

The Altar: A Sign of Hope

Key Verse: *“When these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord GOD.”*
—Ezekiel 43:27

Selected Scripture:
Ezekiel 43:13-21

and an hand breadth; even the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about shall be a span.”—Ezek. 43:13

The focus of this study is related to the altar, which is the only piece of furniture listed in the temple described by Ezekiel. Throughout the Bible, altars and their use are mentioned many times. They were utilized as a means of offering sacrifices, sometimes for sin-atonement or

AS NOTED IN OUR PREVIOUS lesson, the book of Ezekiel contains references to Christ’s reign during the Millennium. The overall symbolism in the latter portion of this prophecy deals with a temple arrangement and how it will operate in the future. This depiction would certainly provide a sense of hope and encouragement for the Jewish people that at some future time, Israel would once again be favored by God. This seems to be shown by Ezekiel’s vision of a new temple and his description of certain features of it. “These are the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit is a cubit

some other specific purpose. On other occasions, altars were used to make offerings simply as expressions of gratitude and thanksgiving to God. It is, therefore, likely that the altar herein described in our lesson also is connected with sacrifice.

“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. And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord GOD, a young bullock for a sin offering.”—vss. 18,19

In these and succeeding verses there is a description of a dedication ceremony relative to the altar. This is reminiscent of typical arrangements as described in the book of Leviticus, in which the Aaronic priesthood was first consecrated. Then, after the Atonement Day sacrifices were complete, typical of the sacrificial offerings of Christ and his footstep followers during the present age, the people were permitted to bring their offerings, which the priests accepted on their behalf.

It seems likely in the account relative to Ezekiel’s vision of a future temple that the “young bullock for a sin offering” also pictures Christ Jesus, who offered himself to take away the sin of the world caused by Adam’s disobedience. Additionally, there was one goat offered as a sin offering on each of seven successive days. Perhaps that might picture the seven stages of the development of the church. Their offering, included as a part of Christ’s sin-offering during this present antitypical Atonement Day, will pave the way for the benefits of the ransom to be applied during the kingdom.

Our Key Verse contains hope and encouragement for all who will then recognize that, based upon God’s wisdom, justice, love and power, a way will have been found for their recovery and restoration into a covenant relationship with their Creator. ■