saying that the whole area round about or surrounding the temple is holy, not that the temple is round. Ezekiel uses the phrase many times, for example in 45:2: “Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred in length, with five hundred in breadth, square round about; and fifty cubits round about for the suburbs thereof”. Ezekiel uses the phrase in relation to the altar in 43:20, but Brother Sulley does not have a circular altar, but a square altar. The word for ‘round about’ (*sabib*) is translated in the following ways: ‘about’ (22), ‘on every side’ (7), ‘all about’ (1), ‘circuit’ (1), ‘compass’ (2), ‘places about’ (3), ‘round about’ (248).

Brother Sulley has something approaching 400 sections forming his circular temple, each section having two sets of doors. Thus, though Ezekiel specifically describes only two sets of doors (one set at the entrance to the holy place or temple, and one set at the entrance to the most holy), Brother Sulley has something approaching 800 sets of doors.

Reference has already been made to Solomon’s temple. The [table](#) overleaf shows some of the features common to Solomon’s temple and the temple of the future age as described by Ezekiel.

Small or large?

Brother Sulley stated: “A building of five hundred cubits would scarcely differ from Herod’s Temple. Such a building would be totally inadequate for a ‘house of prayer for all peoples’, and for the assembly of that vast concourse of people which the scope of numerous prophecies requires”.² This is said when he is considering the wall Ezekiel sees described in 42:15-20.

Brother Sulley uses the dimensions of this wall as his primary dimension to determine the size of the temple. He is in fact taking the only main dimension where Bible versions are not in agreement. The AV gives ‘reeds’, most others give ‘cubits’. If this dimension is in reeds and it applies to the temple buildings it is not in harmony with other dimensions given by Ezekiel. Is it wise to use as a mainstay of any theory a passage over which there is doubt? Furthermore, Brother Sulley insists that this wall is in effect part of the temple building, whereas Ezekiel, before measuring this wall, states: “Now when

1. *The Temple of Ezekiel’s prophecy*, fourth edition, p. 45.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6–7)	The temple of Ezekiel 40–41
Had a holy place measuring forty cubits by twenty (6:16,17)	Has a holy place measuring forty cubits by twenty (41:2)
Contained an "oracle" (the most holy place) twenty cubits by twenty (6:19,20)	Has a most holy place measuring twenty cubits by twenty (41:4)
Had two doors, one at the entrance to the "temple", the holy place, and the other at the entrance to the "oracle", the most holy place (6:31-35). Both doors had two leaves each (6:32, mg.; 6:34).	Has two doors, one at the entrance to the "temple", the holy place, and the other at the entrance to the "sanctuary", the most holy place. Both doors are two-leaved (41:23,24).
The doors had carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers (6:32).	The doors have carvings of cherubim and palm trees (41:25).
Contained an altar of wood, covered with gold, which stood before the most holy place, "the . . . altar that was by the oracle" (6:20,22).	Contains an "altar of wood", standing "before the LORD", in other words before the most holy place, a symbol of His presence. No covering of gold is mentioned, but a covering would be necessary to function as an altar, and this was doubtless of gold (41:22).
Had a porch which measured twenty by ten cubits "before the temple of the house", the holy place (6:3).	Has a porch of almost the same measurements, twenty by eleven cubits, standing at the entrance to "the house" (40:48,49).
Two pillars stood in front of the temple porch (7:21).	Two pillars stand in front of the porch of the house (v. 49).
Chambers were built into the walls of the house, and surrounded the holy and most holy places (6:5).	Chambers are built into the walls of the house, and surround the holy places (41:5,6).
These chambers were said to be "round about" the house (6:5).	These chambers are built "round about" the house (41:6).
The word translated "chambers" is the Hebrew <i>tse/aot</i> , meaning 'ribs', fittingly describing their position on each side of the two holy places	The same word <i>tse/aot</i> is used to describe the side chambers, which are also found on each side of the holy places, as ribs on a body (41:5).
The chambers were built three storeys high, "nethermost", "middle" and "third" (6:6).	These chambers are built on three levels "one over another", "lowest", "midst" and "highest" (41:6,7).
The chambers were reached by a winding stairway to all levels (6:8).	A "winding" (stairway) leads to all three levels (41:7).
The supporting beams of these three levels rested upon ledges or steps, made in the inner wall, but were only built into the outer wall (6:6,10).	The beams that support these three levels are only built into the outer wall and merely rest upon the 'stepped' inner wall (41:6).
The width of each chamber increased from the lower to the upper levels, due to the 'stepped' wall (6:6).	The width of the chambers increases from the lowest to the highest level of the wall (41:7).

he had made an end of measuring the inner house [the temple], he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect is toward the east, and measured it round about”.

Regarding the size of the sanctuary, the attention of the reader is directed to my original series of articles, where it is established that a large oblation and sanctuary would not fit into the extent of the land as described by Ezekiel.³

A further difficulty that arises in Brother Sulley’s exposition is that he decided how many gates there would be for entrance to the outer court of the sanctuary. He writes:

“Two single gates (one on the north and one on the south) would be totally inadequate for the vast multitude which is to enter and issue from a building used for universal worship . . . If there were only a single gate on each side, the provision for offering appears altogether out of proportion to the necessities of such a number of people. Eleven gates on each side is according to the fitness of things”.⁴

Thus, though Ezekiel describes only one gate on the north (40:20-22) and one on the south (vv. 24-26), Brother Sulley states that eleven gates on each side “is according to the fitness of things”.

There are undoubtedly some valuable spiritual lessons brought out in Brother Sulley’s book, but serious difficulties come to light when attempting to harmonise his thoughts on the size and construction of the temple with the text in Ezekiel’s prophecy. Other problems include the following:

- According to Brother Sulley’s concept, once a sacrifice has been slaughtered, it has to be carried approximately half a mile up a steep hill to be sacrificed on the altar.
- All the links with Solomon’s temple are ignored by Brother Sulley.
- Brother Sulley stated that we should “resist the unbeliever’s disposition to belittle the house to 500 cubits”.⁵ Thus anyone who sees the sanctuary as 500 cubits square is classed with unbelievers.
- Regarding the corner courts, described by the prophet as boiling houses for the sacrifices and measuring forty cubits by thirty (46:21-24), Brother Sulley saw each of these as being nearly as large as St Paul’s Cathedral, since he says that four of these building occupy three times the area of St. Paul’s Cathedral. He said: “If the buildings are three storeys high there would be 2,664 dining halls, each larger than most banqueting halls”.⁶

- Ezekiel describes the waters as coming from the threshold of the temple and then passing to the south of the altar (47:1). Brother Sulley has them issuing from the altar.

Brother Sulley was convinced that the temple will be for universal worship, hence his large temple, but a number of scriptures suggest otherwise. This subject will be considered in a future article, God willing.

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The use of the fish symbol

I was very interested in Brother Trevor Maher’s article “The symbol of the cross” (Oct. 2002, p. 365) and I thank him for a very useful study. Recently I did some research on another symbol that is used worldwide in the name of Christianity, the fish. The reason I did this research was because there also seems to be an ever-increasing number of brethren and sisters using the fish symbol in the form of lapel badges or stickers on their cars—just two of the common ways it is used. In fact the fish symbol is now so popular that it is used on everything from business cards to the yellow pages. The symbol is not new; it has been around for many thousands of years. So why this increase in its use amongst Christadelphians?

The church teaches that this symbol has existed for centuries, representing the concept of Jesus as the fisher of men.* Today its origin and meanings are clouded by a vague tradition, but the antiquity of this symbol was enough to make it accepted without question by modern Christians who are striving for a closer identity with their roots.

Is this a good thing? Because many Christian groups have adopted this symbol to identify themselves to others, should we do the same? Unknown to ‘moderns’, however, the fish symbol is not unique to Christianity, but was in use

3. [Jan. 2002, p. 26.](#)

4. *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

* Brian Moynihan, in *The Faith: A History of Christianity*, says of the meaning of the fish symbol: “The fish was a secret sign; the first letter of the Greek words *Iesou CHristos THEou Uios Soter*, Jesus Christ God’s Son and Savior, spell *Ichthus*, Greek for fish”.—T.B.