



The temple to be built upon Mount Zion

Dennis M. Elliott

THE TEMPLE rebuilt under the leadership of Zerubbabel fulfilled the compelling need for a house of worship that was able to centralise and systematise the religious beliefs and practices of the Israelites returned from captivity in Babylon. Following its completion, "all such as had separated themselves . . . from the filthiness of the heathen of the land . . . kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful" (Ezra 6:21,22).

Later, Ezra, delightfully described as "a ready scribe in the law of Moses" (7:6), and a most devout man, was intent upon re-establishing the returned exiles upon the firm foundations of the precepts and principles of the Law delivered to Moses at Sinai by God: "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (v. 10). However, with his deep conscious rectitude and spiritual perception, he was able to see that all was not well in the land, because some of the Israelites had wrongly intermarried with their heathen neighbours. This impelled him to make fervent supplication to God on behalf of the people, who, realising the error of their ways, heeded his chastening word: "Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do His pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives" (10:11).

This fervent appeal by Ezra had a salutary effect upon the remorseful people, who responded by saying: "As thou hast said, so must we do" (v. 12). And so "they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass" (v. 19). It was a time of re-education in the Law given to the people of Israel by their God.

Ezra, as a scribe, had a comprehensive knowledge of all facets of the Law, besides which he had the voice of authority that commanded the attention and respect of the people: "And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law . . . Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner" (Neh. 8:13,18).

The returned exiles were a people ready to make amends for their lapse of faith, showing genuine contrition as they spontaneously confessed that they had done wrong in the sight of their God in departing from His laws. That they were now a repentant people is conveyed in the beseeching words of the Levites to the God of Israel: "Howbeit Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for Thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept Thy law, nor hearkened unto Thy commandments and Thy testimonies, wherewith Thou didst testify against them . . . And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it" (9:33,34,38).

Reconciling Jew and Gentile

In our own day, in a world where there is widespread anti-Semitism, we know from the prophetic Word that the miracle of reconciliation between Jew and Gentile will take place when Christ the King takes to himself the reins of world government. He will bring Jew and Gentile together in a way never known before, with both peoples joining in worship in the temple upon

Mount Zion and learning of God and Jesus Christ, so long disregarded by the peoples of the world. The reconciliation between Jew and Gentile in the uniting bonds of the Christian faith, in which was “broken down the middle wall of partition” (Eph. 2:14), will be perfected and finalised when Jesus Christ returns in power and glory and is enthroned in Jerusalem.

That lovely concept, “the times of restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21), might be nearer than we imagine. It will be a time when the Jewish people will see in Jesus their true Messiah and will lament their rejection of him: “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zech. 12:10).

It will be mandatory for all those nations that have taken part in the invasion of Israel as detailed in Ezekiel 38—nations such as Russia, Iran, Libya and Ethiopia, and others with them, all noted for their anti-Semitism over a period of time—to “go up to . . . the house of the God of Jacob” to learn of “His ways” and to “walk in His paths” (Mic. 4:2). This is conveyed in the prophecy of Zechariah: “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles” (14:16). This inescapable requirement is mentioned three times in Zechariah 14 and also includes “all the families of the earth” (v. 17). It will be remembered that the Feast of Tabernacles was one of the great festivals under the Mosaic Law, covering a period of seven days, with the daily offering of sacrifices.

This is clearly a pointing back to the Mosaic Law, which required animal sacrifices, on the principle, “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). Just as elements of the tabernacle and Mosaic Law envisaged the coming of Jesus Christ and the new covenant, so there is a corresponding reflecting back to the old covenant in the sacrifices to take place in the temple on Mount Zion. This is to be part of the learning process that the invading forces alluded to in Ezekiel 38 will have to go through, the Law being the “schoolmaster” to bring them “unto Christ” (Gal. 3:24), bearing in mind that Jesus said: “Think not that I am come to destroy the

law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Mt. 5:17).

Those who think that there will be no animal sacrifices in the coming temple upon Mount Zion seem to do so upon the basis of what is written in the Epistle to the Hebrews concerning the substitution of the new covenant, involving the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, for the old covenant and the priests “daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins” (10:11). Those holding this view feel encouraged by what the writer of this epistle (whom many of us believe to be Paul) says: “Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law . . . He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (vv. 8-10).

It should be realised, however, that “once for all” does not mean all and sundry, but rather those who come to God through Christ’s saving name. Jesus himself said: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned [condemned]” (Mk. 16:16). And we know the truth of the words of the Apostle John, who wrote, “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 Jno. 5:19).

A house of prayer

Isaiah says of the Gentiles: “even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar; for Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people” (56:7).

The matter of the reinstatement of sacrifices and offerings in the temple to be built upon Mount Zion is interestingly portrayed in Brother Henry Sulley’s book, *The Temple of Ezekiel’s Prophecy*. His book shows that the Biblical references to the offerings and sacrifices in the new temple upon Mount Zion are too specific and clear to be anything else but literal. The prophecy of Jeremiah leaves us in no doubt in this regard, for he writes: “For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually” (33:17,18). Brother Sulley also quotes from the prophecy of Ezekiel, which says: “And He said unto me, Son of man, thus

saith the Lord GOD; These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon" (43:18).

Brother C. C. Walker writes in *The Ministry of the Prophets: Isaiah*:

"The Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall *do sacrifice* and oblation' (Isa. xix. 21). That is in the day of Christ when Assyria and Egypt are blessed with Israel. The righteous 'sons of the stranger' and eunuchs, 'even them', saith God, 'will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer . . .'" (p. 701).

Brother Walker presents further evidence in regard to sacrifices to be made in the coming temple:

"In [Ezekiel's] last nine chapters the details of the 'house of prayer for all peoples' are very elaborately specified, as also are all the ordinances of the house. Among these is provision for sacrifice, both for the Prince and for the people. Chapter xlvi. provides for the entry of the Prince by the east gate; 'and the priests shall prepare *his burnt offering* and his peace offering, and he shall worship' (verse 2). His offering on the sabbath 'shall be *six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish*' (verse 4). 'Thou shalt daily prepare a burnt offering unto the Lord of a lamb of the first year without blemish. Thou shalt prepare it every morning' (verse 13). In the corner courts are 'the places of them that boil, where the ministers of the house shall *boil the sacrifices of the people*' (verse 24)" (p. 702, italics as in the original).

Jerusalem will become the focus of worship for all peoples who, because of the tremendous impression that Jesus Christ's righteous and peaceful reign has made upon them, will willingly present themselves at the temple—Jews and Gentiles alike—to worship God and Christ the King. In the course of their conversion to the laws and ways of God and the teachings of Christ, we are told that "it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the LORD" (Isa. 66:23). How truly exhilarating the singing will be in the temple as the worshippers from all nations, under choirmaster Asaph, raise their voices in a crescendo of joyful sound as they sing praise, glory and honour to God and to Christ the King!

In My holy mountain

In our mind's eye we are able to gain a glimpse of the wonderful sight of Jews and Gentiles appearing together in the temple upon Mount Zion as they make solemn expiation for their long neglect of God's laws and the precepts of Jesus Christ. It will be a time of heartfelt repentance, remorse and sacrificial worship by people intent upon making amends for times devoted to worldly pursuits and allurements in which there was no peace of mind or salvation. It will be a time of spiritual education for all those as yet unconverted in the laws of God and the precepts of Jesus, as they go up to the temple for instruction in the principles of righteousness, principles that will enable them to walk in His ways, as envisaged in the prophecy of Isaiah:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (2:2,3).

We can rest assured that all things ordained by our heavenly Father will, in His great love and mercy, come to pass, for the Apostle Peter declared: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). We can well imagine what moving scenes of sincere repentance and worship there will be in the temple upon Mount Zion.

The coming temple is, of course, a Jewish one, for it is described as "the house of the God of Jacob" (Isa. 2:3), and will be located at Jerusalem. It is there that the Jewish people, the only people with whom God made an irrevocable covenant, will turn to Him in humble repentance and worship, as befitting the descendants of their faithful fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: "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" (Ezek. 20:40).

The miracle of Jewish conversion from unbelief to a deep and abiding faith in their God and in their true Messiah and King, Jesus Christ, will be plain for all peoples to see: "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever" (Isa. 59:20,21).

In the mercy and love of God the "times of refreshing" will surely come for His chosen people, "the times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:19,21), when a repented, restored and sanctified Israel will become "the head, and not the tail" of the nations (Deut. 28:13), a time foreseen in the prophecy of Zechariah: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (8:23). The Jewish people will assume the moral leadership of the nations, no longer despised

and discriminated against, but admired and respected as the people of God, and worthy of emulation by all the nations.

The truly wonderful picture before us is completed in the portrayal of Christ the King enthroned in the temple upon Mount Zion: "Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne" (6:12,13).

The nature of the incomparable reward that awaits the faithful children of God and followers of Jesus Christ is conveyed to us in those truly exhilarating words of Jesus that should encourage us and stimulate our faith as together we walk towards the Kingdom in prayerful expectation of his return. Jesus said: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21). What a truly wonderful privilege and joy it will be for the saints as they assist in bringing "many people" to an understanding of the laws of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ! "Even so, come, Lord Jesus".

Referendum—yes or no?

Arthur East

OVER THE PAST fifty years members of our community in the Western world have experienced a developing sense of personal freedom, brought about by relative security, higher educational opportunity and society's greater sense of personal rights. Increasingly we seem to have a political point of view. This is often centred on the family. We comment on what we would and would not wish our children or grandchildren to experience, and attempt to shield them, in an artificial way, from perceived dangers.

These attitudes and this level of political awareness, however, make it easy for us to step into direct political involvement. We would do well to consider where we stand on this before the next politically charged issue is placed before us.

We are yet again entering a situation of change, and choices will have to be made. Pressure is on the British Government from its European part-

ners, from some sections of British business and from the need for political uniformity, to discard sterling in favour of the euro. Some may see the political implications of this change, others think it will merely be an inconvenience. Some may see this change as being beneficial when going on holiday or travelling in European countries, whilst many in business think a common currency will bring financial advantages and reduce administration costs.

In order to transfer the responsibility for any unpleasant side effect, Parliament will ask the British people to vote on which they would prefer. This poses the question as to whether we, as brethren and sisters of Christ, should take part in such a decision, or whether there is a higher power involved to which we have to defer.

When we discuss God's involvement in earth-bound political issues, two overall principles appear to come into play: