

tration of some painful lessons, it was treated in accordance with Divine command and was brought to Jerusalem.

When the temple was completed, it was put in its proper position beneath the overshadowing wings of the cherubim in the most holy place. We read that at this time there was nothing in the ark but the tables of testimony placed there

by Moses at Mount Horeb. The golden pot of manna and Aaron's rod had gone. They had a beautiful temple instead of a tent; the nation had reached its highest position of glory and splendour in temporal things; but from the most treasured of all the holy emblems they had lost the symbol of incorruptible nature and the symbol of Divine judgement and approval.



## 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

I can sympathise with Brother Jeremy Thomas ([Nov. 2003, p. 416](#)) when he says that Ezekiel's visions are not easy to understand. I myself have had the problems, but I eventually concluded that one can make things worse by some of the methods adopted to explain them.

#### The prince in Ezekiel

My imagination will not stretch to giving everything a purely figurative interpretation, and if the prince is not Christ, who is he? If he is just a mortal being, it seems incredible that only he should be permitted to enter and leave the sanctuary by that eastern gateway, because the glory of the Lord had returned by it (43:4; 44:2,3). And it would be a high honour indeed for such a mortal to be granted an especial place in the holy portion to be sited right in the centre of the land (45:7,8). And if the prince is a mortal, of whom we read nothing in any other scripture, he would have to be chosen from the regathered tribes of Israel, and what would be his moral qualifications? We are all being prepared for the Kingdom by lives of probation, so would he qualify for an entrance into the Kingdom of God?

Could the prince have been Zerubbabel? He was certainly of the royal line, but he neither sought nor was appointed to take the role of king, indeed the Jews' Gentile overlords would not have permitted it. Both Zerubbabel and Nehemiah were governors, not princes, of Judah (Hag. 1:1,14; Neh. 5:14). And I say again that, through the prophet Ezekiel, God had plainly stated that the throne would be overturned until He come whose right it is (21:27), and without question that is Christ (Lk. 1:32,33). And in two places, as the prophecy moves to the final re-

gathering of Israel, the "prince" is named as "David", who is to be their prince "for ever" (Ezek. 34:24;37:25). In the remaining chapters of the book there are seventeen verses which mention "the prince", and Christ must at least be there among them. Are we left to guess which verses refer to Christ?

We all accept that chapters 36-39 speak of the latter-day revival of Israel, reaching a climax with the destruction of Gog and the uniting again of the whole house of Israel (37:19; 39:25). In the last verse of chapter 39 God says: "Neither will I hide My face any more from them". The remainder of the book presents a logical progression, stage by stage, leading in the last chapter to the millennial layout of the land, with the twelve tribal cantons detailed, and the announcement that "the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there" (v. 35). This was already anticipated in 43:7, where God says that Zion is "the place of My throne . . . where I will dwell", as we read in Psalm 132:13,14.

#### The fulfilment of Ezekiel 40-48

These visions of Ezekiel reach far beyond the return from Babylon. In chapter 40 the prophet is taken to a very high mountain in the land of Israel, and he describes in great detail the frame of a city which he saw. No such elaborate descriptions were ever given when Solomon built his temple, and it is clear that Ezekiel is writing of a building different from that of Solomon's. He is not speaking of the restoration work of Ezra and Nehemiah, but of the erection of a new temple yet future. In describing the chambers of this new building he tells of a place where they washed the burnt offering, and where were tables for killing the various offerings, together with all the instruments they needed for the

purpose (vv. 38-43). These are all literal items of equipment in the temple.

Chapters 41 and 42 continue in similar vein, with precise measurements of various parts of the building. In chapter 43 the glory of the Lord returns from the same direction by which it departed from the disgraced temple of Solomon. Chapter 44 introduces the priestly orders to be restored. Chapters 45 and 46 make mention of some of the sacrifices that will be offered, while chapter 47 presents that beautiful view of the river of living waters which will flow out of Jerusalem, and of which we read in Zechariah 14:8.

The final chapters portray the layout of the land of Israel as it will be in the Kingdom. In the centre will be that holy oblation dedicated to the sanctuary, in which will be the possession of the prince. The Levites will also dwell in this area. On either side of this holy oblation the twelve tribes will each have a strip of land running from east to west. And this reminds us that there are to be twelve immortal princes ruling them: "in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt. 19:28). How would a mortal prince fit into this arrangement?

And could I suggest that these twelve are the "My princes" of Ezekiel 45:8? In describing the possession of the prince, it was opportune to mention them and say, not as an injunction, but as a statement of fact, "My princes shall no more oppress My people", unlike those of the past such as Ahab with his designs on Naboth's vineyard. Then we read, "and the rest of the land shall they give to the house of Israel according to their tribes", as chapter 48 explains. In the prophet's own day, wicked princes, together with the people they had ill-treated, were languishing in Babylon for their misdeeds, and in 45:9 the Lord God chides with them. He had told Ezekiel to show them his vision to shame them (43:10).

In Ezekiel 46:16,17 we have the problem of the prince's sons. But if the prince really is the Lord Jesus Christ, is there such a difficulty? It is true that he died childless, but "when Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he *shall* see his seed" (Isa. 53:10). The Messianic Psalm 45 says to him, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth" (v. 16). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the faithful of David's line, were his natural fathers, but eventually they will all become his children,

being "the children of the resurrection" (Lk. 20:36). And it is useful to remember that Christ's inheritance will extend far beyond the boundaries of Israel; it will reach to "the uttermost parts of the earth" (Ps. 2:8).

#### Animal sacrifices in the Kingdom

I can see no other way of reading these visions of Ezekiel than as being the literal and inevitable sequence to those chapters 38 and 39 in which we take such a keen interest. There *will* be animal sacrifices in the Kingdom, and the Lord Jesus Christ really *will* partake of them. Can we not accept the evidence and then ask the question, Why?

The first answer must be that Christ will be "a priest upon his throne" (Zech. 6:13), and priests are associated with sacrifice. Secondly, it will be essential for the mortal population in the Kingdom to *remember* (as we do) that one great sacrifice by which alone sins can be forgiven. His offering will be equally efficacious for them as it is now for us, and he will always be the intercessor with his Father. We remember that offering as we take the emblems week by week, and with the aid of the exhortation we are instructed in every aspect of Christ's sacrifice.

But there is no hint that the breaking of bread as we know it will continue during the Kingdom, and the mortals of the world then will have to remember Christ for a thousand years! The return to animal sacrifice, I am sure, will be designed to serve that purpose. The sacrifices will not be a means of putting away sin, but, whereas the Mosaic offerings pointed forward, those of the future will point backward, and the one whom they represent will be there himself to identify with the offering. We read in Ezekiel 45:22 that the prince will prepare an offering "for himself and for all the people". These words match Hebrews 7:27: "first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself". Christ did no sin, but he had our nature, and it was "*by his own blood* he entered in once into the holy place" (9:12).

A similar passage in Hebrews 5:2,3 speaks of the high priest being "compassed with infirmity". And our high priest "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way" *because* he himself once knew the infirmity of human nature. The high priest will be re-enacting his own sacrifice so that the people can learn the lessons. And the one who so loved us that he gave his life for us, and the Lord and

Master who in love for his servants washed their feet, will still in that future age want men to love him because he first loved them and gave himself for them. He will want to encourage them to overcome the same human nature that he overcame. Visitors to the city of Jerusalem in that day will be greeted by the smoke of the sacrifice on the hilltop, telling them that it was *because* he

overcame that he is now set down on his Father's throne. Because he loves them, he will want them to overcome too.

In the book *Faith in the Last Days*, under the heading "Sacrifice in the Age to Come", Brother Thomas quotes various Scriptures other than Ezekiel to support this title.

*Don Harrison, Purley*

## From the Editor's postbag

### Comments on items received from readers

#### Oil and Russia

We began the previous 'Editor's Postbag' (Oct. 2003, p. 379) with an item about the importance of natural gas, and in particular Europe's dependence on gas from Russia. This time we begin with an item about Russia and oil, based on an article entitled "Putin invests heavily in Russian oil trade" in *The Times* of 25 September 2003, passed on by a reader.

One argument used by those opposed to America's war against Iraq was that America's real motive was to gain control of Iraq's oil reserves and exploit them for its own benefit. If this was the case, then it has not worked very well so far; the cost of trying to bring Iraq to peaceful democratic rule is far exceeding any benefit received from Iraq's oil reserves. The *Times* article says: ". . . one of Russia's shrewdest moves, while the world has been occupied with Iraq, has been to expand its influence over the oil markets. If the gibe 'It's all about oil' has any application, it is about Russia's recent manoeuvres, not America's".

Eleven of the world's leading oil-producing countries are members of a cartel known by the acronym OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries), and these nations

control three quarters of the world's known oil reserves. Russia is not part of OPEC, although it is a major oil producer. After the crash of its economy five years ago, Russia's economic growth has been remarkable, and about half of its recent growth has been due to a rise in oil prices. It has stepped up its oil production to the point where it produces almost as much as the world's biggest oil producer, Saudi Arabia. Its aim is to keep oil prices and production high (and gas as well) in order to double its economy in the next decade, and to this end it has been engaged in talks with Saudi Arabia. It has also sought good relations with America, although it did oppose the Iraq war.

Russia's aim seems to be to remain on good terms with the West while it builds up its economic strength after decades of Communist misrule and the traumas of the introduction of capitalism. Having duped the West into thinking it has peaceful intentions, it will then be in a position to become the aggressive power of the past once more and fulfil the role which Scripture foretells it will take.

#### Noah the eighth

In my article "New evidence for the Flood" (Nov. 2003, p. 427)

I referred to the fact that Sumerian king lists differentiate between kings who reigned before the Flood and kings who reigned after, with those who reigned before the Flood being eight in number, and reigning for very long periods of time. I compared this reference to eight kings with the fact that the genealogy of Genesis 5 has ten names from Adam to Noah inclusive.

A reader has pointed out that there is an exact correspondence if we take account of the fact that Enoch was 'taken' by God well before his father Jared died, and Lamech died aged 777 when Methuselah was still alive at the age of 964, with five more of his 969 years to live. There were therefore eight men in the line from Adam to Noah before the Flood who would have been head of the family, corresponding to the eight long-lived kings of the Sumerian record. This, our reader says, is what the Apostle Peter is referring to when he calls Noah "the eighth" (2 Pet. 2:5), the word "person" being in italics and not in the original.

#### Bulgaria and the Jews

A reader in Bulgaria has drawn my attention to the fact that 2003 was the sixtieth anniversary of the deliverance of the Bulgarian