

over; but only to be renewed in somewhat milder form by Decius's successor, Gallus (251-253 A.D.).

"In 253 A.D. Decius's old associate in persecution, Valerian, obtained possession of the empire (253-260 A.D.). Though he at first left the Christians undisturbed, in 257 and 258 A.D. he renewed the attack with greater ferocity. Christian assemblies were forbidden; Christian churches and cemeteries confiscated; bishops, priests, and deacons ordered to be executed, and lay Christians in high places disgraced, banished, and their goods held forfeited . . . It was a fearful period of trial, lasting, with intermission indeed, from 250-259 A.D.

"Diocletian (284-305 A.D.) moved slowly, however. A cautious effort to rid the army and the imperial palace of Christians was followed, beginning in February, 303 A.D., by three great edicts of persecution in rapid succession. Churches were ordered destroyed, sacred books confiscated, clergy imprisoned and forced to sacrifice by torture. It was a time of fearful persecution. As in the days of Decius there were many martyrs . . .

"The Eastern Caesar, Galerius (305-311 A.D.), was even more hostile to Christianity, and had much influence over Diocletian. To him the suggestions of persecution may have been due. The growth of Christianity, however, was uniting all the forces that threatened heathenism against it; while Diocletian and Galerius were disposed to emphasise emperor-worship and the service of the old gods".¹¹

The death of Galerius in May 311 opened up the way for Constantine ultimately to become emperor of the west, and, according to Williston Walker, "he was, thenceforth, in all practical respects a Christian, even though heathen emblems still appeared on coins, and he retained the title of Pontifex Maximus".¹² In A.D. 323 Licinius, the Eastern Emperor, was defeated by Constantine, who became at last the sole ruler of the Roman world.

Conclusion

The Apostle Paul was able to comfort and assure the believers at Rome of the ultimate triumph of Christianity over all that they were suffering under the iron rule of the imperial power, saying: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution . . . or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:35,37).

Those of us living in our comparatively free Western society, who feel safe from the heavy hand of autocratic authority and incarceration, cannot imagine what those early Christians had to endure in afflictions, persecutions, tortures, even the loss of their lives. Many of them lie entombed in the underground tunnels known as the Catacombs of Rome, awaiting the call to newness of life and glory in the Kingdom of God which is to come upon this troubled earth at the return of Christ the King. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus".

11. *Op. cit.*, pp. 86,87,108,109.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

Ezekiel's visions of the Millennium

7. Summary and conclusion

Geoff Cave

THIS FINAL article in this series will attempt to summarise the details of the study and then to draw some conclusions.

The borders of Israel's inheritance

The prophet Ezekiel gives a fairly concise description of the borders of the land of Israel in the coming age. The details given reveal a relatively small area of land, a little smaller than that occupied by the nation in the days of David and

Solomon. It must be remembered, however, that this was the maximum extent of the earlier kingdom.

Rather than extend further from the days of Solomon onwards, the inheritance of the nation diminished because of the wayward behaviour of the people, from the king downwards. In the age to come, with an all-righteous King and a purified priesthood, the land will extend until it fills the whole earth.

The division of the land

Ezekiel also describes the way in which the land will be allocated between the tribes, with a special portion in the centre of the land around Jerusalem. The holy oblation in the centre of the land is divided into three portions: one for the priests, another for the 'sons of Zadok' and the third portion for 'the city'. The sanctuary will be in the centre of the portion belonging to the sons of Zadok. The size of the holy oblation has been the cause of much discussion. The RSV, along with various other versions, states that it will measure 2,500 cubits square. The AV agrees with 2,500 but gives no unit of measurement. The RSV is most likely correct; if the unit of measurement is to be the reed (six cubits), then the oblation will take up too much room to fit the tribal portions and the portion for the prince within the borders of the land.

The city of the great King

A city with an area over eighty times that of the sanctuary is described by the prophet, and called "The LORD is there" (48:35). This must be the "city of the great King" (Ps. 48:2). The Lord is there in the person of His Son, who will rule the world from Mount Zion. The nations will go to worship the King and to learn of his ways. Ezekiel does not give any details of this city because the main thrust of this prophecy is concerned with the sanctuary, which will be built for the mortal people in the nation of Israel to worship the Lord in a way which is acceptable.

The sanctuary

This will be the centre of worship for the mortal population of Israel and those of the Gentile nations who wish to "join themselves to the LORD" (Isa. 56:6). Ezekiel clearly states that those who are uncircumcised in heart or flesh will not be allowed into the sanctuary (44:9); this will restrict the numbers entering during a given period. Gentiles who are not joined to the Lord will still come to worship the King in the city and to learn his righteous laws, but they will also learn that "I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore" (37:28). They will not be allowed to enter. In the centre of the sanctuary will be the temple, which will have a porch, a holy place and a most holy place. The dimensions of the holy and most holy places will be identical to those of Solomon's temple and exactly twice the size of the tabernacle.

Workers in the sanctuary

Two orders of priests will serve in the sanctuary. The Levites will serve at the gates and in the outer court. They will minister to the people, whilst the sons of Zadok will minister before the LORD (44:11,15). The sons of Zadok will minister in the inner court and in the temple building. Both groups of priests will be mortal.

The other person who plays an important task in the sanctuary is the prince. The prince is to "make reconciliation for the house of Israel" (45:17) by offering various sacrifices on behalf of the nation. Taking all the information given by Ezekiel regarding the prince into account, the conclusion reached is that the prince is a mortal ruler of the Jewish nation who offers sacrifice for himself and for the nation collectively.

Conclusion

These few chapters at the end of Ezekiel's prophecy are unique in Scripture in respect of the detail given about one aspect of the coming age. They concentrate mainly on the provisions made for the mortals of the nation of Israel and any Gentile who wishes to become part of that nation. It is impossible to be certain about every small detail given in these chapters, neither do such details affect the fundamentals of our faith. It is nevertheless good to have this vision before us, and the better we understand it the brighter will be our vision.

The works of our earlier brethren are of immense value to us; we owe them a great debt for their sound exposition, which has stood the test of time. It must be remembered, however, that they had to clear away all the teachings of apostate Christendom and establish the true teaching of Scripture across the whole spectrum. This was an immense task, which must have weighed heavily upon them.

When Brother Thomas was answering his critics in the very early days he gave a resumé of his beliefs and then added: "These things I believe and teach as the doctrines of the word. If you can prove from that word that a single item is not there, I will renounce it. If I can prove them, will you be equally candid and receive them?"¹ This must surely be the approach of all Bible students.

The following was written in 1921:

1. Cited in *Dr. Thomas: his life and work*, Robert Roberts, p. 155.

“Book upon book has been written concerning the shape of the Temple, so elaborately detailed in the closing chapters of Ezekiel. With clerical commentators we are not much concerned, but the conclusions of Christadelphians who have devoted much time and thought thereto do interest us. We have such in Brethren H. Sulley (Nottingham) and W. Clifford (London). The former thinks the Temple will be circular, whereas the latter concludes it will be square, and we herewith append their views, together with plans, with the object of stimulating readers to study the matter for themselves, and take nothing for granted. [The diagram shown from the work of Brother Clifford is very similar to those submitted in these articles.]

“It is contended by some that the training of an architect was essential to correctly interpret the prophecy, but to our mind that is a dangerous proposition, and will play into the hands of the clergy, who claim that college training is essential to rightly understand the Bible, which was written in Hebrew and Greek”.²

Comments are welcome on this subject, in the hope that all may come to a better understanding of the those things that are revealed to form part of our vision of the coming age.

(Concluded)

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2. *A Christadelphian Treasury*, F. G. Jannaway, pp. 152-3.

Tischendorf and the Codex Sinaiticus

Malcolm Edwards

IN 1815 A MAN named William Bankes visited St Catherine’s Monastery beneath Mount Sinai, and he reported on his return to England that the monks there had a library containing 200 volumes, most of which were Greek manuscripts. That same year, the wife of a Dr Tischendorf, a German medical practitioner in Lengenfeld, near Leipzig, gave birth to a son whom they named Lobegott Friedrich. He was destined to be the discoverer at the same monastery of the famous fourth-century manuscript called *Codex Sinaiticus*, one of the earliest Greek Bibles ever discovered, matching in age the one called *Codex Vaticanus*, held for centuries in the Vatican library.

Tischendorf became a schoolmaster, and met and married a fellow teacher, Angelike Zehme, returning to his college studies soon afterwards. He became a competent theological scholar, and developed an obsession for ancient Biblical documents, in the hope of eventually discovering a Bible of considerable age.

Tischendorf knew of the library in St Catherine’s Monastery, having read the reports of those who had visited there, especially that of Johann Burckhardt stating that it contained 1,500 Greek volumes. But it was probably the visit of Archdeacon Henry Tattam in 1839, and his failure to purchase the monastery’s oldest Bible for £300, which prompted Tischendorf to investigate the matter for himself, which he did in 1844.

Saved from the flames

During his visit Tischendorf came across a large basket of old documents in the Great Hall, amongst which were a quantity of parchments from a very ancient Greek Bible. He was deeply concerned to learn that they were soon to be used to light the monastery furnace, and managed to rescue them from such an unthinkable end.

He eventually persuaded the librarian to loan him forty-three sheets for closer study. Later it was discovered that notations on some of them were by Eusebius Pamphilius, bishop of Caesarea in the fourth century, indicating that the Bible had once been in Caesarea and was probably one of fifty Bibles commissioned by the Emperor Constantine and copied by this same Eusebius. It was thought that, when the Arabs conquered the city in 638, this Bible was taken to St Catherine’s Monastery for safe keeping, but in time was largely forgotten.

Ecstatic about his success, Tischendorf took the parchments back to Europe and carefully copied them. He named the volume *Codex Frederico-Augustanus* after King Frederick II of Saxony who had financed his expedition.

A gift for the Tsar

Determined to acquire the rest of the ancient Bible, Tischendorf revisited the monastery in 1852 and again in 1859. On these occasions he had