



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 prince

I would like offer some comments on the subject of the prince in Ezekiel's prophecy of the temple, following the publication of Brother Cave's article on the above topic ([Jun. 2002, p. 239](#)). The first reference to "the prince" is in Ezekiel 44:3, where we read, "It is for the prince", "it" being the east gate of the temple (v. 1). In Solomon's temple this gate was "the king's gate" (1 Chron. 9:18). In 2 Chronicles 23:13 we read, "the king stood at his pillar at the entering in", and the parallel record in 2 Kings 11 adds, "as the manner was" (v. 14). These references indicate that the kings of Judah used to enter the temple by the east gate and stand by a pillar here; see also 2 Kings 23:2,3 and 2 Chronicles 34:31.

Ezekiel 44:2 says of the east gate: "This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and *no man* shall enter in by it . . . therefore it shall be shut". This rules out any idea that the prince is a mortal man. Verse 3 then continues: "It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD [Yahweh]; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same". The prince must therefore be Christ, who is no longer a man but the great King/priest after the order of Melchizedek.

This verse states that the prince will "sit in [the gate] to eat bread before the LORD [Yahweh]". Surely none other than Christ can *sit* in the temple. Paul says in Hebrews 10: "every priest *standeth* daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins"; then, referring to Christ, he says: "but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, *sat down* on the right hand of God" (vv. 11,12). He is the only one who can sit before Yahweh, as was typified by David, who, after being girded as a priest and offering sacrifices in 2 Samuel 6, "*sat* before the LORD [Yahweh]" (7:18). No man can do this.

Throughout the prophecy of Ezekiel, the king of Israel is termed "the prince" (12:10; 21:25; 34:24;

37:25). When we come to chapter 45 we find that "the prince" has a very large "possession" in the most important part of the land, on each side of Yahweh's own possession, "the oblation of the holy portion" (vv. 7,8), also termed the "holy portion of the land" (v. 1).

Those who do not accept that the prince of Ezekiel's temple prophecy is Christ quote 46:16: "If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons'; it shall be their possession by inheritance". The argument is that, if the prince is Christ, how can he have sons to whom he can give some of his inheritance? The answer to this point is to be found in Hebrews 2, where Paul writes of God's work of "bringing many sons unto glory" (v. 10) through Christ, and then, quoting Isaiah 8:18, terms them Christ's "children" (v. 13). One of the titles of Christ in Isaiah 9:6 is "The everlasting Father", or "Father of the age", and that is how he is depicted in Ezekiel's temple prophecy, the father figure, leading the people in sacrifice and praise.

In Ezekiel 46:16 gifts become the possession of the prince's sons "by inheritance", remaining theirs' until the Kingdom is given back to the Father, as in 1 Corinthians 15:24. However, if the prince "give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince" (v. 17). This shows that his servants are mortal and are not able to keep it for ever.

We learn from Ezekiel 45:15,16 that one lamb out of every two hundred will be given to the prince by "all the people of the land" for an "oblation". This will fulfil Isaiah 16:1: "Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land", who is, of course, the prince. Ezekiel 45:15,17 speaks of the prince offering various offerings "to make reconciliation for the house of Israel", which only Christ can do, not a mortal man. He is the great Melchizedek King/priest spoken of in Zechariah 6:13: "he shall bear the glory, and shall *sit* and rule upon his throne".

This is the one Ezekiel saw in vision, the great Prince/priest, leading all the people at Passover (45:21,22). He had said to his followers: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with

you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 22:15,16). Ezekiel saw him sitting and eating bread before Yahweh (44:3), the great Prince/priest preparing for himself, just as the high priest prepared for himself under the Law, and Christ himself in his sacrifice offered first for himself and then for us.

Those who cannot accept that Christ in the future will "prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock for a sin offering" (45:22) have forgotten that this will not be to take away sin but will be a reminder. Paul says: "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). Brother John Thomas wrote of the work of the Prince/priest of Ezekiel:

"The Ezekiel reconciliation, however, will perfect the conscience, because Christ has died and lives for evermore; which death and resurrection connected with the reconciliatory offerings by faith in the worshipper, and offered to God through the Prince of Israel, the High Priest upon his throne after the order of Melchizedec, will constitute sacrifices of a character such as have not been offered on the earth before" (*Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come*, 1851, p. 175).

The wonderful prophecy of Ezekiel 40-48 gives us all the details of the "house of prayer for all people" (Isa. 56:7) to be built when Christ returns, but the prophecy would be empty and meaningless without the great King/priest after the order of Melchizedek, the most important personage of this remarkable prophecy.

Ted Bailey
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Reply

Brother Bailey makes a number of points in his letter, and this reply addresses these points in the same order as the letter.

Concerning the east gate of the sanctuary, it must be remembered that there are in fact two east gates. The details of the east gate into the *outer* court are described in Ezekiel 40:6-19; this is the gate where the prince sits to eat bread. The east gate into the *inner* court is described in 40:32-34; it is in this gate that the prince stands when he brings the sacrifices for himself and the people.

Regarding the east *outer* gate, Ezekiel 44:2 is clear and emphatic: "This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened", the reason being given in

the same verse, "because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut". This is a reference to the glory entering the sanctuary by this gate: "And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east" (43:4). This is why the gate is shut, and no man, including the prince, may enter the sanctuary by that gate. We are in fact told how the prince enters and leaves the sanctuary in 46:9,10; it is with the people of the land, using the north or south gates.

This being the case, to what does 44:3 refer? "It [the east gate] is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same". The verse is not saying the prince enters the sanctuary by going *through* the east gate, it is saying he can go into the porch of that gate to eat bread. Having entered the court via the north or south gates, he may enter the porch of the east gate to eat bread and he then leaves the gate the same way he has entered. He does not go *through* the gate because "it shall not be opened".

Moving to the east gate into the *inner* court, the prince has to *stand* in the porch of this gate to worship *with the people of the land* (46:2). The closest the prince comes to the temple is the porch of this gate; he brings an offering, and he stands and worships while the priest takes his offering to the altar. The prince has to stand and worship when he comes near to the Lord, but the Lord Jesus Christ has sat down in the very presence of the Almighty.

Regarding Brother Bailey's comment that Jesus Christ is "no longer a man", presumably meaning in his glorified state, this raises an interesting question. He is not a mortal man any more, but Scripture makes the following statements about the glorified Lord: "Hereafter shall the *Son of man* sit on the right hand of the power of God" (Lk. 22:69); "but this *man*, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:12).

Moving to the aspect of Christ having sons, Hebrews 2 is surely speaking of the sons or the children of God of whom Christ is one: "I will declare Thy name unto my *brethren*, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee . . . Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his *brethren*, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (vv. 12,17).

The link made with the Last Supper and the prince sitting and eating bread presents difficulties. Christ desired to share the Last Supper with his disciples; the prince sits alone to eat bread in the east gate.

Brother Bailey says: "Those who cannot accept that Christ in the future will 'prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock for a sin offering' (45:22) have forgotten that this will not be to take away sin". I would agree that it will not take away sin, but Ezekiel does tell us why the prince makes offerings in 45:15,17: it is to make reconciliation for the house of Israel, and the prince is part of the house of Israel. This is why he offers "for *himself* and for all the people". This cannot apply to Christ. The phrase "the house of Israel" of whom the prince is a part refers to the mortal nation of Israel. Ezekiel states: "For in Mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve Me: there will I accept them, *and there will I require your offerings*, and the first-fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things" (20:40). Again, this cannot apply to Christ.

Geoff Cave

Another reader has directed our attention to some comments by Brother Thomas in *Elpis Israel*, in dealing with the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 22:15,16). Brother Thomas comments on this passage:

"The passover must be restored before it can be eaten of by Christ and his apostles in the kingdom of God. This is one of the things to be re-established at 'the restitution of all things'; and the law of its restoration is in the following words: 'In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. And upon that day shall (Messiah) the Prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock for a sin-offering' [Ezek. 45:21,22]. This was spoken by the prophet to Israel of the fourteenth generation, concerning the observance of the passover by Israel of the generation contemporary with the 'restoration of the kingdom again to Israel', when it should be constituted under the Prince . . . When Ezekiel's passover is observed at Jerusalem, Christ will

be there, the apostles also, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, and many from the four winds of heaven . . . celebrating their own redemption, and the overthrow of all their enemies by the Lord Jesus at his revelation in flaming fire, attended by the angels of his power".¹

Our correspondent also suggests that readers should read the section of Brother Henry Sulley's book *The Temple of Ezekiel's Prophecy* entitled, "The eastern side for the Prince", which presents arguments for the prince being Jesus Christ. In connection with the topic covered in the quotation from Brother Thomas, he draws attention to the following words of Brother Sulley:

"For Jesus Christ as *prince* to take part with his people in such offerings [those referred to in Ezekiel 45 and 46] seems almost impossible to those who are misled by prejudice arising out of traditional theology. The idea of an immortalized Son of God being charged with any such business is to them inconceivable. They also may feel equally shocked at the idea of Jesus returning to the earth, and 'eating bread and drinking wine'. Yet we have seen that Jesus will do this in the kingdom of God, because the pledged word of Jesus cannot be gainsaid. Accepting His evidence, than which there can be no greater, the Lord Jesus will again eat of the passover lamb which is to be offered by Himself as PRINCE over Israel".²—T.B.

"As newborn babes . . ."

Thank you to Sister Valerie Pinfield (Sept. 2002, p. 343) for the scientific reasons for what we already knew—our Father's way is always best, even though it often seems in our weakness and weariness that another way is easier.

Breast-feeding is an experience that brings a sister closer to understanding the feelings of our heavenly Father expressed in the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget,

1. 1958 edition, p. 297.

2. 1921 edition, p. 89. The whole section about the prince is on pages 84-90. According to our correspondent, the words quoted are on page 183 of the 1981 edition, with the section about the prince beginning on page 174.