

Bible Study Notes

Thursday, October 5th, 2017 - First Day - Feast of Tabernacles

Ezekiel and John's Vision of the World Tomorrow

From time to time during this Feast, Mr. Kalliman has found our cat Smokey sitting on his bed. On these occasions he has gently picked her up and deposited her outside the bedroom door. This repeated action has sparked some thoughts in his mind relating to the Bible and the Feast of Tabernacles - it has reminded him of the times when God miraculously "transported" several of His servants from one location to another, in order to give them a vision of the World Tomorrow.

Ezek. 40:1-2

God "transported" Ezekiel, in vision, from Babylon to Jerusalem. This occurred 25 years after he became a captive and 14 years — to the very day — after Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem and God's holy temple. Notice, God placed Ezekiel on a very high mountain overlooking a city toward the south. This was a vision of the World Tomorrow, the "holy land," the area from which Jesus Christ will govern all nations on earth after His return (Jer. 3:17; Zech. 14:4, 9, 16; Luke 1:33; Rev. 11:15).

Jer. 52:12-14, 27

The vision of Ezekiel occurred on "the 10th of Ab" - the anniversary of the burning down of Jerusalem - exactly 14 years later.

Ezek. 40:3-4

These chapters (Ezekiel 40-48) have been studied extensively. They are very detailed. Scholars and Bible students have been able to take what's written here and make precise models of the temple grounds and buildings. Beautiful artists' conceptions have been rendered.

Ezek. 1:1-3

Ezekiel was 30 years old when he began receiving visions from God. He was a priest, at the age when a priest began performing his duties.

Ezek. 8:1-5

Notice, God took hold of Ezekiel by a lock of his hair and "transported" him to Jerusalem in vision.

Ezek. 11:14-25

This is part of the same vision which began in chapter 8 - God said He would never lose track of Israel and Judah, even while they were scattered throughout the countries of the Gentiles (Amos 9:8-15). The vision is brought down to our time and the days immediately ahead. God will give the people who are destined to become the first generation of the World Tomorrow a soft, pliable and workable heart, so they will listen to His way of life. He will forgive their sins and bring them into the bond of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34).

Ezekiel wrote the book of Ezekiel but did not travel around the world as his contemporary Jeremiah did (Jer. 25). God gave Ezekiel visions AS IF he were going all around, but he

actually spent the whole time near the river Chebar with the Jewish captives. How, then, did this book get into the Bible?

Ezek. 14:14, 20

Ezekiel and Daniel knew each other. Daniel was in the Babylonian captivity, as was Ezekiel (Dan. 1:1-6). Daniel was placed in charge of the main library at Babylon, where books from all over the world were brought from lands which Nebuchadnezzar had conquered. After Ezekiel had written what is now the book of Ezekiel, Daniel received it and included it with the other sacred Hebrew writings. When Daniel was old (for he lived a long time in captivity, serving Babylonian and Persian kings), he gave the Hebrew scrolls to Ezra, a young descendant of Aaron (the high priest) who was a skillful scholar in the Word of God (Ezra 7:1-6). During the Persian period Ezra traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem and was used by God to organize and canonize the books of the Hebrew Bible (including the Law, the Prophets and the Writings). Ezra set them in proper order and added clarifying comments to the text.

Ezek. 40:1

So, in the 25th year of Ezekiel's captivity (which was the captivity of king Jehoiachin), 14 years to the day after Jerusalem was smitten by Nebuchadnezzar's army, Ezekiel received this wonderful vision of the World Tomorrow, portraying the time when Israel will be restored and the Messiah will rule the world from the throne of David! New Jerusalem will be the headquarters of Jesus Christ during the millennium and beyond (Isa. 65:18-19; Jer. 3:17; Joel 3:20; Zech. 14:9, 16).

Ezek. 43:1-12

The general landscape of the temple is described in chapters 40-42. Ezekiel's vantage point is from the eastern gate of the temple. What Ezekiel wrote in chapters 40-48 of his book go hand-in-hand with what the apostle John wrote in chapters 20-22 of the book of Revelation. God will restore His laws and ways over Israel and all other nations in the World Tomorrow (Isa. 2:1-5). Christ's government on earth will proceed from Jerusalem.

Animal sacrifices will be restored (v. 18-27). Paul mentioned that the Old Testament sacrificial system and Levitical priesthood were "tutors" to bring people to Christ (Gal. 3:24-25; 4:1-2). Christ's one sacrifice has replaced the animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:11-14) and His high priesthood has replaced the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 7:11-14). The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament will be reinstated in order to teach people the importance of Christ's sacrifice in the World Tomorrow (I John 2:1-2).

Ezek. 44:5-24

Any "priests" - ministers purporting to represent God - who have gone off track and stubbornly refused to administer God's government properly in this age will not be allowed to "enter into the temple" and perform their duties in the World Tomorrow (e.g., Matt. 21:43, 45; Heb. 7:11-12). They'll be demoted to positions of "gatekeepers." But, "the sons of Zadok" - an expression representing those who are loyal to God's government in this age (who will become the saints of the first resurrection) - will be given positions close to God (Rev. 1:6, 5:10; 20:4-6). God describes them, how they will live and the rules of their conduct. Notice, they'll be teachers of God's law, showing people how to discern the difference between what's holy and what's not (Ezek. 44:23-24; Lev. 10:8-11; Mal. 2:7). Those who stay on the right track today will be rewarded with high positions in the World Tomorrow. Jesus will reward everyone according to their works.

Ezekiel 45 is a description of the "holy district" where New Jerusalem will be located.

Ezek. 46:1-3, 6, 9-12

People will observe the weekly Sabbath and God's annual holy days in the World Tomorrow! This is in stark contrast to what is commonly practiced in today's world.

Ezek. 47:1-12

This chapter describes healing waters proceeding from God's temple in the World Tomorrow. As Ezekiel walks farther away from the temple, the water gets deeper and deeper. By the time he gets a little over a mile from the temple, the water is deep enough to swim across. On either side of the river are many health-and-life-giving trees - you can read about these trees in the Book of Revelation. They are "trees of life" that bring healing!

Rev. 8:8-9; 16:3; 21:1, 5; 22:1-2

Before the end of this age, everything in the water will die. But, life will be restored by these healing waters! No wonder the World Tomorrow will be a "new heaven and earth" - life will be restored to this planet on a massive scale!

Ezek. 47:12-48:35

After the healing waters section, the story flow of Ezekiel's vision turns to the allotment of the land. This is what God meant when He promised the land to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants in the book of Genesis (verses 13-14). The description starts at the northern end and works its way toward the south. Seven tribes will be situated in the northern sector of restored Israel (Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben and Judah). Then, it describes the holy district and the city/temple area in detail. It proceeds to the five tribes situated in the southern sector (Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun and Gad). It finishes with the gates that will lead into the city, situated in the holy district south of the temple. The name of the city will be "The LORD is there." God's presence will be in the New Jerusalem. It will be the headquarters of the earth during the World Tomorrow and beyond.

2 Cor. 12:1-10

The apostle Paul, like Ezekiel, also received visions from God and was seemingly "transported" up to the third heaven of God's throne. The visions were so realistic that Paul couldn't tell if he was literally in heaven or not. He "boasted" throughout chapters 10-12 because many church members had stopped believing that he was an apostle (many say this about Herbert Armstrong today). Paul "boasted" so that they wouldn't forget that he was an apostle. In this section Paul talks about the many visions and revelations he had been given. Paul is obviously talking about himself in this section, although he doesn't state that directly (just as the apostle John never mentioned his name in connection with things pertaining to himself in his gospel). Jesus kept Paul humble by giving him a "thorn in the flesh" so as not to allow him to be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations he had received.

Rev. 1:1-3, 9-11

The apostle John was projected, in vision, to the time pictured by the fall holy days. Like Paul, he was "transported" up to heaven to receive this vision (Rev. 4:1)

Rev. 21:1-3, 9-27; 22:1-21

The concluding chapters of Revelation are obviously talking about the same things as the closing chapters of Ezekiel. These two sections of Scripture were clearly meant to be harmonized and understood together. The measurement of Rev. 21:16 may be translated

“twelve furlongs, twelve thousand paces,” as found in the Lamsa translation based on the Aramaic text.

The vision given to the apostle John ends with verse 5 of chapter 22. The remaining verses of chapter 22 are a commentary on what John has seen. Jesus will come “quickly.” The time is near. A thousand years are as a day to God (II Peter 3:8). The almost two-thousand-year period which has followed the time of Jesus and the original apostles isn’t really all that long - just two “millennial days.” If you want to be in the World Tomorrow, keep God’s commandments (22:14)! Stay connected to God (John 15:1-8).

If you are alive at the end of this age and want to live into the World Tomorrow which is pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles, you must pass through the coming historical time period pictured by the Days of Trumpets and Atonement. That’s what verses 14-15, in context, mean. Believe the Word of God. Obey God’s commandments. Don’t be rebellious against the government of God. God will soon separate the righteous from the wicked on earth (verse 11; Matt. 13:36-43, 47-50; II Peter 3:10-13).