

Taking the Future Literally

**The Importance of a Literal Interpretation
of Ezekiel's Temple (Ezekiel 40-48)**

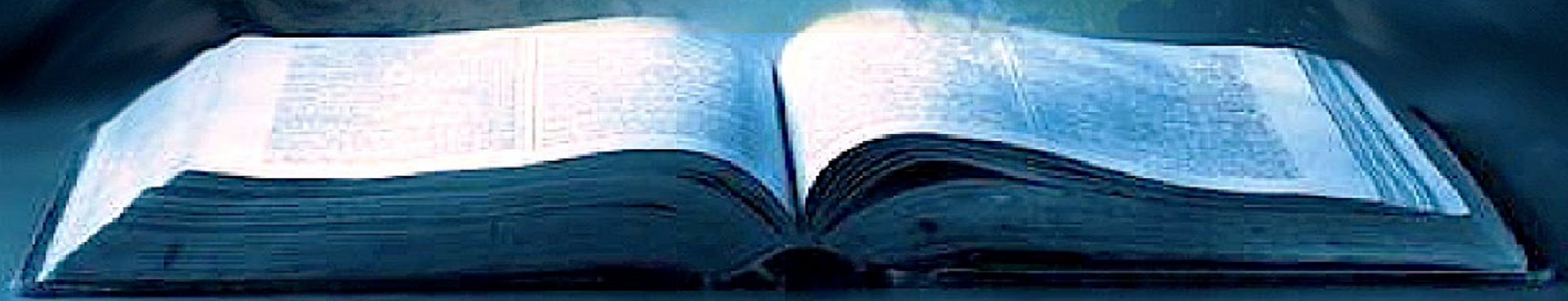


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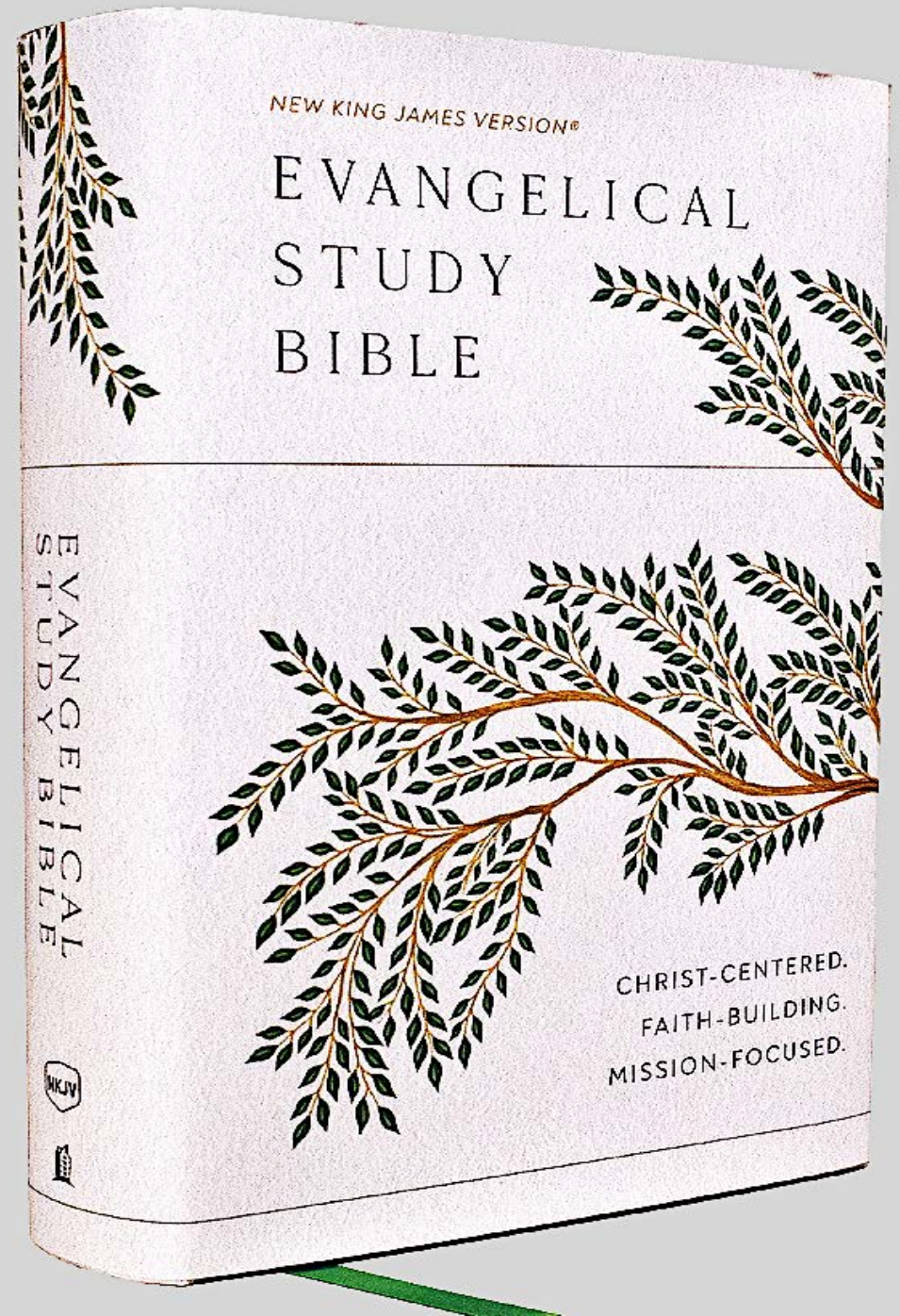


Special Creation
Young Earth
Literal Adam & Eve
Global Flood

Dispensational
Pre-Tribulation
Premillennial

Messianic Focus

Over 100 Full-color
Archaeological notes



MARK HITCHCOCK

Foreword

**WHAT SHOULD
WE THINK ABOUT
ISRAEL?**

J. RANDALL PRICE

General Editor

*Separating Fact from Fiction
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**Leading scholars in the U.S., Israel,
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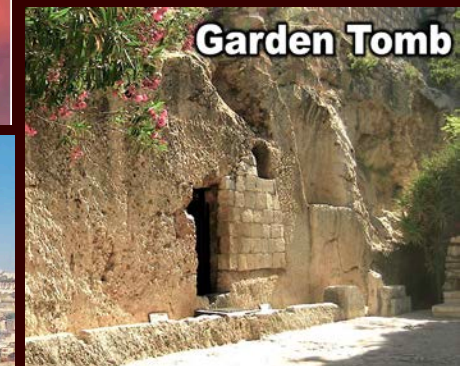


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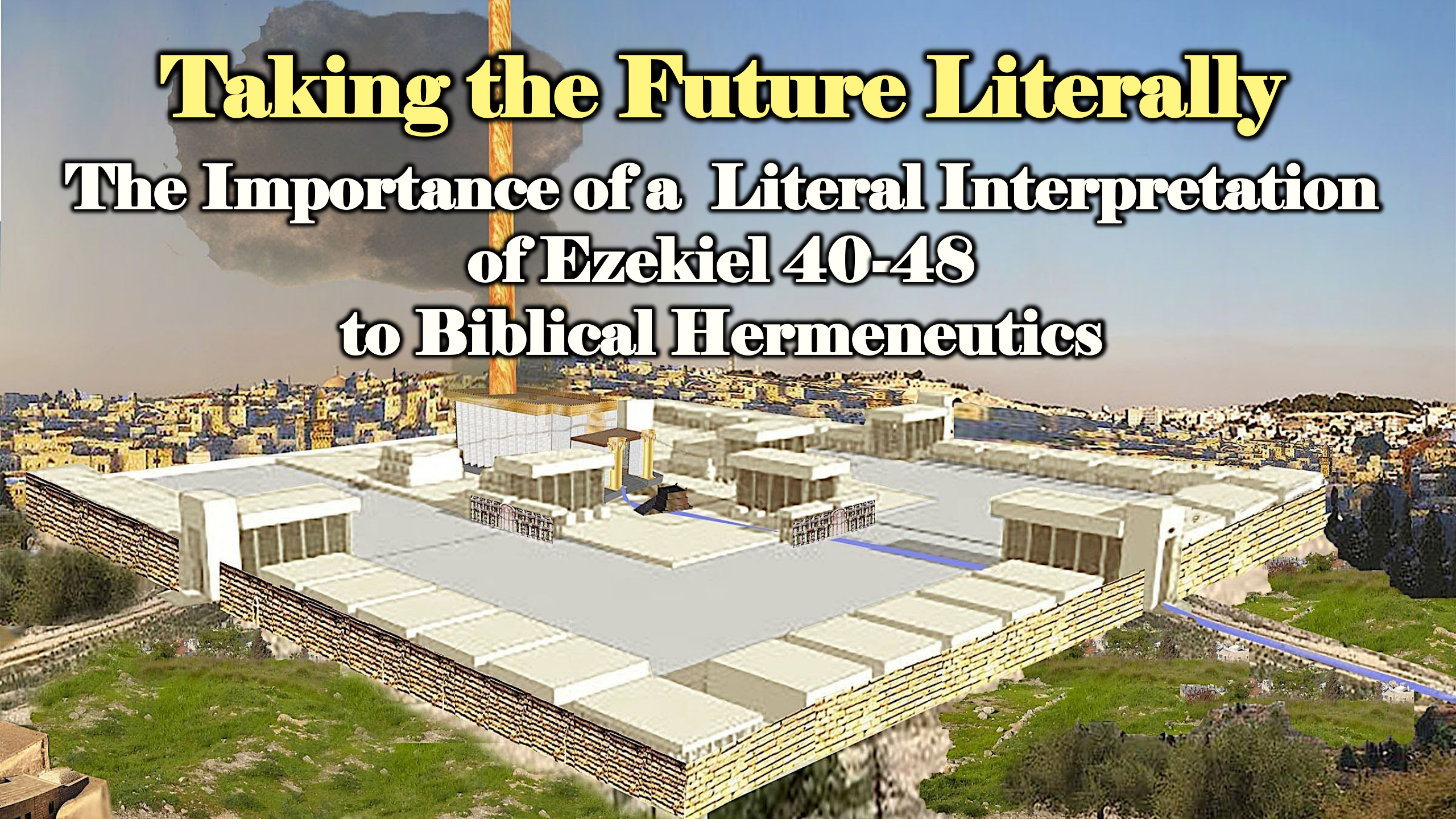
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Taking the Future Literally

**The Importance of a Literal Interpretation
of Ezekiel 40-48
to Biblical Hermeneutics**





Solomon



Zerubbabel/Herod

Which Temple?



Church



Millennial

The Dispensational Interpretation

“... the concluding chapters of Ezekiel form a kind of continental divide in the area of Biblical interpretation. It is one of the areas where the literal interpretation of the Bible and the spiritualizing or allegorizing method diverge widely. Here amillennialists and premillennialists are poles apart. When thirty-nine chapters of Ezekiel can be treated seriously as well as literally, there is no valid reason *a priori* for treating this large division of the book in an entirely different manner.”

Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*, 233.

What the Critics Claim: A Literal Interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48 is Unscriptural

“It is impossible to interpret Ezekiel 40-48 in a strictly literal manner in reference to a future millennium without denying the clear teaching of Hebrews on the final sacrifice of Christ. To do so introduces a contradiction into Scripture ...”

Keith A. Mathison, *Dispensationalism: Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995), 7-8.

Premillennial Concession to Non-Literal Interpretation

"There are things in it so improbable physically as to preclude a purely literal interpretation ... The ideal temple exhibits ... the essential character of the worship of Messiah as it shall be when He shall exercise sway in Jerusalem among His own people, the Jews, and thence to the ends of the earth ... Though the writer believes in an earthly millennium, he does not see its temple as purely literal."

A.R. Fausset, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (1870), 4:356

Getting the Big Picture

Why is There a Difference of Interpretation Among Christians?



A cosmic landscape featuring a person standing on a dark, rocky mountain peak. The background is a vast, swirling blue and white nebula or galaxy, set against a dark starry sky. A crescent moon is visible in the upper left corner. The overall scene is ethereal and majestic.

Two Models for Interpreting Eschatology

1) Spiritual Vision Model

2) New Creation Model

Each presents a different way of seeing eternal life
— what it will be like and where it will be lived.

Spiritual Vision Model

In the Spiritual Vision Model, heaven is seen as the place where believers in Christ are destined to live forever. It is a non-earthly spiritual place where believers will exist as spiritual beings engaging in spiritual activities. It is a realm of spirit and not of matter. This belief that the final dwelling place of Christians is in an ethereal heaven The Spiritual Vision Model has been the dominant view of eternal life for centuries. The church fathers who contributed to this model were influenced heavily by classical Greek philosophers like Plato. Origen, who came from Alexandria, a center for Greek philosophy, founded the allegorical stream of hermeneutics and Augustine wrote his *City of God*, which symbolized faith, in contrast to the City of Man, which symbolized unbelief, that Heaven is the final home of the faithful.

New Creation Model

The New Creation Model is the opposite of the Spiritual Vision Model. This model emphasizes the physical, social, political, and geographical aspects of eternal life, as opposed to the Spiritual Vision Model. In this model, eternal life takes place on earth, instead of in some alternate, spiritual dimension. It focuses on the transformation of every aspect of our world including the physical, social, political, and economic dimensions. The resurrection body is a physical body designed to live in a material world. This accords with the scriptural emphases on redemption and regeneration. Just as believers are born again and growing until their regeneration and salvation are complete, the world at large will also be renewed and returned to its Edenic state. This was the Jewish and early Church view until the 3rd-century.



THE NEW CREATION MODEL

◆
A Paradigm for Discovering
God's Restoration Purposes from
Creation to New Creation

◆
MICHAEL J. VLACH

Divine Ideal - God With Man On Earth

**CREATION
(PHYSICAL)**

**RESTORATION TO
THE DIVINE IDEAL**

**CONSUMMATION
(PHYSICAL)**

Interruption of the divine ideal because of the Fall. The messianic promise comes to assure mankind of its future once redemption has been achieved.

The Church (Remnant of National Israel & Gentile Nations) Preserves the Divine Ideal under the New Covenant during the time of National Israel's temporary divine rejection (discipline)

Initial fulfillment for the Old Earth during the Millennial Kingdom
Final fulfillment for the New Earth during the Eternal State

Ezekiel 40-48 fits this model and assures National Israel of its future once national repentance toward Messiah has taken place.

The Future Kingdom of God

TWO DISTINCT PHASES

MILLENNIAL KINGDOM	ETERNAL KINGDOM
THE MESSIAH RULES FOR 1,000 YEARS ON THE PRESENT EARTH	THE TRIUNE GOD RULES FOREVER ON THE NEW EARTH

“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth ... and I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them and ... they will be priests of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.” **Rev. 5:10; 20:4, 6**

“then comes the end, when He (Christ) delivers up the Kingdom to the God and Father ...” **1 Cor. 15:24**

“the new heavens and new earth which I make will endure before Me ... all mankind will come to bow down before Me.” **Isa. 66:22, 23**

“there shall no longer be any curse; and the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it ...” **Rev. 22:3**

Interpretations of 40-48

Spiritual/Symbolic Interpretations

- **Apocalyptic/Present: The Idealized Temple**
- **Spiritual/Eternal: The Kingdom of God/New Jerusalem**
- **Symbolic/Present: The Church**

A Symbolic Temple?

- 1) Idealized (spiritual) temple to motivate post-exilic Jews.**
- 2) Figurative of the returned Israelite nation (438 BC).**
- 3) Symbol of Christ as the new temple (Jn. 2:21).**
- 4) Symbol of the Church on earth as the new spiritual temple (Eph. 2:21-22).**
- 5) Symbol of the Church in Heaven (Rev. 3:12).**
- 6) Figurative of the heavenly abode of God (Rev. 11:19).**
- 7) Symbol of the Heavenly City as abode of the saints and angels (Heb. 12:21-23).**
- 8) Figurative of the Eternal State (Rev. 7:15-17).**
- 9) Figurative of the New Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21-22).**
- 10) Figurative of holy conduct of believers indwelt by Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 6:16-18).**

If Ezekiel's Temple is a spiritual ideal or a spiritual reality, which one is it? No consensus exists as to what these symbols signify.

Why Cannot Ezekiel's Temple Be a Spiritual/Heavenly Reality?



Why Cannot Ezekiel's Temple Be a Spiritual/Heavenly Reality?



Interpretations of 40-48

Literal Interpretations

- **Literal/Historical: The First Temple**
- **Literal/Historical: Zerubbabel's Temple**
- **Literal/Historical: Herod's Temple**
- **Literal/Future: The Millennium Temple**

Why Didn't Post-Exilic Jews Build Ezekiel's Temple?

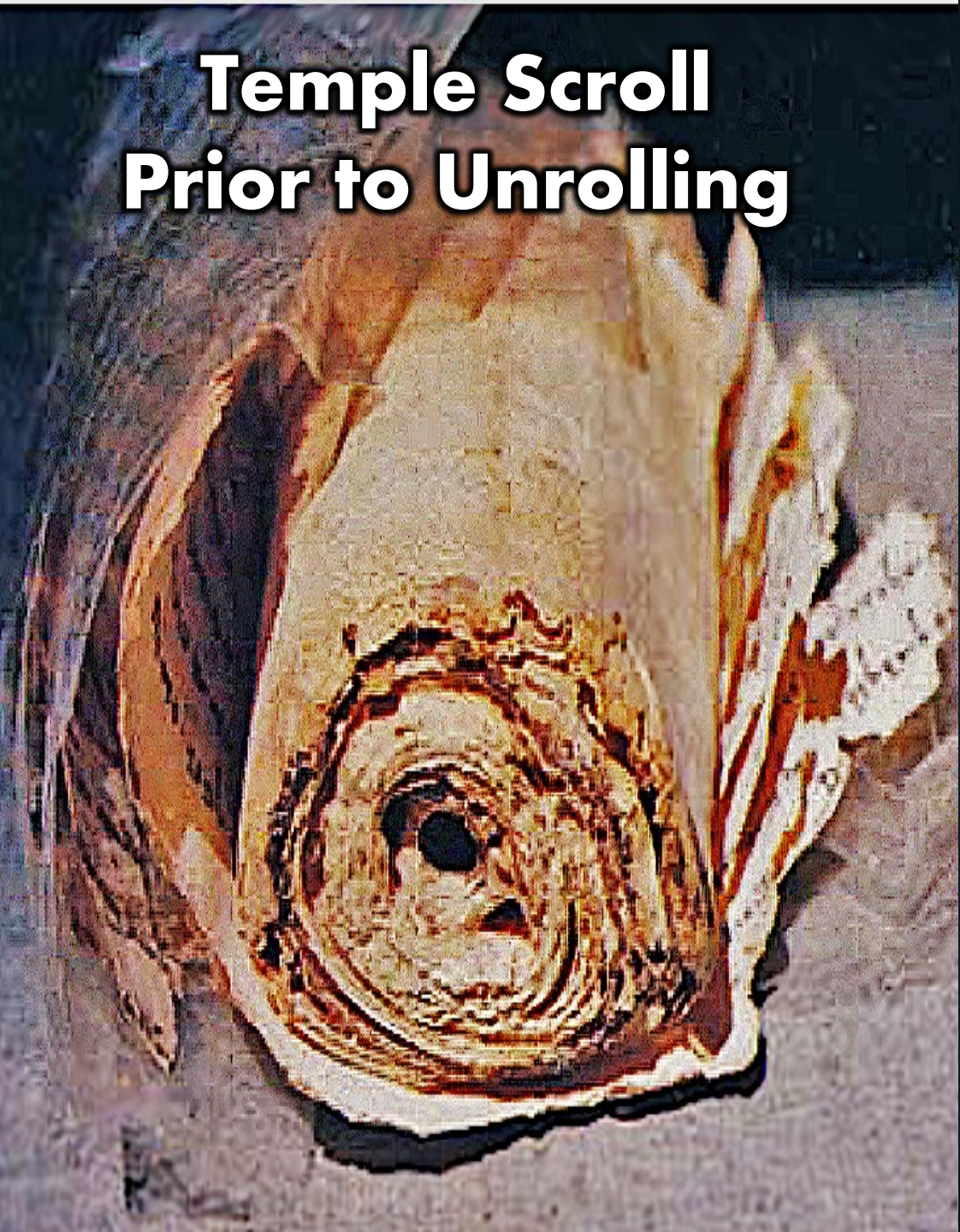
“Ezekiel’s vision of a new temple and a restored nation was not fulfilled in the postexilic period. How then should we expect the vision to be fulfilled? Scholars have answered this question in a variety of ways. On one end of the interpretive spectrum are those who see the vision as purely symbolic and as fulfilled in the New Testament church. On the opposite end are the hyper-literalists, who contend that the vision will be fulfilled exactly as described during the millennial age. In attempting to answer the question, one must first recognize that Ezekiel’s vision is contextualized for his sixth-century B.C. audience. He describes the reconciliation of God and his people in terms that would be meaningful to this audience. They would naturally conceive of such reconciliation as involving the rebuilding of the temple, the reinstatement of the sacrificial system, the renewal of the Davidic dynasty, and the return and reunification of the twelve exiled tribes. Since the fulfillment of the vision transcends these culturally conditioned boundaries, we should probably view it as idealized to some extent and look for an essential, rather than an exact fulfillment of many of its features.”

Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 285–286.

Why Didn't Post-Exilic Jews Build Ezekiel's Temple?

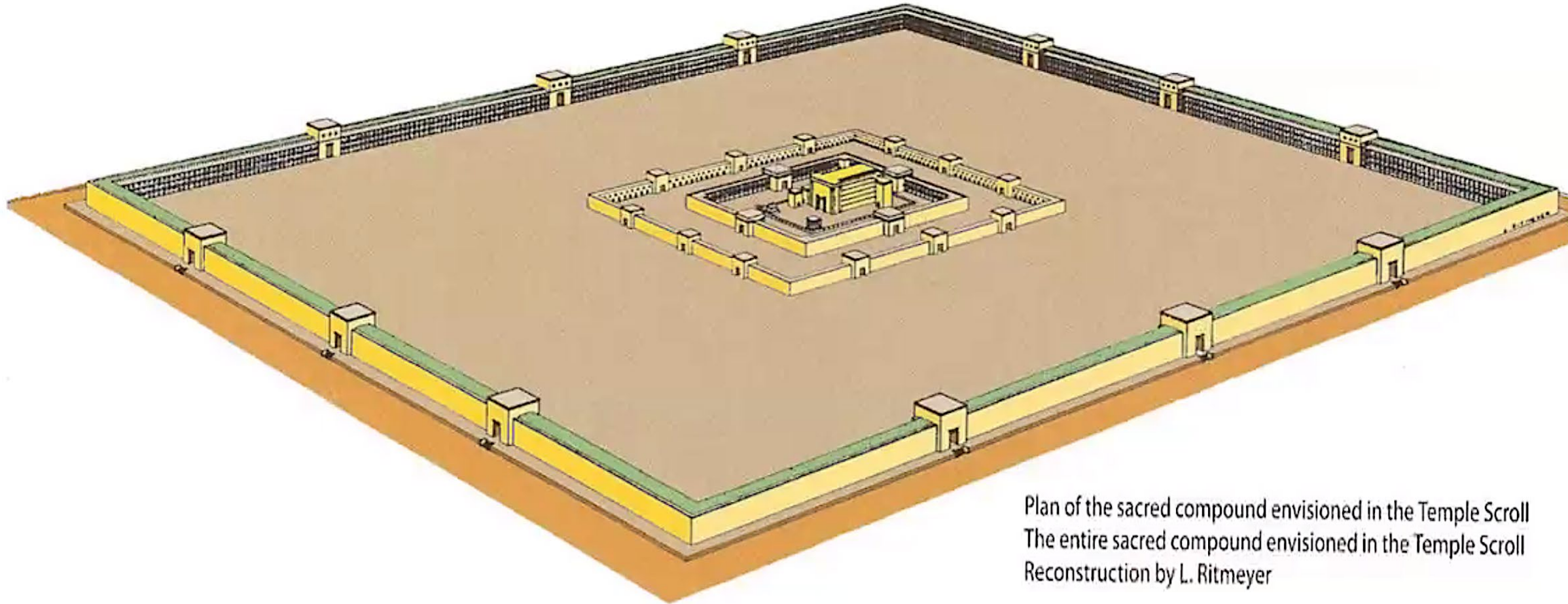
- 1) Building was not a priority for the post-exilic community.
- 2) They did not have the ability to build Ezekiel's Temple plan.
- 3) No fulfillment of restoration physically or spiritually.
- 4) Realized fulfillment was eschatological (for the End time).

**Temple Scroll
Prior to Unrolling**



Unrolled Temple Scroll

“And I will consecrate My [T]emple by My Glory (Shekinah), (the Temple) on which I will settle / My Glory, until the day of blessing (the End of Days) on which I will create My Temple / and establish it for Myself for all times, according to the covenant which I have made with Jacob at Bethel.” *11QTemple 29:8-10*

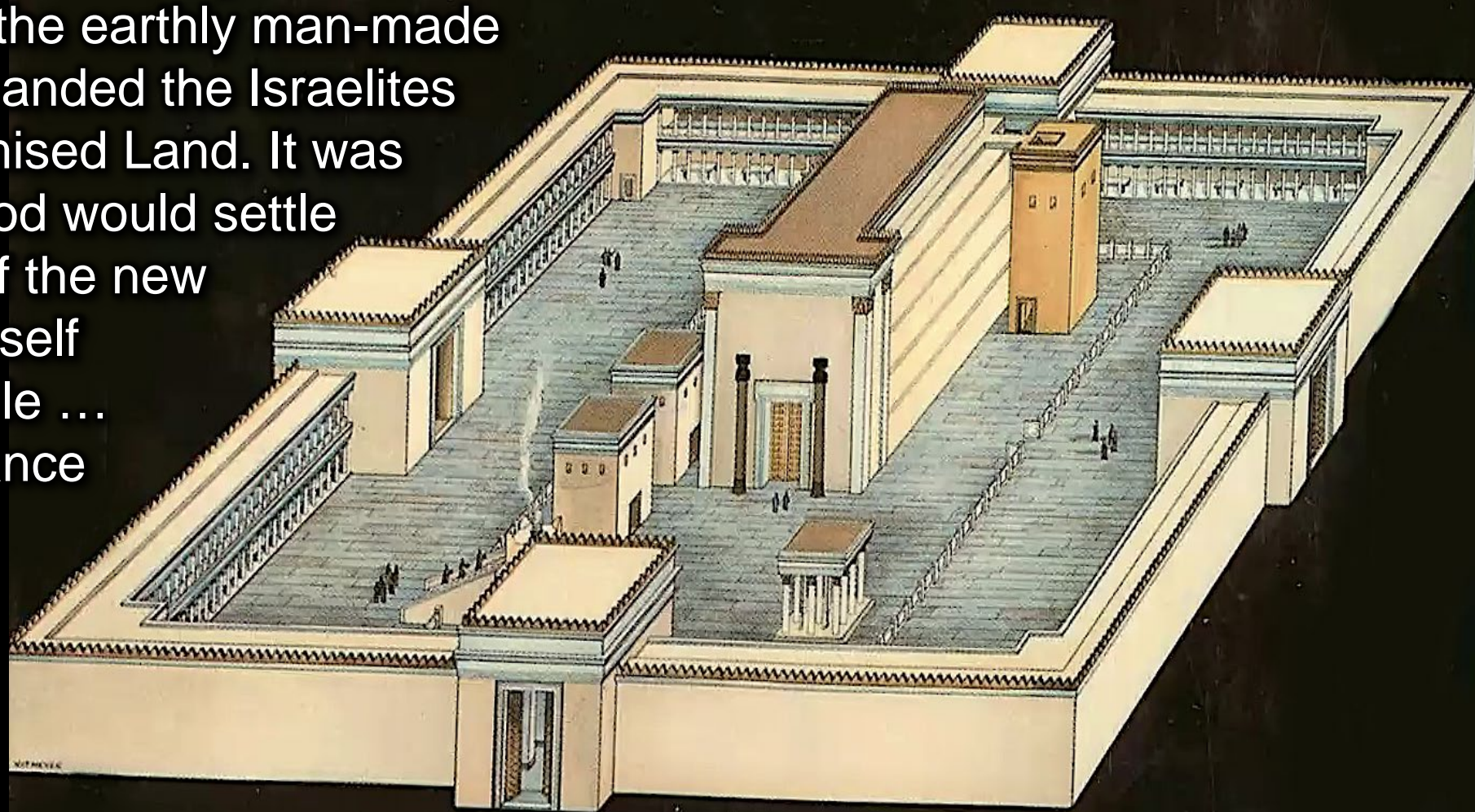


Plan of the sacred compound envisioned in the Temple Scroll
The entire sacred compound envisioned in the Temple Scroll
Reconstruction by L. Ritmeyer

The Temple of the Temple Scroll was Expected to be a Literal Construction

“The author [of the Temple Scroll] was definitely writing about the earthly man-made Temple that God commanded the Israelites to construct in the Promised Land. It was on this structure that God would settle his glory until the day of the new creation when God himself would "create my Temple ... for all times" in accordance with his covenant "with Jacob at Bethel.”

Yigael Yadin,
The Temple Scroll: The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect, 113



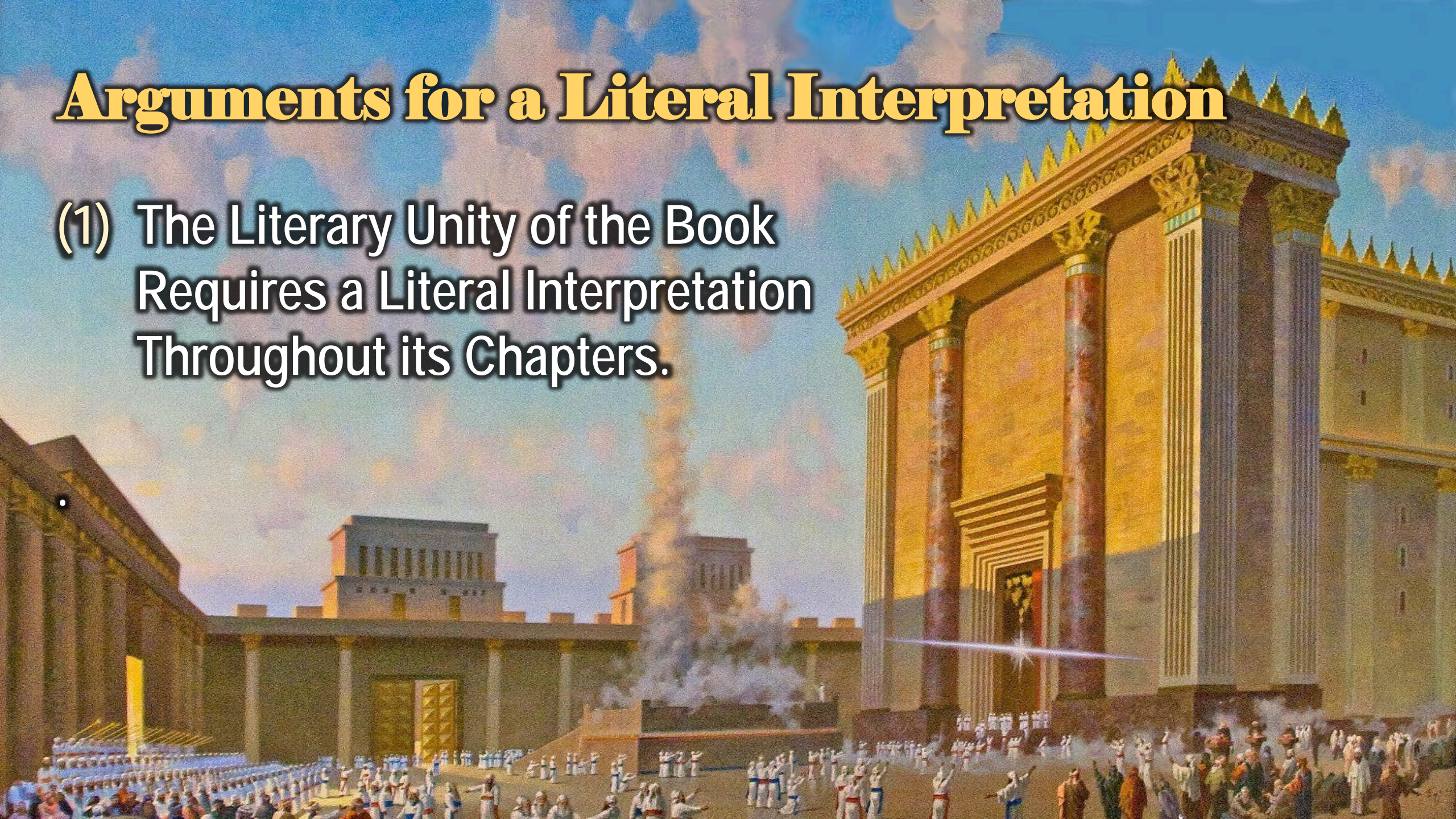
Arguments for a Literal Interpretation



- (1) The Literary Unity of the Book.
- (2) The Context of the Temple's Restoration.
- (3) The Detailed Design of the Temple.
- (4) The Description of the Shekinah's Departure and Return.
- (5) The Conditions of the Restoration Context.
- (6) The Harmony with other Old Testament Prophetic Passages.
- (7) The Requirement of Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple.

Arguments for a Literal Interpretation

(1) The Literary Unity of the Book
Requires a Literal Interpretation
Throughout its Chapters.



Literary Structure of Ezekiel's Prophecy

**Prophecy of the
Nation/Temple's Ruin
1-32**

Punishment Announced

Old Covenant

**Land, Temple
Priests, King**

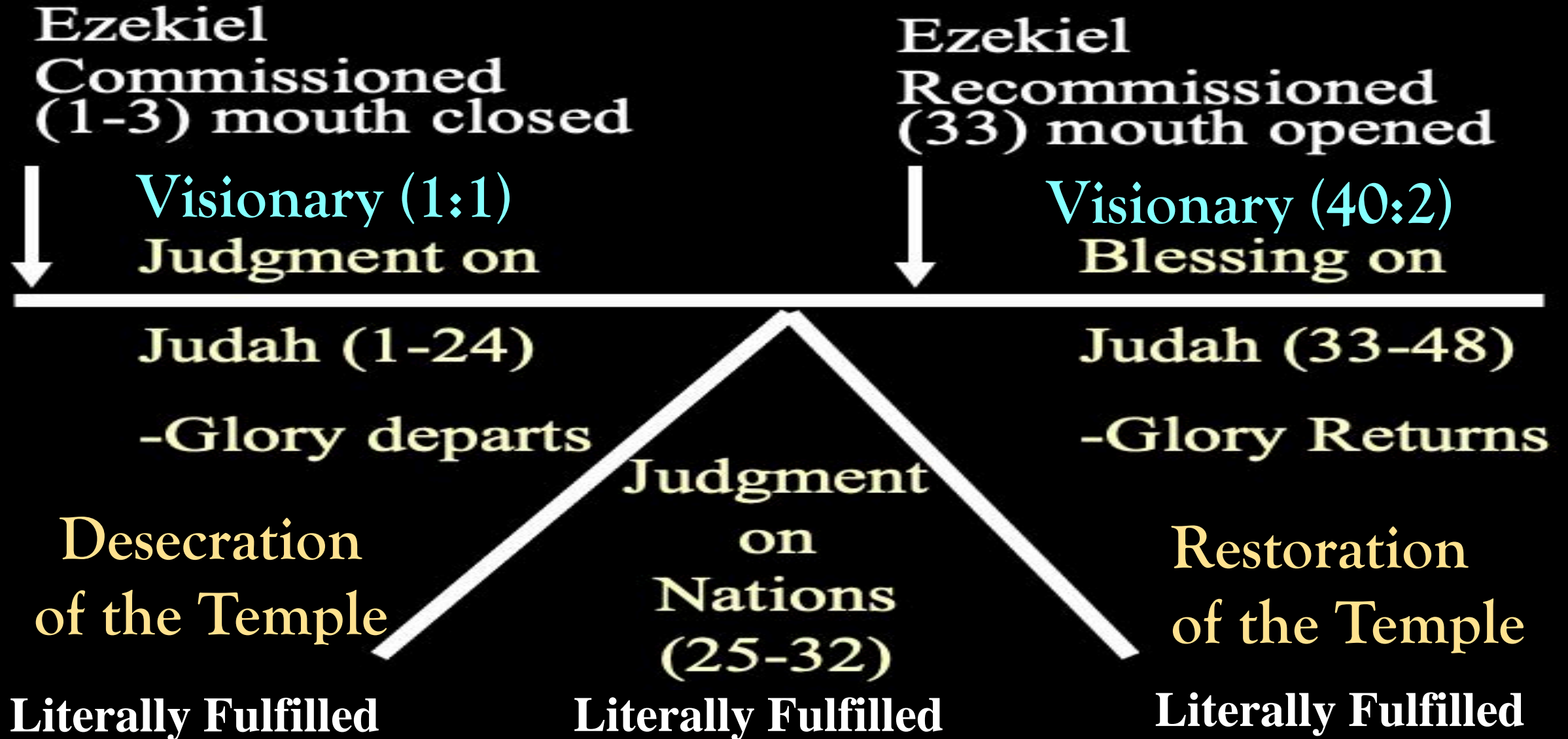
**Prophecy of the
Nation/Temple's Restoration
33-48**

Promises Accomplished

New Covenant

**Land, Temple
Priests, King**

Literary Structure of Ezekiel



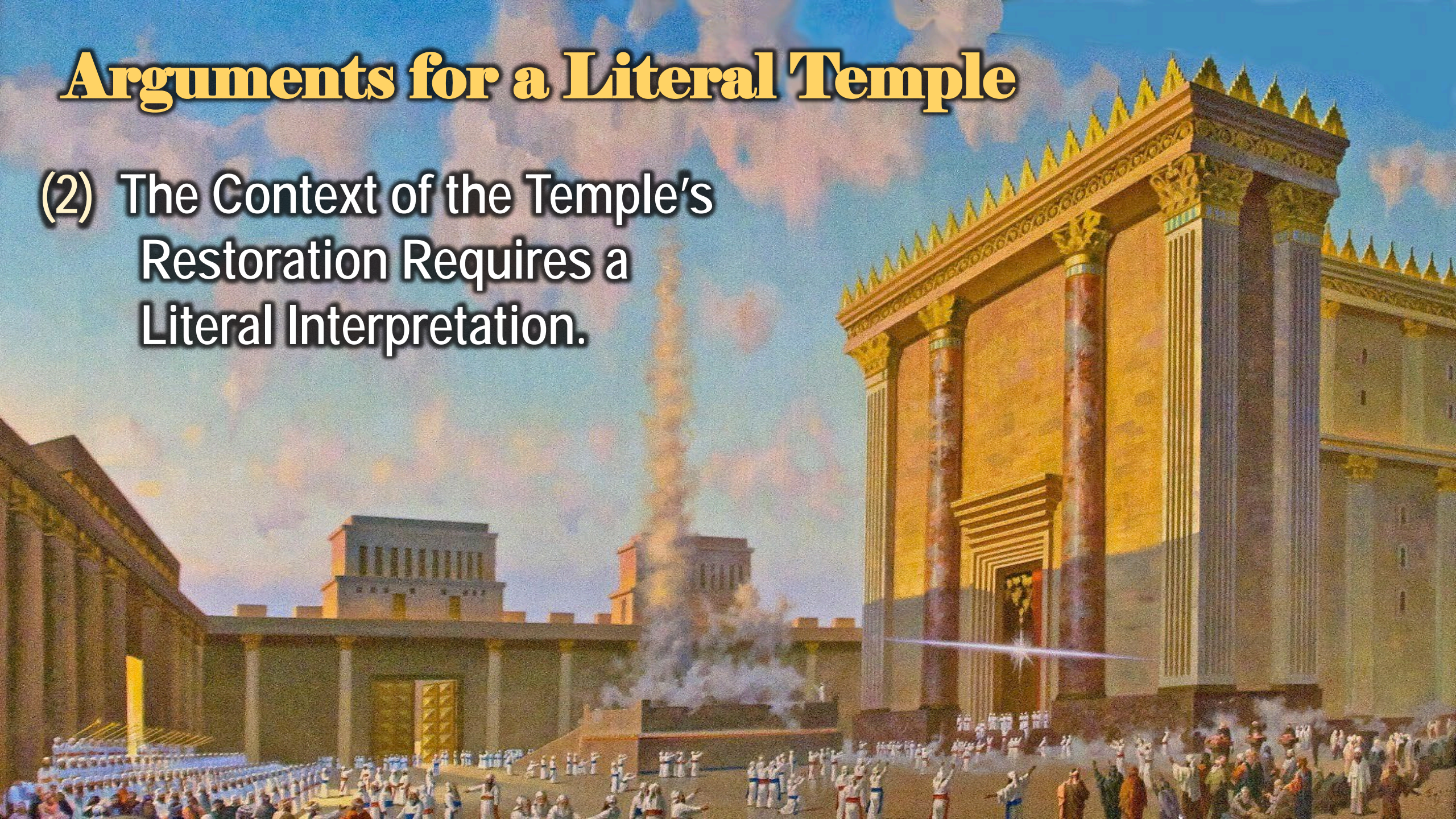
Ezekiel's prophecy of the future Temple is the means to restoring the Presence of God to Israel and guaranteeing the success of Israel's spiritual restoration. Its focus falls into three divisions:

- (1) Prophecies of the Temple's desecration and destruction 4:1-24:27**
- (2) Prophecies of Israel's return and restoration 33:1-39:29**
- (3) Prophecies of the Temple's rebuilding and ritual 40:1-48:35**

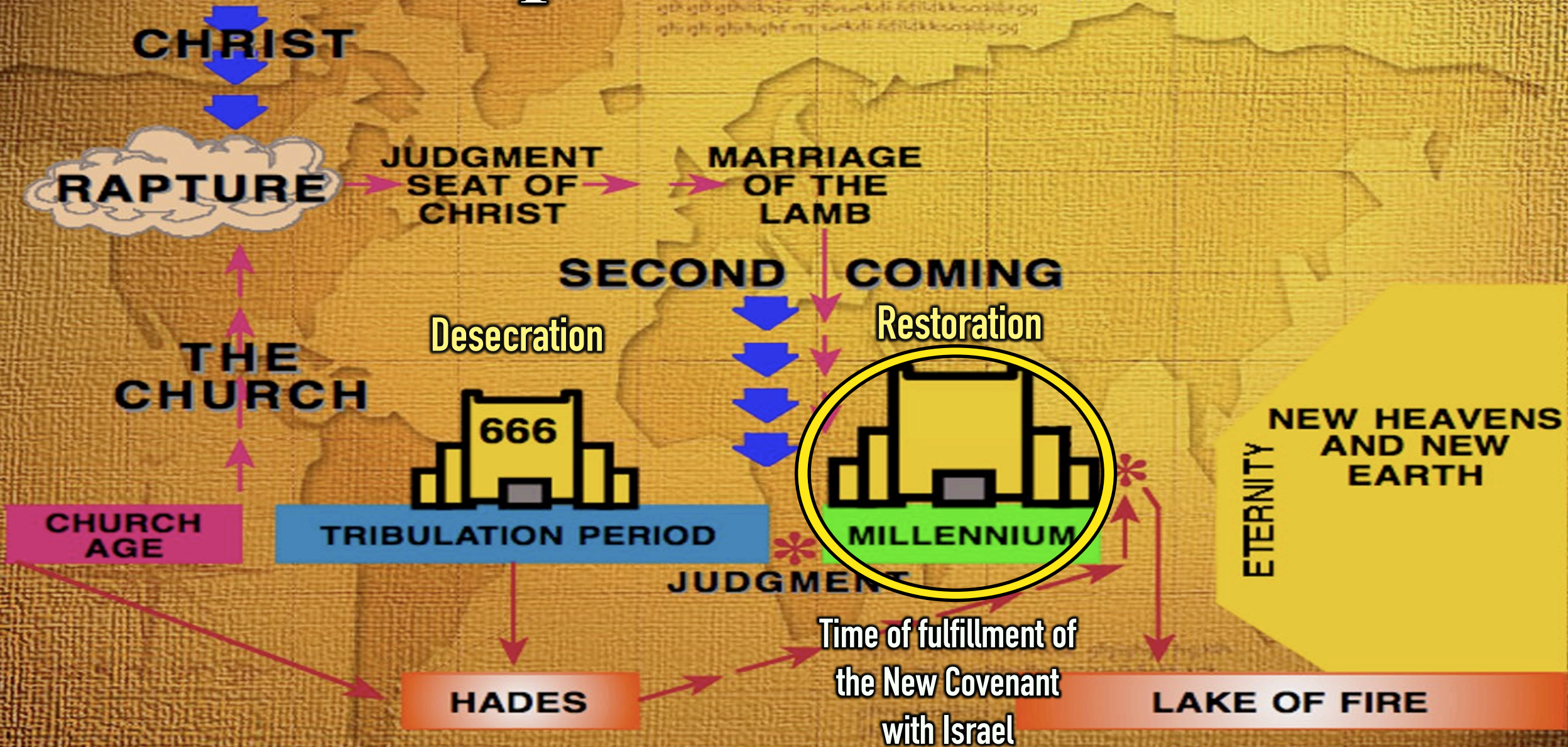
Since it was the physical First Temple whose desecration and destruction was discussed in the first section of the book, the last section's discussion of the Temple's restoration would also expect a structure of the same kind. In view of the exilic understanding of a return from captivity necessitating a rebuilding of the Temple (Daniel 9:20; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:2-11; Haggai 1:2-2:9; Zechariah 1:16; 6:12-15; 8:3), would Ezekiel (or God) have attempted to comfort his people's loss with anything other than the literal restoration of a physical Temple to which the Divine Presence would return? Consistency demands this return will be to a restored literal Temple.

Arguments for a Literal Temple

(2) The Context of the Temple's Restoration Requires a Literal Interpretation.



Ezekiel's Temple in its Restoration Context



Does Prophetic Vision Imply Symbolic Interpretation?

"... while I was by the
river Chebar among the
exiles, the heavens were
opened and I saw
visions of God ..."

Ezekiel 1:1



Comparison of Ezekiel's Temple Vision within Scripture

PERSON	MOSES	DAVID	EZEKIEL
TEXT	EXODUS 25:8, 40	1 CHRONICLES 28:11-19	EZEKIEL 43:11
MODE OF RECEPTION	VISION	VISION	VISION
MODE OF COMMUNICATION	WRITING	WRITING	WRITING
RESULT	BUILT TABERNACLE	BUILT FIRST TEMPLE	BUILT LAST TEMPLE
INTER- PRETATION	LITERAL (FULFILLED IN HISTORY)	LITERAL (FULFILLED IN HISTORY)	LITERAL EXPECTED FULFILLMENT IN HISTORY

Prophecy Past

(Literal Historical Fulfillment)

Nation Rebuked 1-24
Temple Ruined 21-24

Nations Judged
25-32

Temple Restoration
Preview
20:40

Visions
in Babylon
(1:1)

Prophecy Future

(Literal Eschatological Fulfillment)

Nation Restored 33-37
Temple Rebuilt 40-48

Nations Judged
38-39

Temple Restoration
Preview
37:26-28

Visions
in the Land
of Israel (40:2)

“the vision which I saw, like the vision which I saw when He came to destroy the city” (Ezek. 43:3)

The Eschatological Context of Ezekiel 40-48

Ezekiel 40–48 opens with the specific date of Ezekiel’s vision on “the tenth of the month [of Tishri]” (Ezekiel 40:1). The Jewish Sages saw this as already setting an eschatological context since the tenth of Tishri is reckoned as a Jubilee year [Hebrew, *yove*], and the date of Ezekiel’s vision was determined to be the first Day of Atonement [Hebrew, *Yom Kippur*] of the Jubilee year. Together, this date prefigured Israel’s Day of Redemption in both its physical (Land) and spiritual (redemptive) aspects.

Modern Rabbinic Interpretation

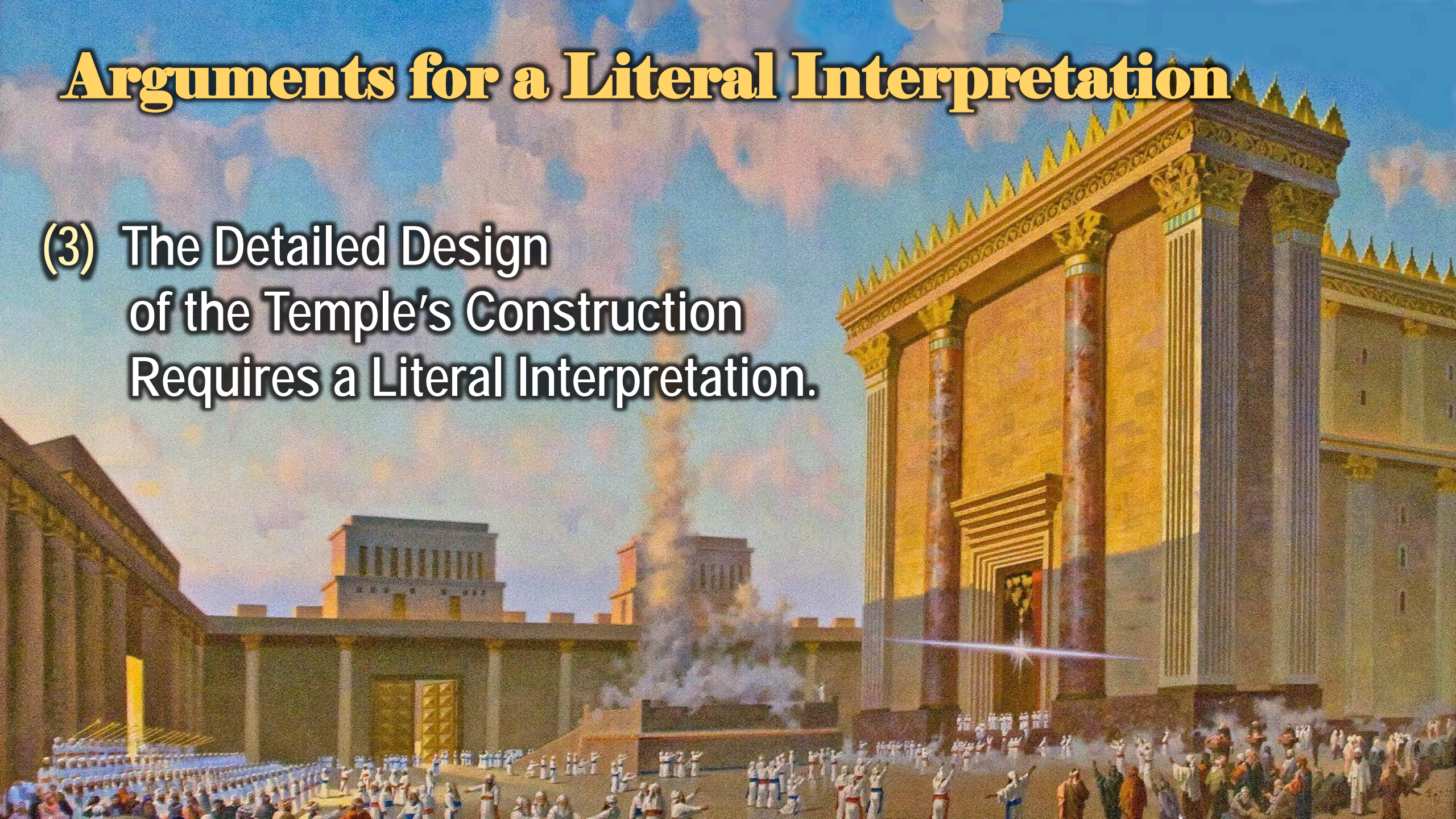
“On that day, which summoned the subjugated and estranged among God’s people to accept freedom and called upon all the sons of Israel to return to their God, on that day it was given to the Prophet to behold a vision of the rebuilt, eternal Sanctuary of the future and to receive the basic instructions for the establishment of the State of God that would endure forever.”

Rav Dr. Joseph Breuer, *The Book of Yechezkel: Translation and Commentary* (New York /Jerusalem: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1993), 353

Therefore, from the very first verse the Rabbis considered the restoration context of Ezekiel 40–48 both literal and eschatological.

Arguments for a Literal Interpretation

(3) The Detailed Design of the Temple's Construction Requires a Literal Interpretation.



Ezekiel 43:11 – Command to Literally Build

Israel's National Repentance

וְאִם-נִכְלְמוּ מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר-עָשׂוּ צוּרַת הַבַּיִת

Blueprint for (Temple) House the of plan the done have they that all from ashamed are they if And

Temple
Construction and
priestly service

וַתְּכֹנְנֵנוּ וּמוֹצְאָיו וּמוֹבְאָיו וְכָל-צוּרָתוֹ וְאֵת

and designs its all and entrances its and exits its and structure its and

written in
this book

כָּל-חֻקֹּתָיו וְכָל-צוּרָתִי [צוּרָתָיו] וְכָל-תּוֹרָתוֹ

laws its all and cf. 1 Chr. 28:19 forms its all and statutes its all

[תּוֹרָתָיו] הוֹדַע אֹתָם וּכְתַב לְעֵינֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ

keep may they that sight their in (it) write and them to known make

Build the
Temple,
Perform its
Services

אֶת-כָּל-צוּרָתוֹ וְאֶת-כָּל-חֻקֹּתָיו וְעָשׂוּ אֹתָם:

them DO and statutes its [all] and plan complete its

BUILDING THE TEMPLE THROUGH TIME

LITERAL

LITERAL

LITERAL

LITERAL

LITERAL



Tabernacle



485 yrs



Conquest-Settlement

1446 BC



1st Temple



374 yrs



Monarchy

960 BC

587 BC



2nd Temple



586 yrs



Gentile Domination

515 BC



Dome of the Rock



Church Age



70 AD



Tribulation Temple



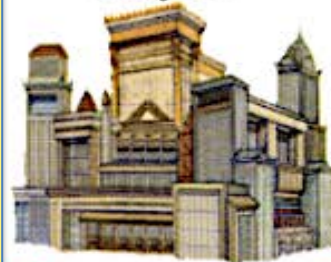
7 yrs



Tribulation



Millennial Temple



1,000 yrs



Millennial Kingdom



New Jerusalem

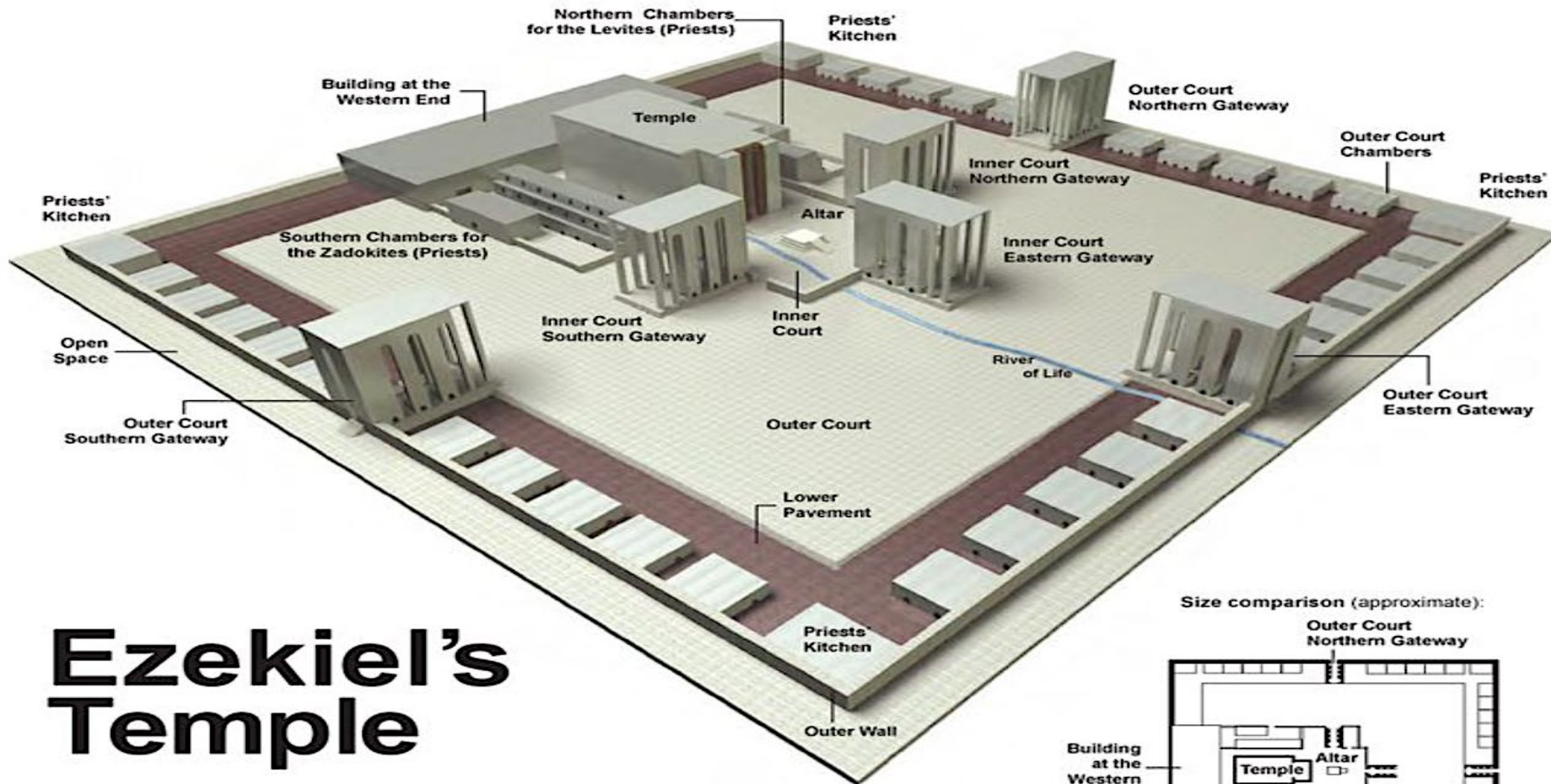


Eternal State

If Can Be Literally Drawn it is Literal

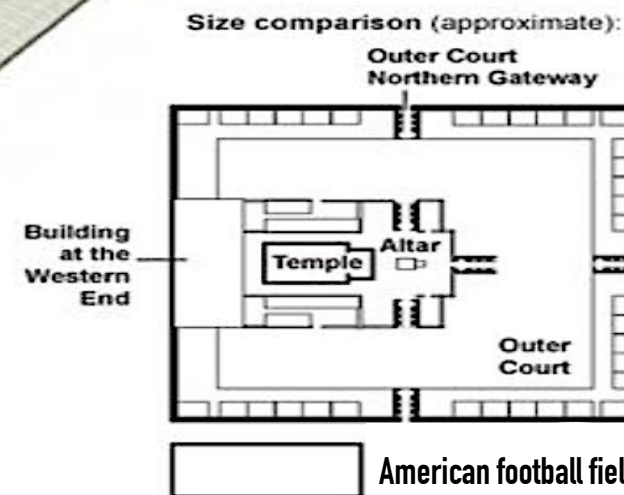
“These three chapters describe the general layout of the visionary Temple ... These chapters are difficult to read without some attempt to draw what Ezekiel describes. The detailed measurements invite the reader to sketch out this Temple plan, which, in fact, is what Christian and Jewish exegetes have done throughout the ages.”

Corrine L. Carvalho, *The Book of Ezekiel: Question by Question* (New York: Paulist Press, 2010), 159, 160.

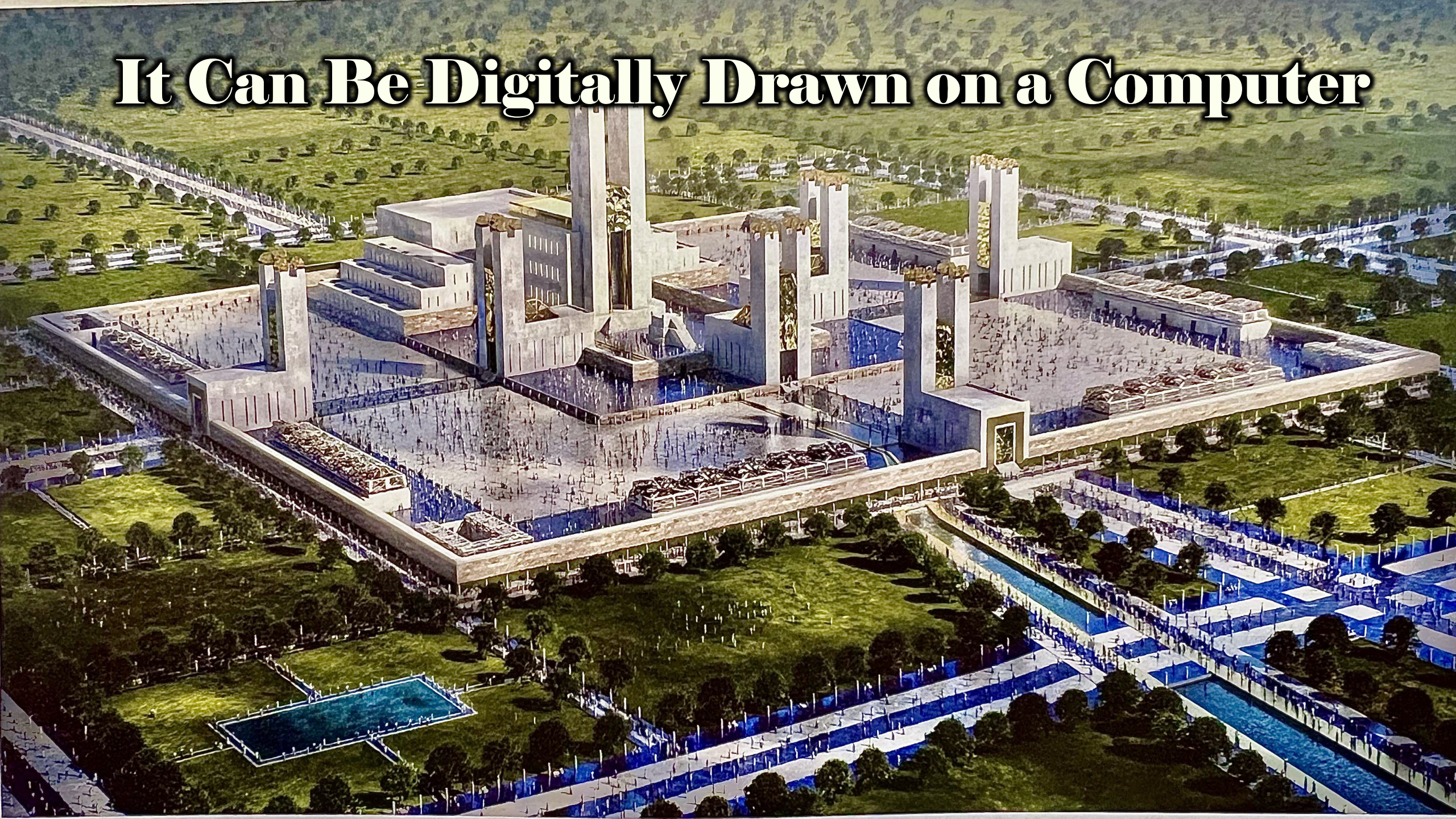


Ezekiel's Temple

The prophet Ezekiel was shown a vision of the Third Temple in 572 BC, just years after the First Temple was destroyed and before the Second Temple was built. Though the destruction of the Second Temple occurred in AD 70, a third temple has not yet been constructed.



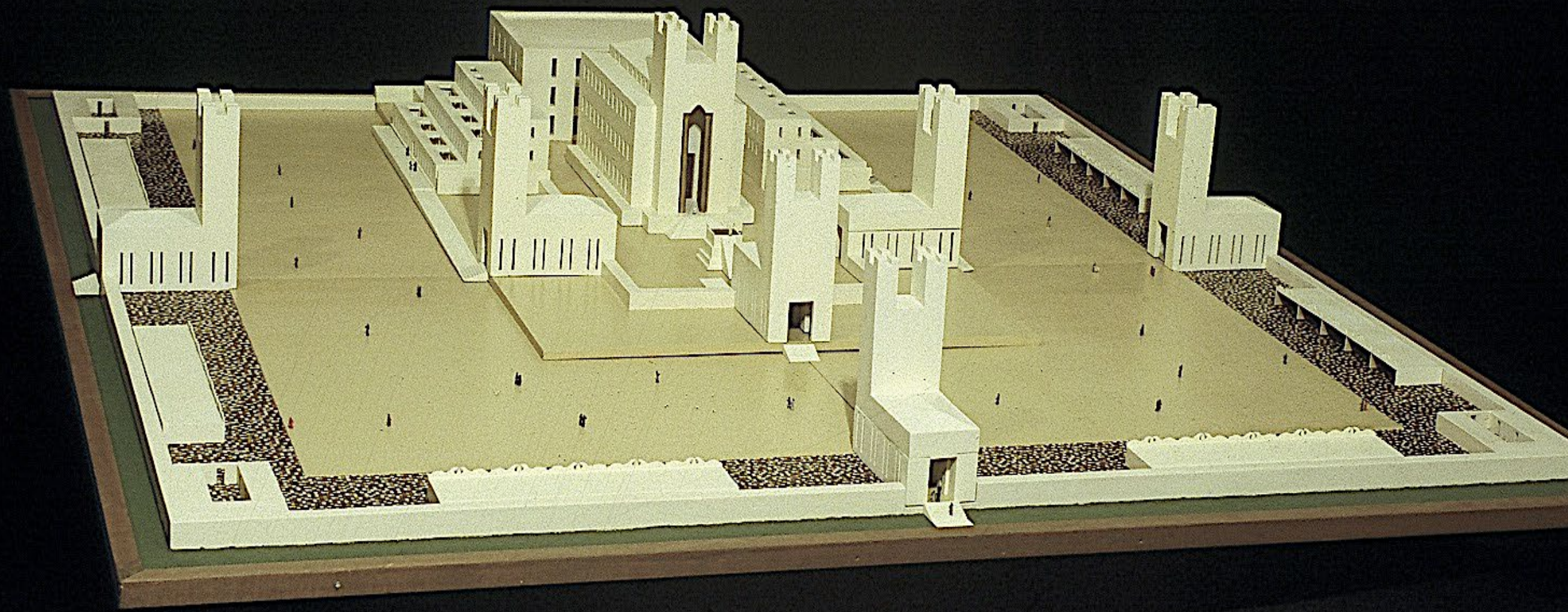
It Can Be Digitally Drawn on a Computer



It Can Be Physically Built as a Model



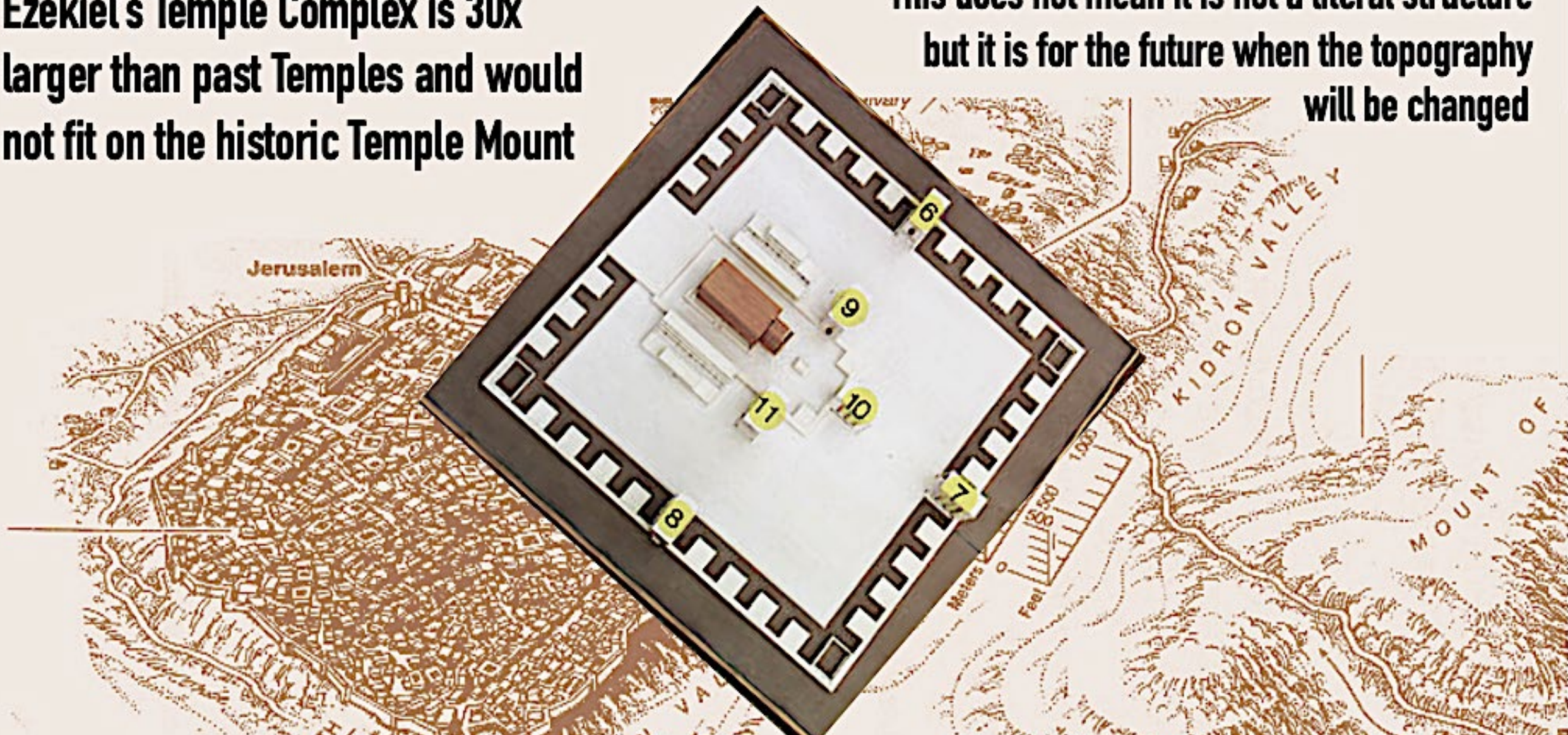
Model of Ezekiel's Temple by John Schmitt, Messianic Temple Ministries



Comparing the Past and Future Temples

Ezekiel's Temple Complex is 30x larger than past Temples and would not fit on the historic Temple Mount

This does not mean it is not a literal structure but it is for the future when the topography will be changed

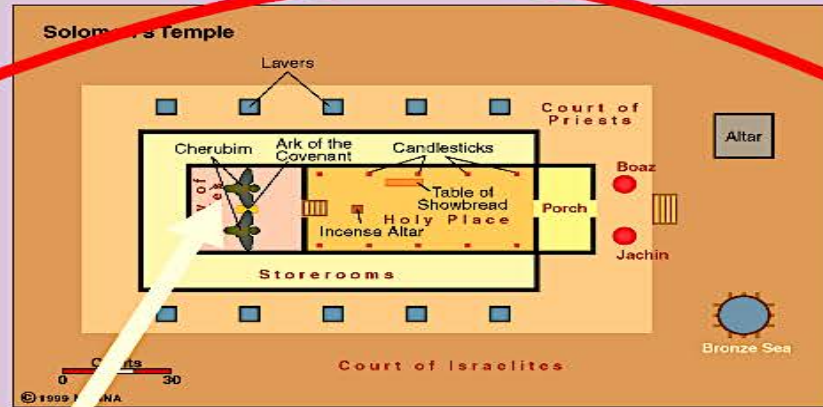


Comparing the Past and Future Temples

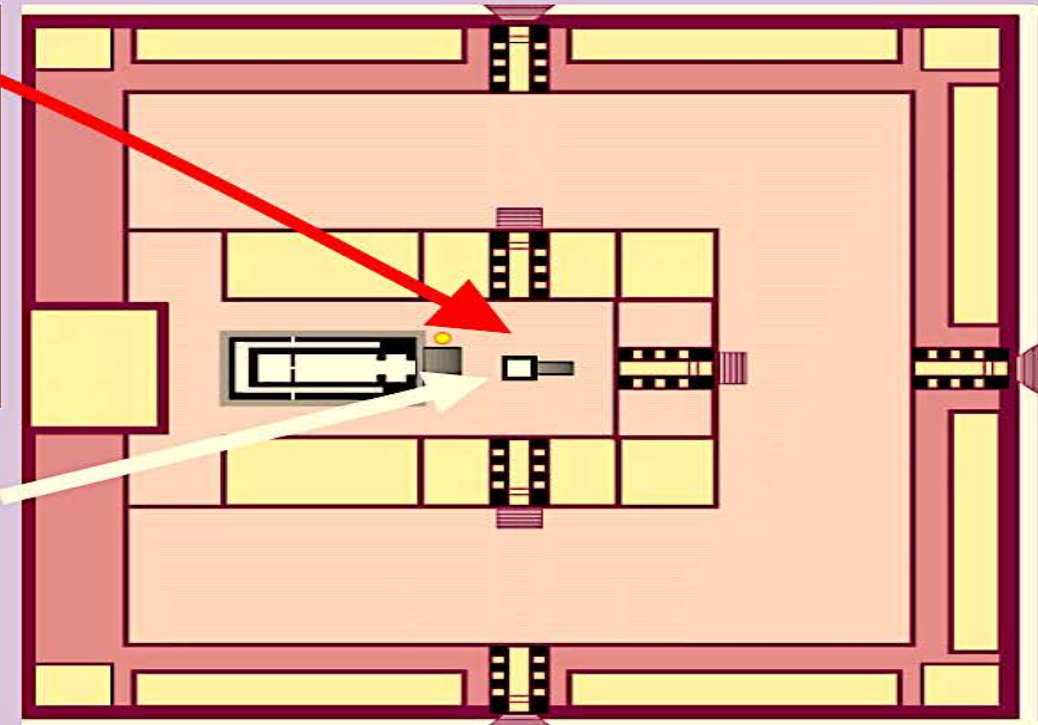
Moses' Tabernacle



Solomon's Temple



Ezekiel's Temple



Ark of the Covenant
(Exod. 25:22)

Ark of the Covenant
(1 Kings 8:21)

Altar of Burnt Offering
(Ezek. 43:13-27)

Contrasting Centers of Worship:

Moved Millennial Furniture:

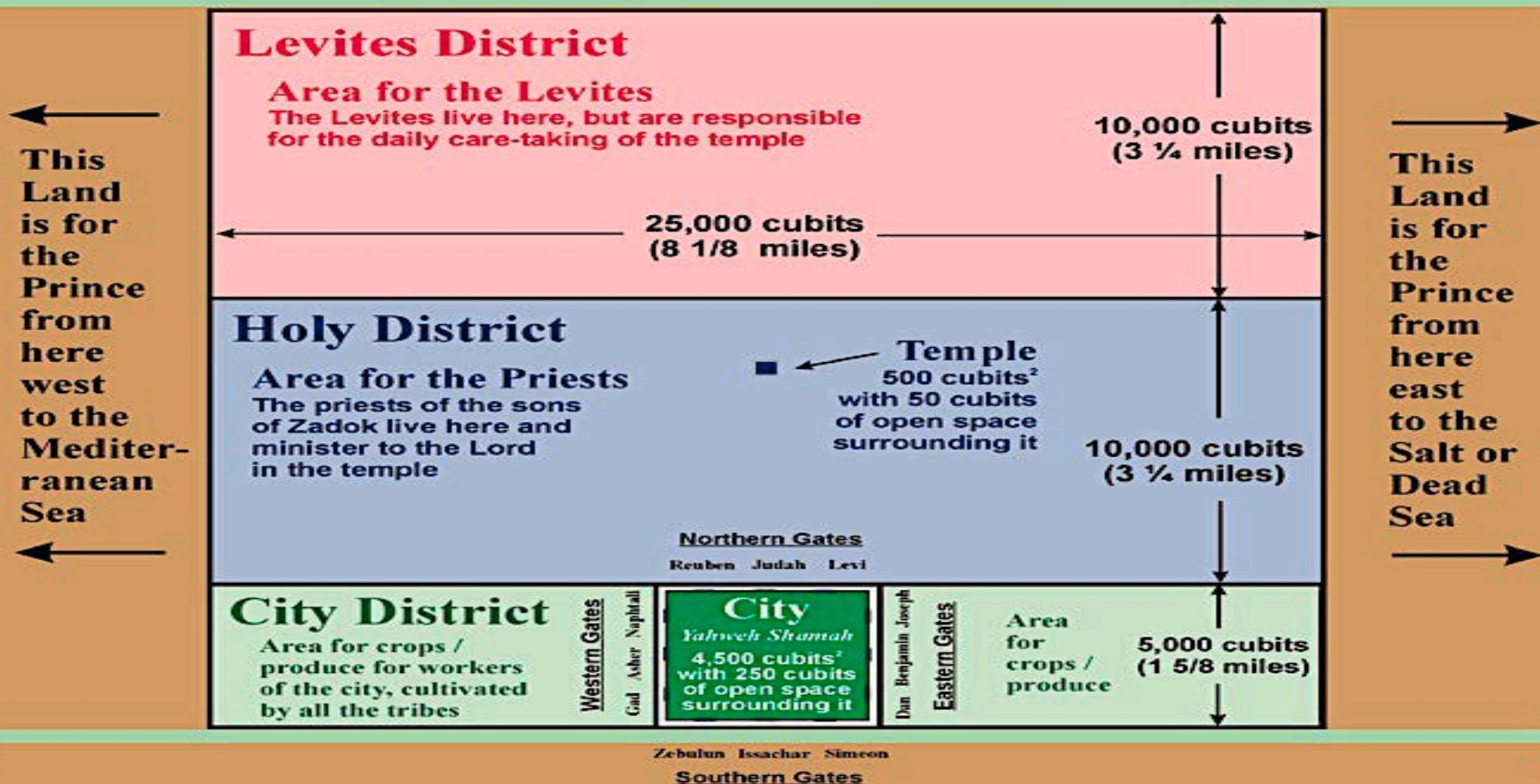
Altar of Burnt Offering: from the outer (Exod. 40:6) to inner court (Ezek 43:13)

Furniture not mentioned:

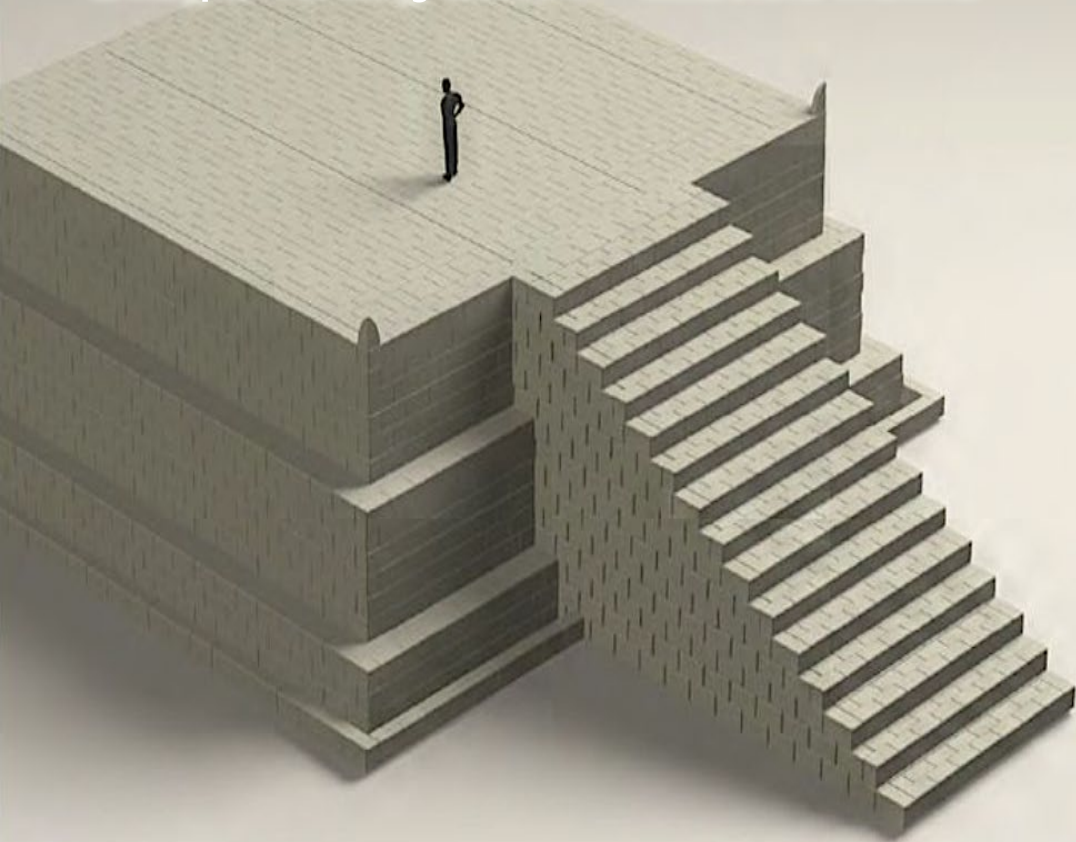
Ark of covenant (Jer. 3:16-17), veil, lamp stand, table of showbread, & laver

Holy Portion of the Land

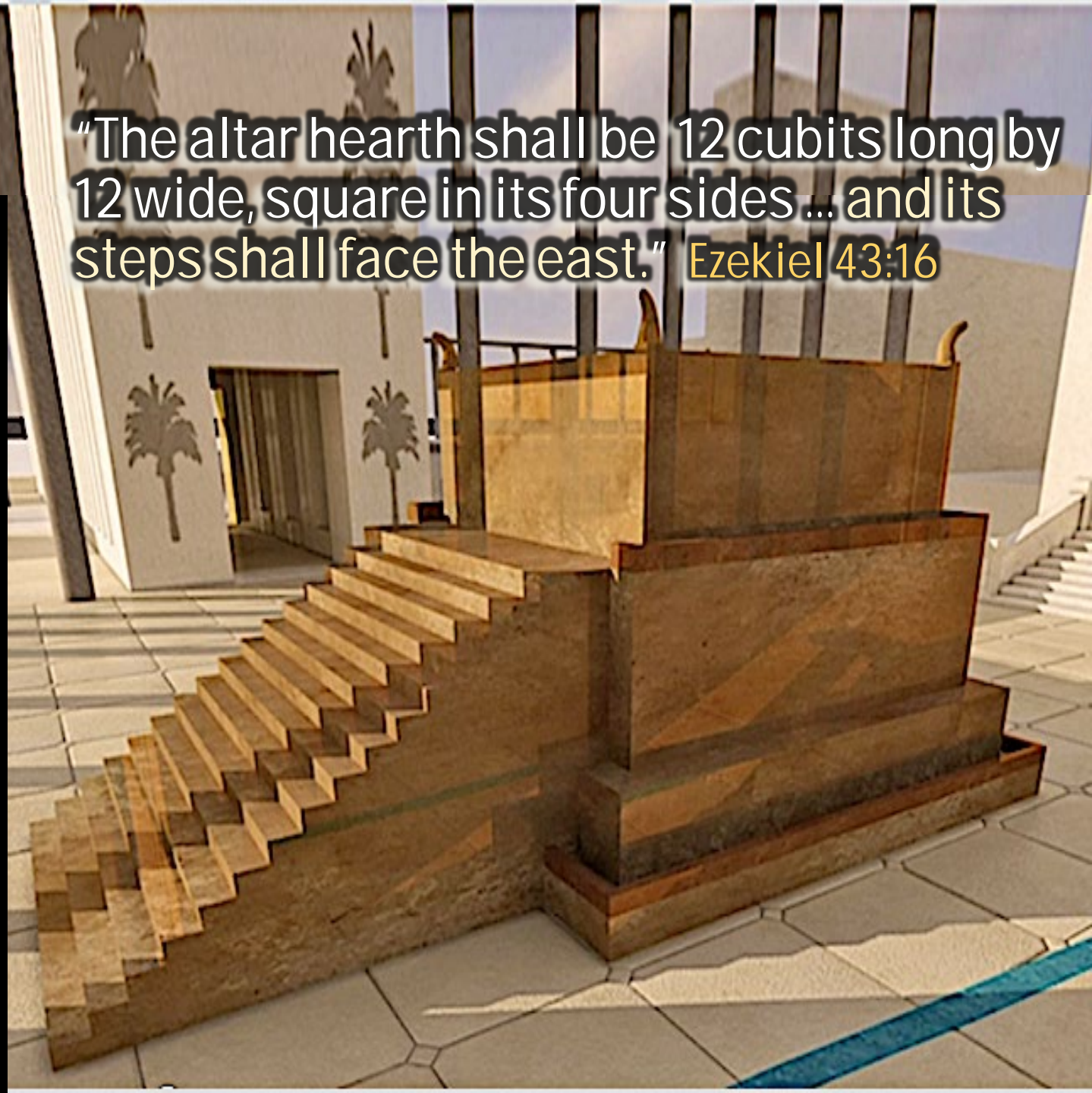
1 Mile : where 1 cubit equals 21"



“And you shall not go up by steps to My altar” Exodus 20:26

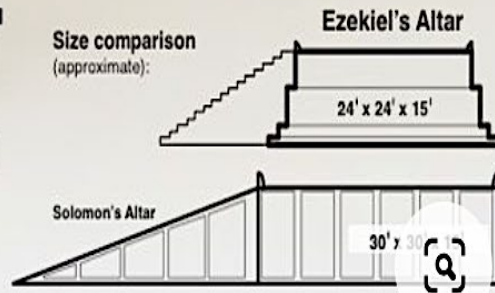


“The altar hearth shall be 12 cubits long by 12 wide, square in its four sides ... and its steps shall face the east.” Ezekiel 43:16



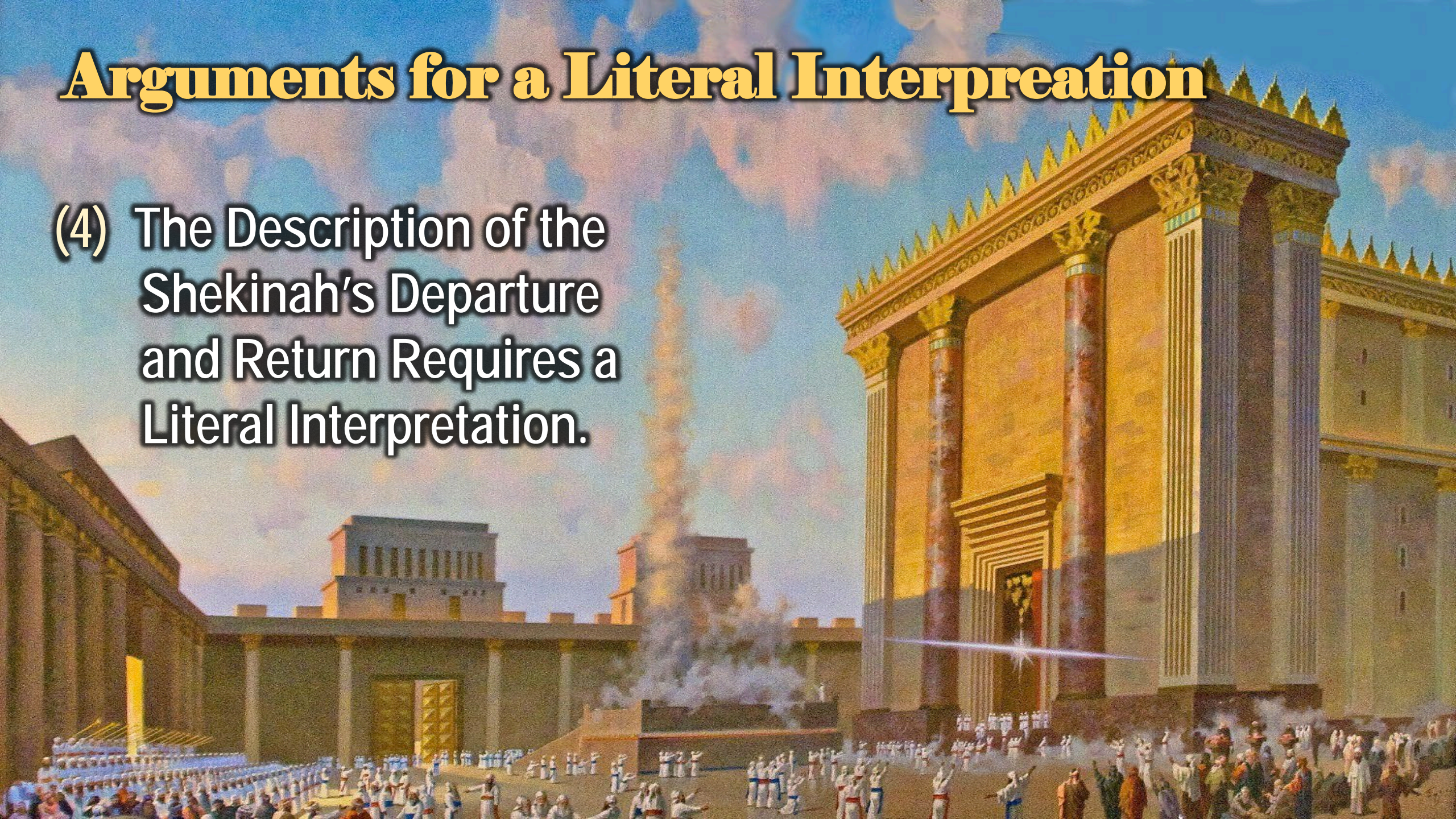
Ezekiel's Altar

This altar was never built—Ezekiel saw this altar in a vision. It was 24' by 24' wide and 15' high. While smaller than Solomon's altar, it had multiple tiers and was more elaborately designed.



Arguments for a Literal Interpretation

(4) The Description of the Shekinah's Departure and Return Requires a Literal Interpretation.

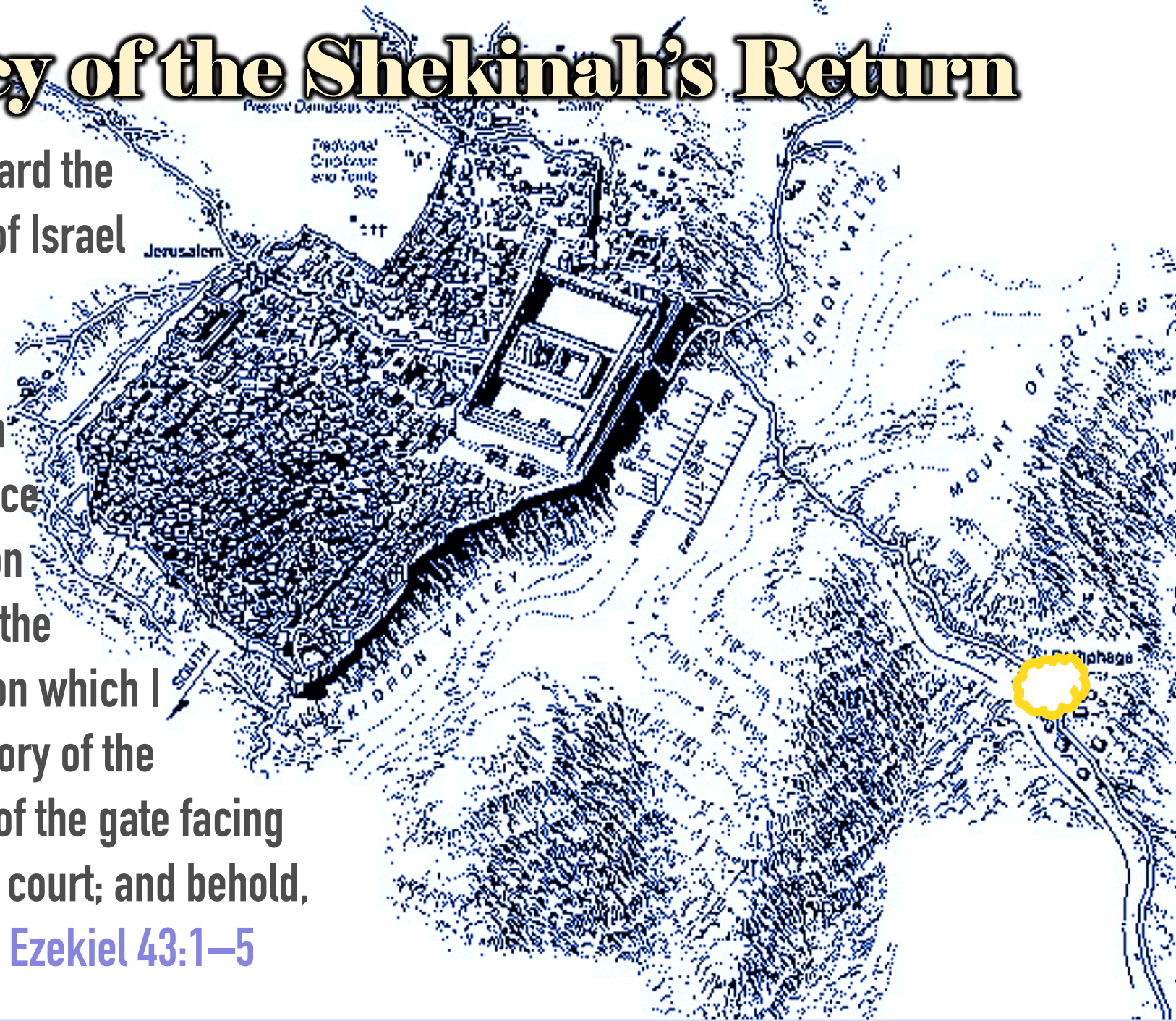


The Glory Returns

“Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east; and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory.” Ezekiel 43:1–2

The Prophecy of the Shekinah's Return

“Then he led me to the gate facing toward the east; and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. And *it was* like the appearance of the vision which I saw, like the vision which I saw when He came to destroy the city. And the visions *were* like the vision which I saw by the river Chebar . . . And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east. . . [and] into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.” [Ezekiel 43:1–5](#)



Stages of the Shekinah's Departure & Return



If this was literal, then this must be literal



Above the Cherubim (9:3)

Over the threshold of Holy of Holies (10:4)

High over the Cherubim (10:18)

On Mount of Olives (11:23)

From the east (Mt. Olives) (43:2)

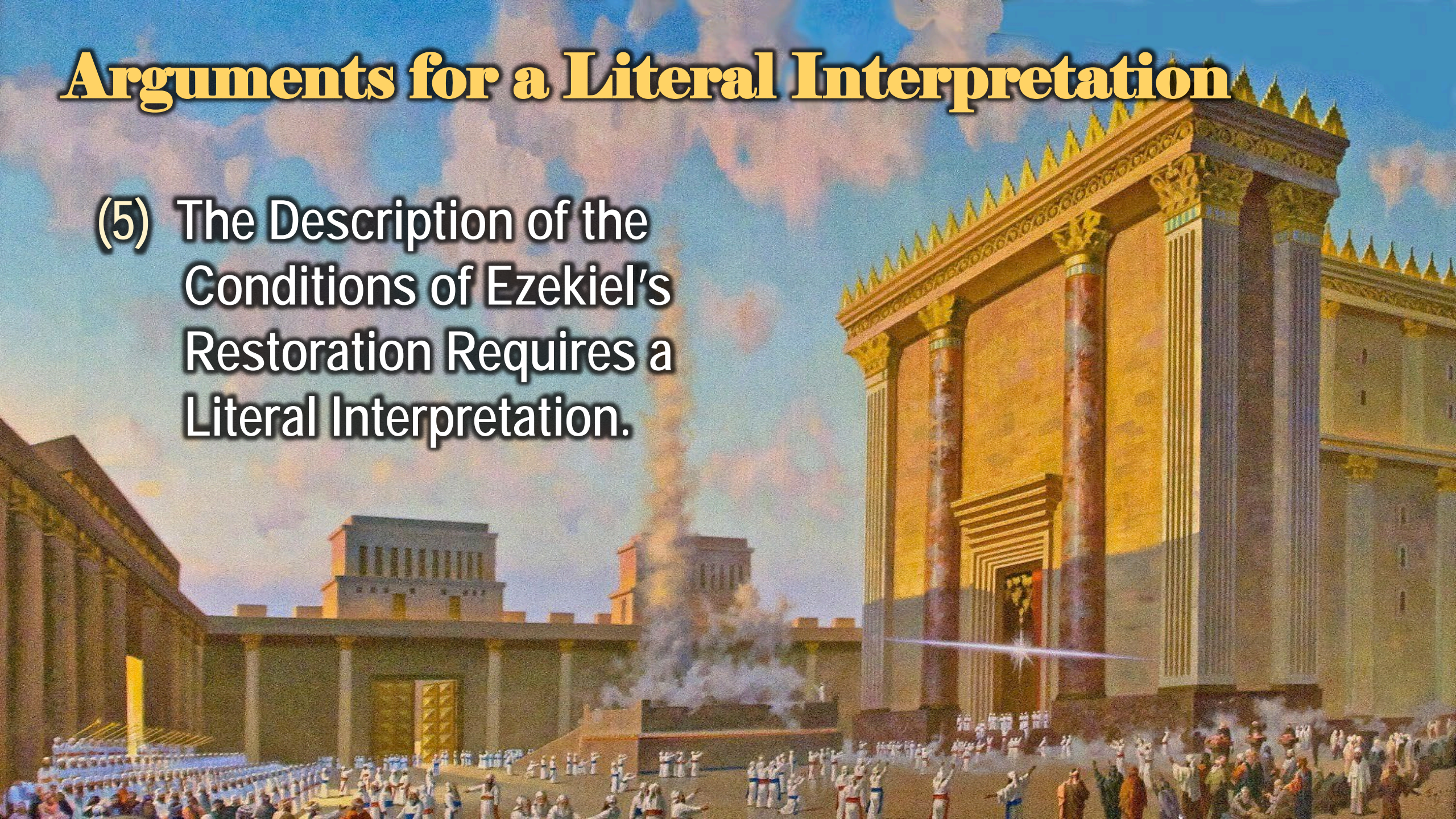
Entered by East Gate (43:4)

Filled Inner Court (43:5)

Above Cherubim? (43:7)

Arguments for a Literal Interpretation

(5) The Description of the Conditions of Ezekiel's Restoration Requires a Literal Interpretation.



Prophecy Past

(Literal Historical Fulfillment)

Prophetic Section of Retribution		
Divine Discipline Nation Rejected 4-24	Temple Ruined 21-24	Nations Judged 25-32

Prophecy Future

(Literal Eschatological Fulfillment)

Prophetic Section of Restoration		
Nation Restored 33-37	Nations Judged Divine Deliverance 38-39	Temple Rebuilt 40-48

“the vision which I saw, like the vision which I saw when He came to destroy the city” (Ezek. 43:3)

REGENERATION OF NATIONAL ISRAEL

STAGES OF RESTORATION

Scattered Bones
(Israel in Dispersion)

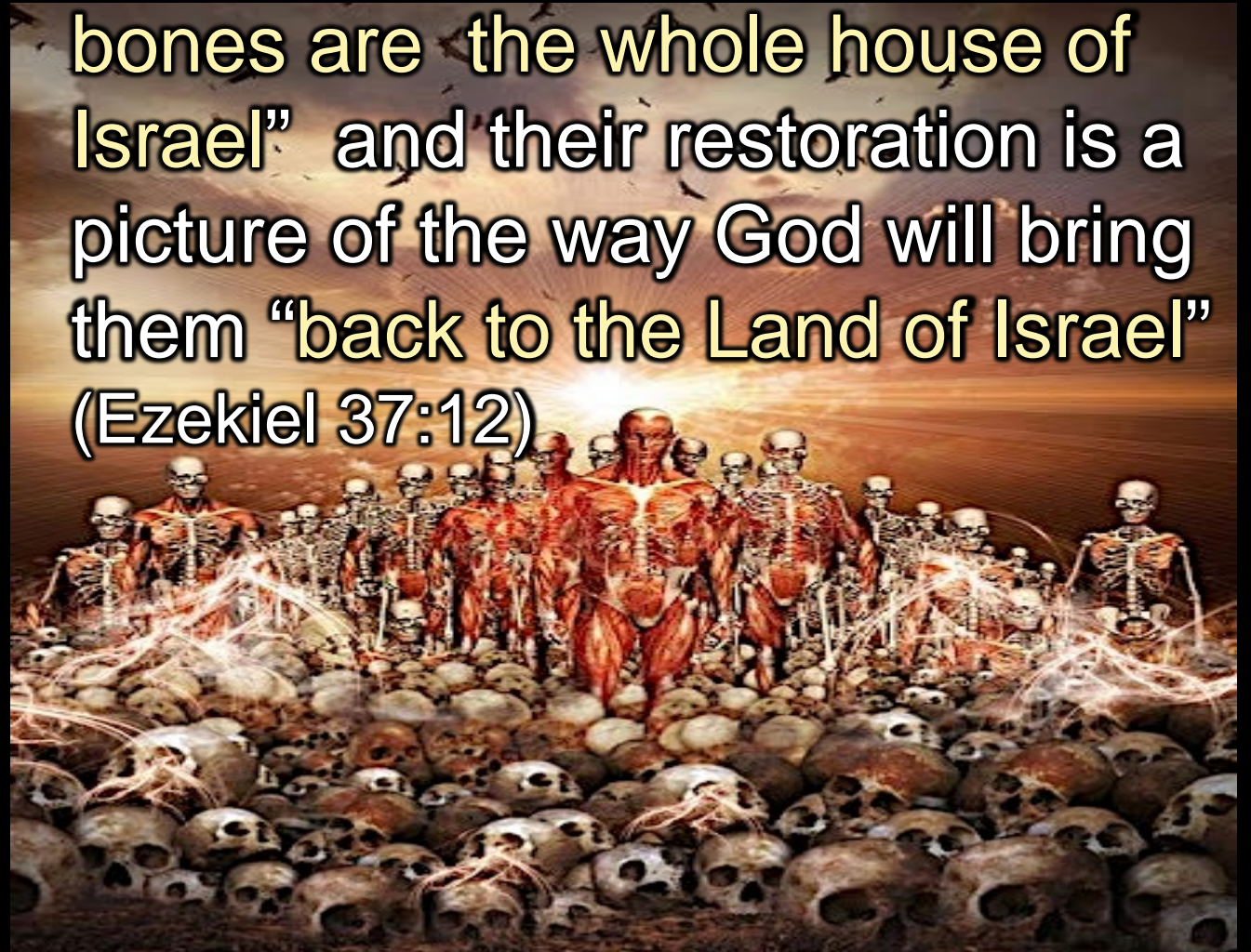
Sinews Connected
(pre-1948 regathering)

Flesh on Bones
(Israel becomes a nation)

Skin Covers Body
(Israel in the Tribulation)

Breath in Body
(Israel after repentance)

God told Ezekiel that “these bones are the whole house of Israel” and their restoration is a picture of the way God will bring them “back to the Land of Israel” (Ezekiel 37:12)



A Reunited National Israel

“Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms” Ezekiel 37:21-22




Conditions After the Return of the Shekinah (Ezekiel 37:25-28)

“And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever. And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.”

“All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site ...”

Zechariah 14:10a

An aerial photograph of Jerusalem, showing the Temple Mount in the center. The city is built on a hillside, and the Temple Mount is a prominent feature. The surrounding area is a mix of green and brown, indicating a semi-arid climate. The sky is clear and blue.

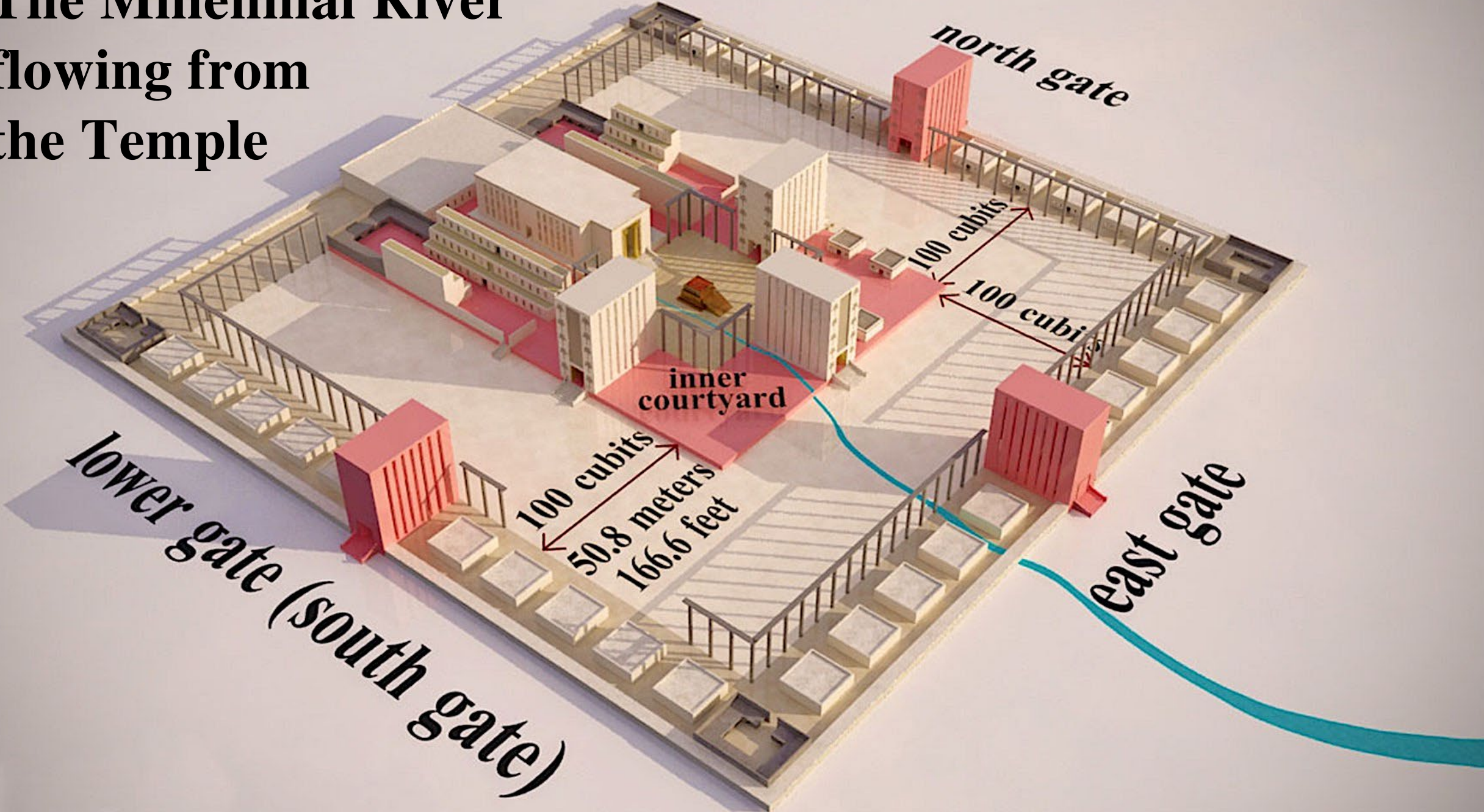
Topographical changes for the Temple Mount with explicit geographical locations in Jerusalem cannot be understood in the context unless they are interpreted literally.



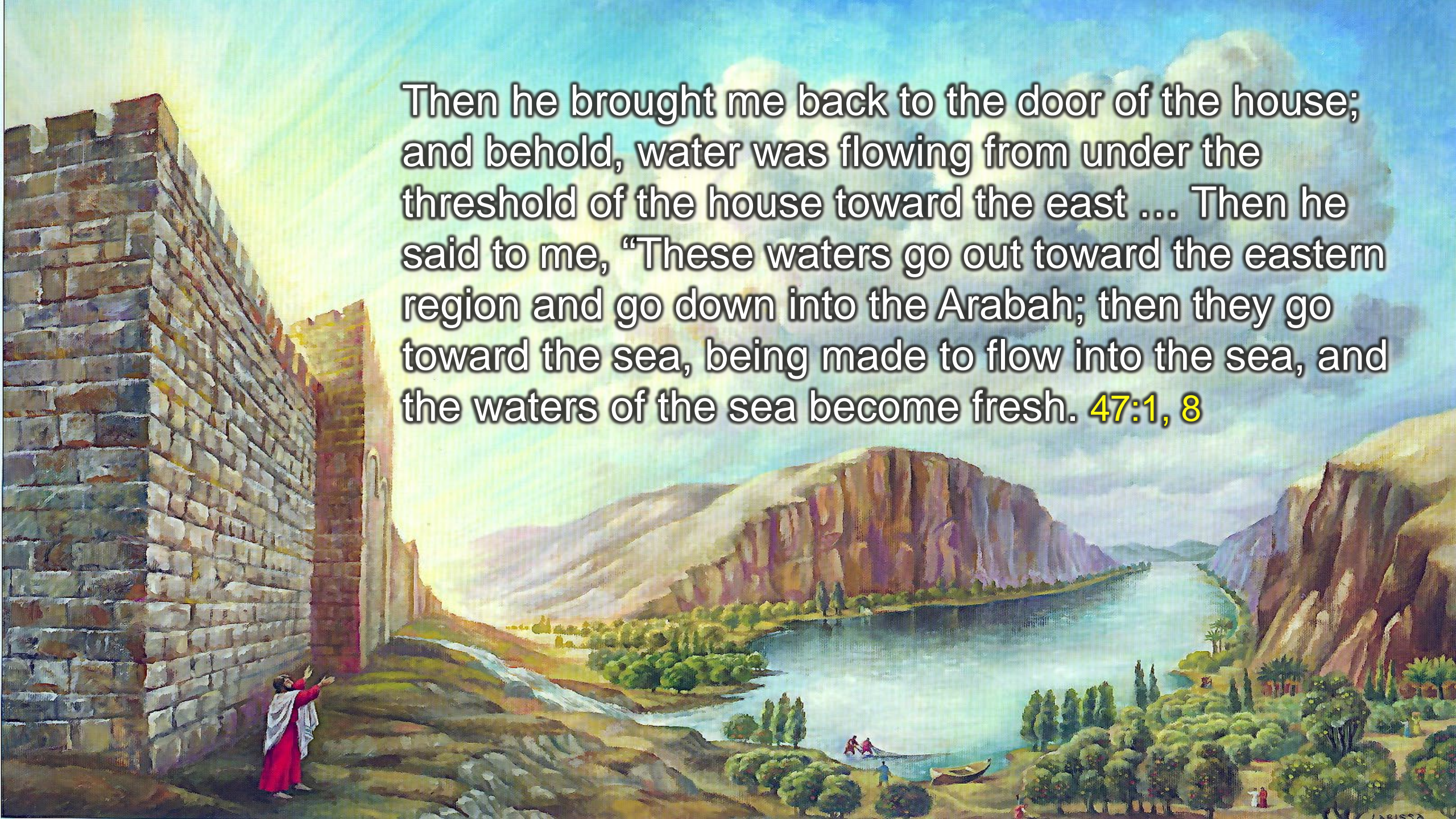
The Final Temple for the World

“And I shall set My glory among the nations . . . “When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. “Then they will know that I am the LORD their God” Ezekiel 39:21, 27–28a

The Millennial River flowing from the Temple



Then he brought me back to the door of the house; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east ... Then he said to me, "These waters go out toward the eastern region and go down into the Arabah; then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea, and the waters of the sea become fresh. 47:1, 8



ISRAEL

ישראל
The Land of the 12 Tribes

Tribal Redistribution

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

After the Conquest
(Josh. 13)



Millennial Israel (Ezek. 47-48)

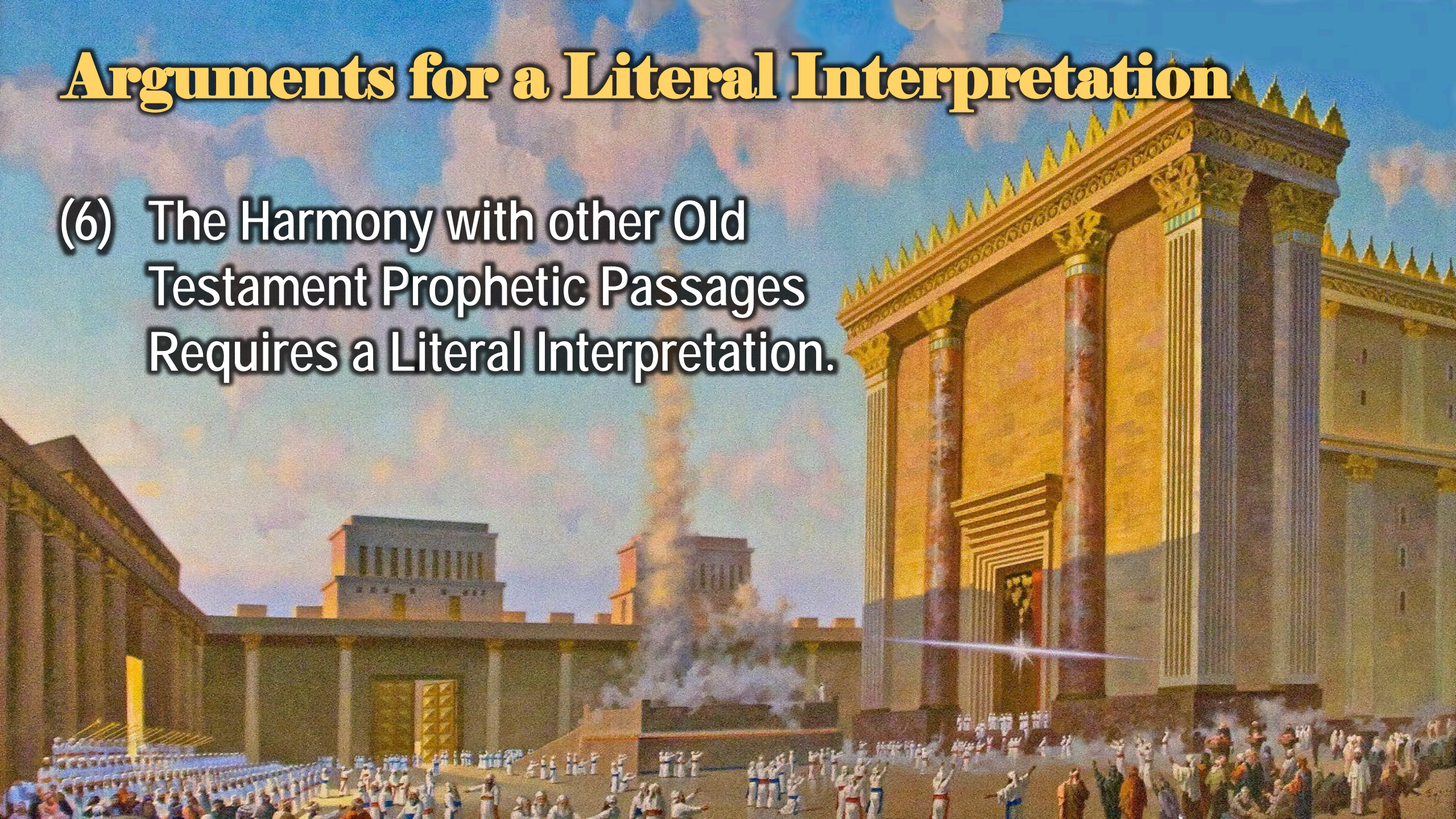
Millennial Jerusalem
in Ezekiel 47 retains
its central location
but is south (not
north) of Judah



• Ancient city
▲ Mountain
○ Other current city
--- Annexed by Jordan, 1948
— Current border
Kartografi: © eMap as (www.emap.no)

Arguments for a Literal Interpretation

(6) The Harmony with other Old Testament Prophetic Passages Requires a Literal Interpretation.



FUTURE TEMPLE

Prophecies of a Restoration Temple

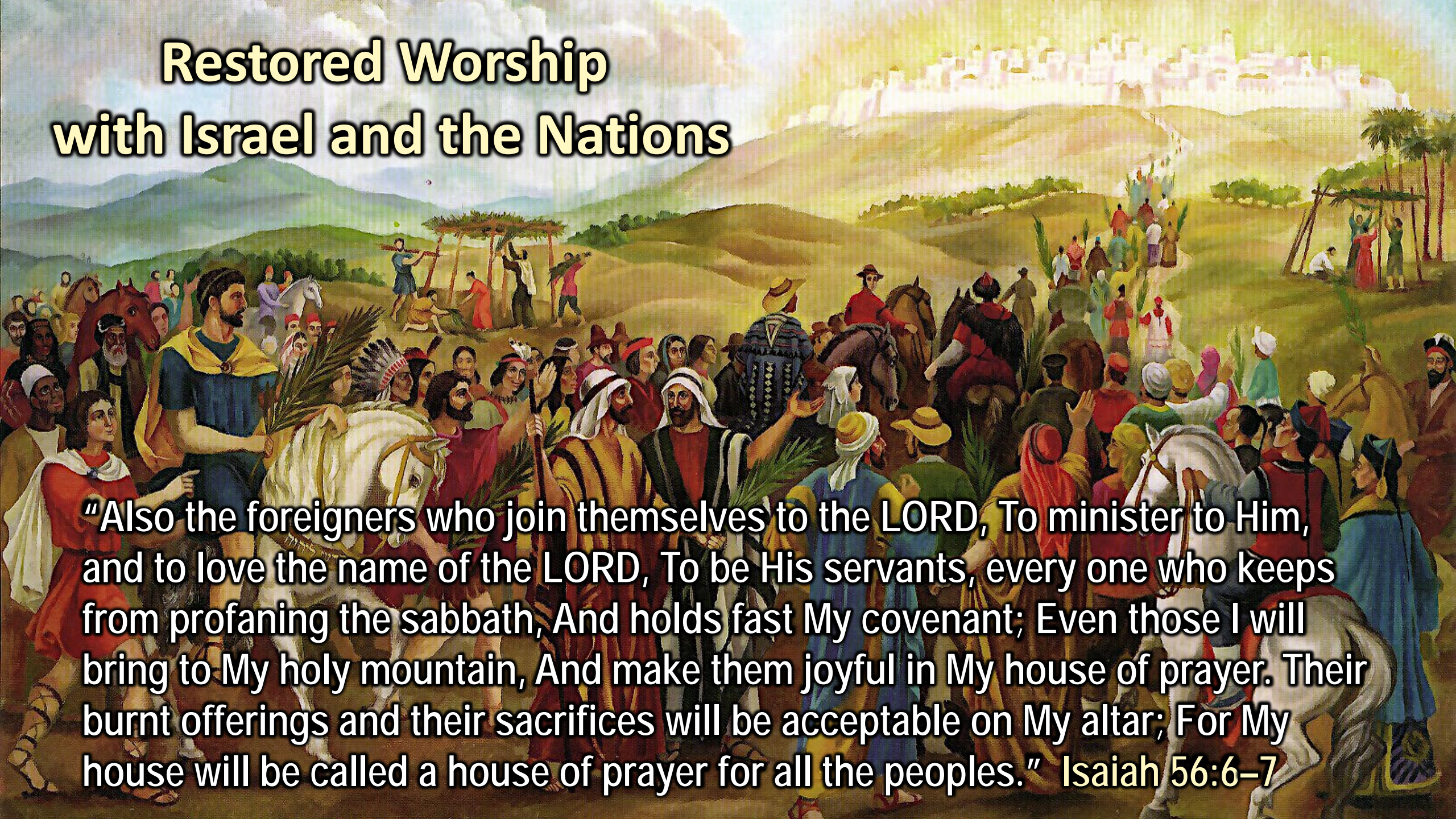
Isaiah 2:3
Isaiah 60:13
Daniel 9:24
Joel 3:18
Haggai 2:7, 9

FUTURE SACRIFICE

Prophecies of a Renewed Sacrificial System

Isaiah 56:6-7
Isaiah 60:7
Isaiah 66:18-23
Jeremiah 33:18
Zechariah 14:16-21
Malachi 3:3-4

Restored Worship with Israel and the Nations



"Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath, And holds fast My covenant; Even those I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples." Isaiah 56:6-7

“For the nation and the kingdom
which will not serve you will perish
... The glory of Lebanon will come
to you, the juniper, the box tree,
and the cypress together, to
beautify the place of My Sanctuary;
and I shall make the place of My
feet glorious.” Isaiah 60:13

Physical Construction

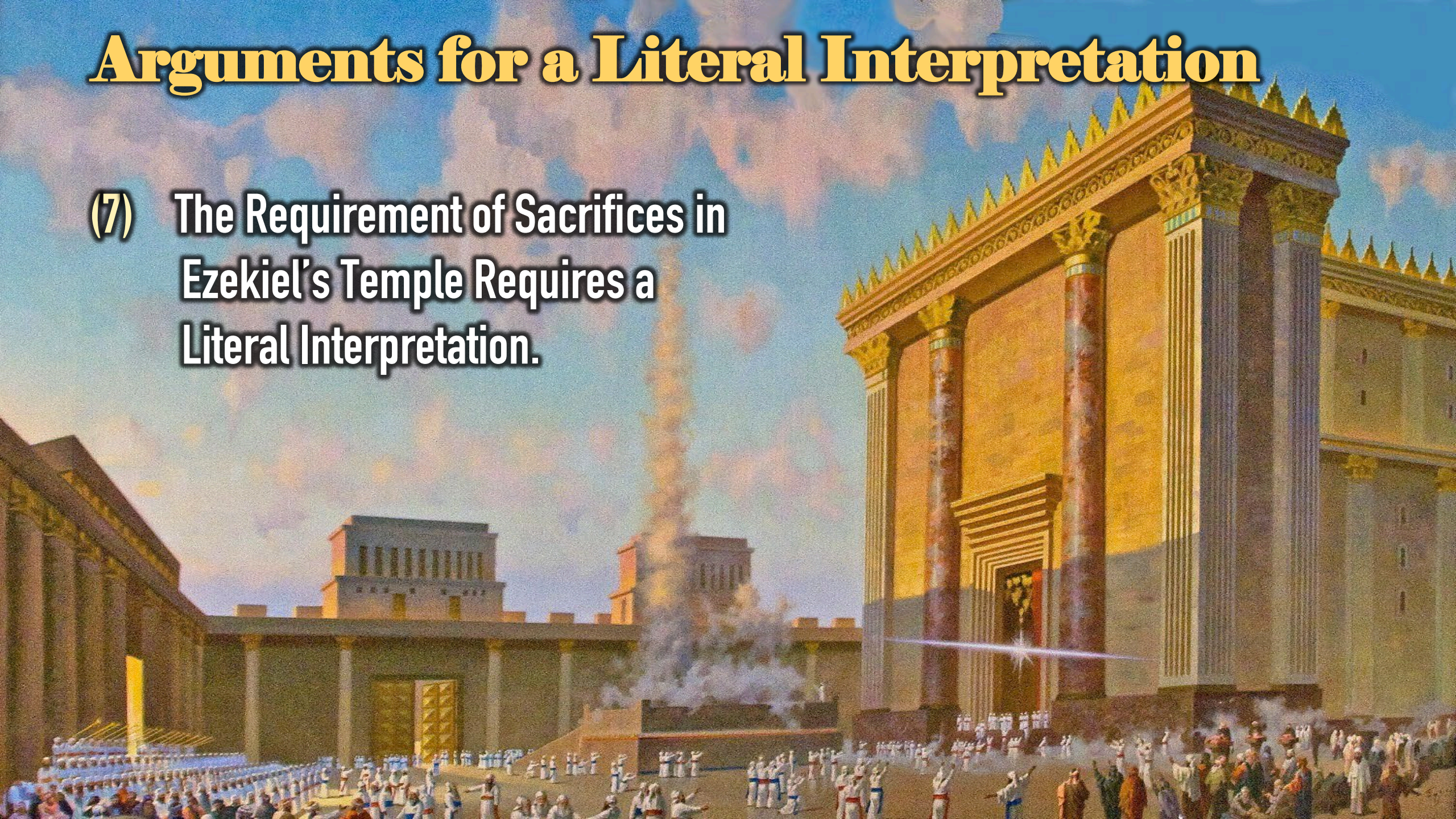




“It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.” *Isaiah 27:13*

Arguments for a Literal Interpretation

(7) The Requirement of Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple Requires a Literal Interpretation.



The Question of Literal Future Sacrifices



**Will actual animal sacrifices be offered
in the future Millennial Temple?**

New Covenant Sacrifices

“For thus says the LORD,
‘David shall never lack a man
to sit on the throne of the
house of Israel; and the
Levitical priests shall never
lack a man before Me to offer
burnt offerings, to burn grain
offerings, and to prepare
sacrifices continually.’”

Jeremiah 33:17-18



The Problem According to Reform Theologians

“Dispensationalists understand Ezekiel 40–48 to be a prophecy of the future millennial temple and the worship that will occur there. The problem is that there are numerous passages in these chapters that depict the practice of animal sacrifices . . . These verses should not be interpreted literally and placed in a future millennium. Hebrews 10:18 forbids it: ‘Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin. According to Hebrews the purpose of the sacrificial system has been fulfilled. The once-for-all sacrificial death of Christ has *forever* ended the offering of animal sacrifices. Some dispensationalists answer that these animal sacrifices will merely be memorials offered in remembrance of Christ’s death. But that is *not* what Ezekiel *literally* says. Ezekiel calls these offerings “sin offerings”. And Hebrews 10:18 says that after Christ’s death there is no more offering for sin. Moreover, the offerings in Ezekiel 45:15, 17 are *literally* said to make atonement . . . It is impossible to interpret Ezekiel 40–48 in a strictly literal manner in reference to a future millennium without denying the clear teaching of Hebrews on the final sacrifice of Christ.”

Keith A. Mathison, *Dispensationalism: Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995), 7–8.

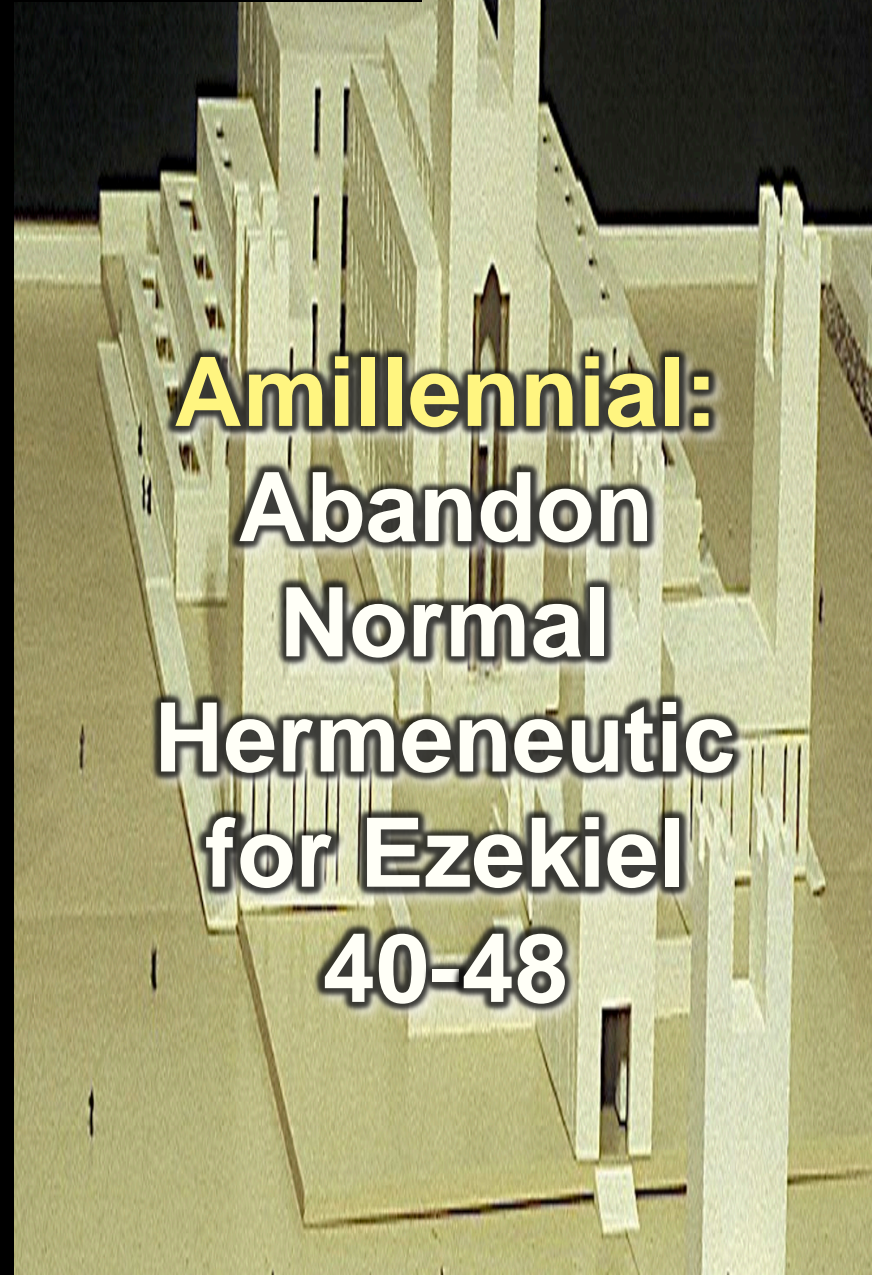
“The early church, however, saw Jesus’s vision being for a transformed people of God, transcending nation, land, and temple . . . Jesus demands the destruction of the old temple and the erection of a new one (John 2:19). This was not a call for the replication of the old system but a wholesale transformation . . . Jesus’s death was interpreted as a definitive sacrifice once for all time, obviating the need for ongoing sacrifice. The writer to the Hebrews, who wrote to Jewish Christians after the destruction of the temple in AD 70, argued against the need for a physical temple because of Jesus’s superior priesthood in accordance with the quasi-Platonic metaphysic of Jewish apocalyptic thinking . . . Jesus fulfilled the purpose of the old cult and rendered all subsequent earthly sacrifice defunct (Heb. 9:1–15) . . . This moved Jewish Christians away from the need for temple-based worship altogether by showing that Israel’s historic destiny had all along been a heavenly city without physical foundations (Heb. 11:10) — a heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22) reached by faith in Jesus. To turn back from this was tantamount to apostasy, akin to the rebellion of the Israelites who failed ultimately to reach the promised land (Heb. 3:16–4:11; 10:26–31) . . . it provided a theological mandate for graduating from Jerusalem-based temple worship.”

George Athus, Bridging the Testaments, 388–89.

Theological Problems Either Way!

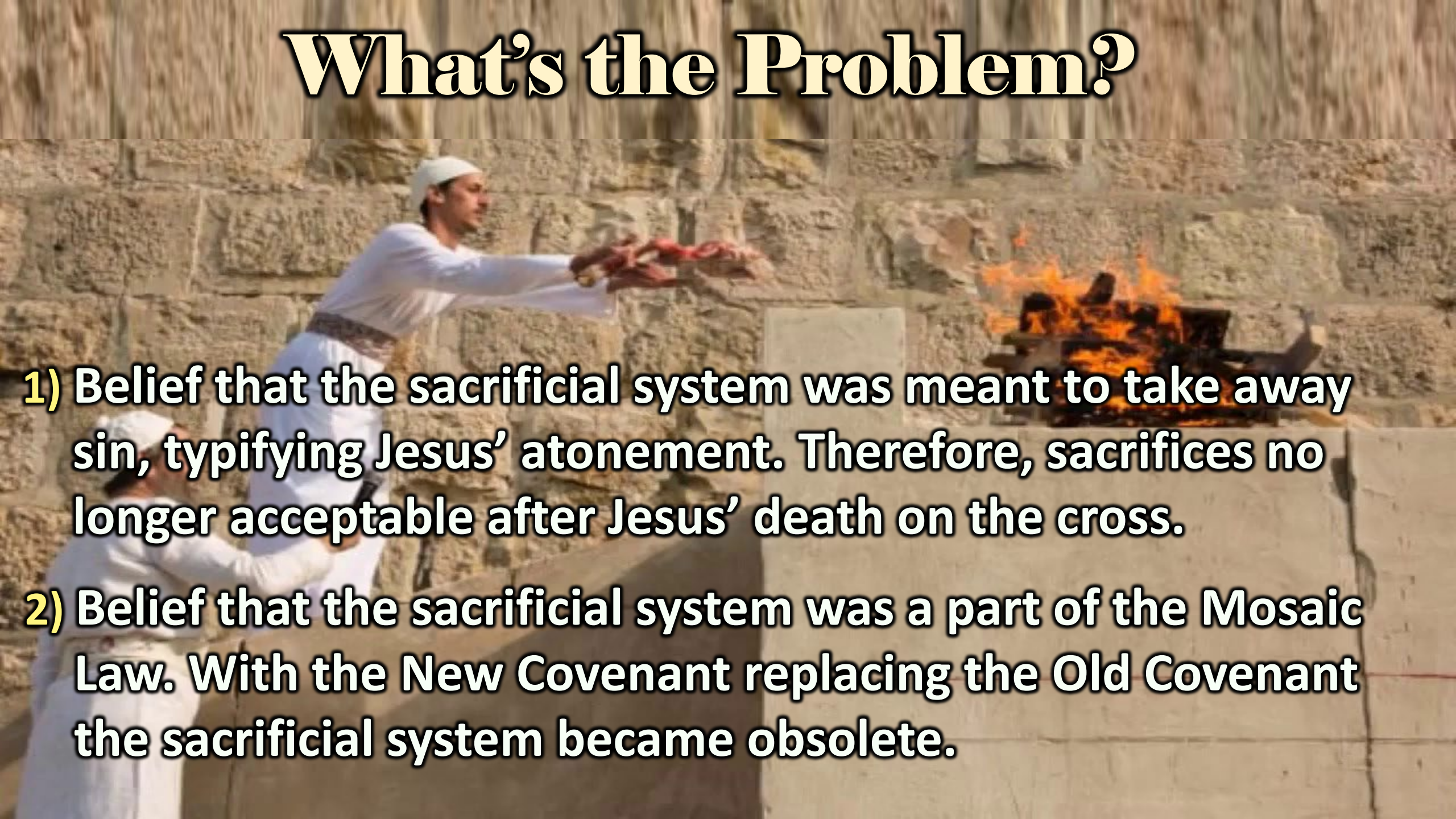


Premillennial:
Sacrifices for Sin
in Light of
Christ's Finished
Work



Amillennial:
Abandon
Normal
Hermeneutic
for Ezekiel
40-48

What's the Problem?

- 
- 1) Belief that the sacrificial system was meant to take away sin, typifying Jesus' atonement. Therefore, sacrifices no longer acceptable after Jesus' death on the cross.
 - 2) Belief that the sacrificial system was a part of the Mosaic Law. With the New Covenant replacing the Old Covenant the sacrificial system became obsolete.

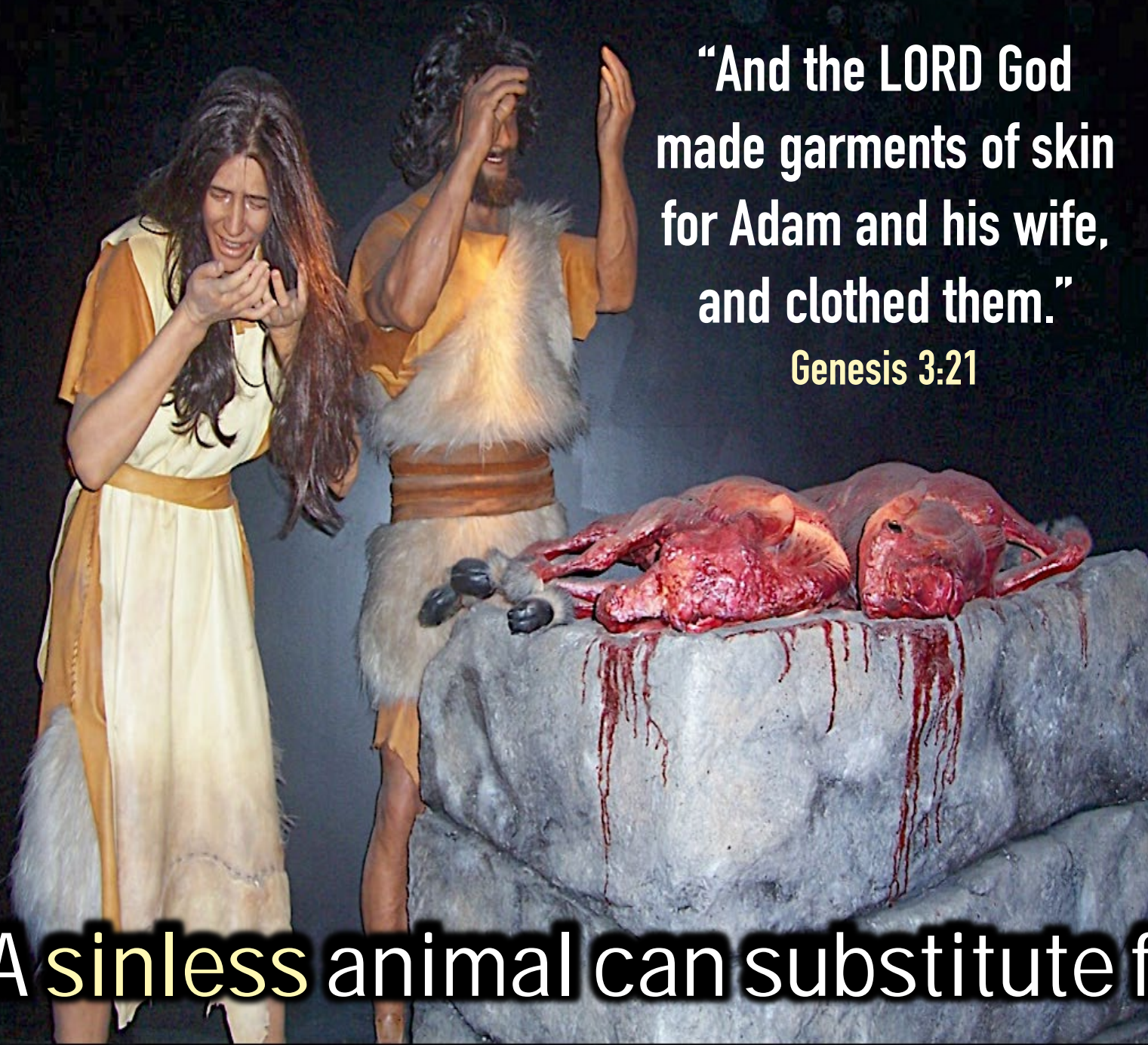


The Sacrificial System

In Ancient
Israel

**“And the LORD God
made garments of skin
for Adam and his wife,
and clothed them.”**

Genesis 3:21

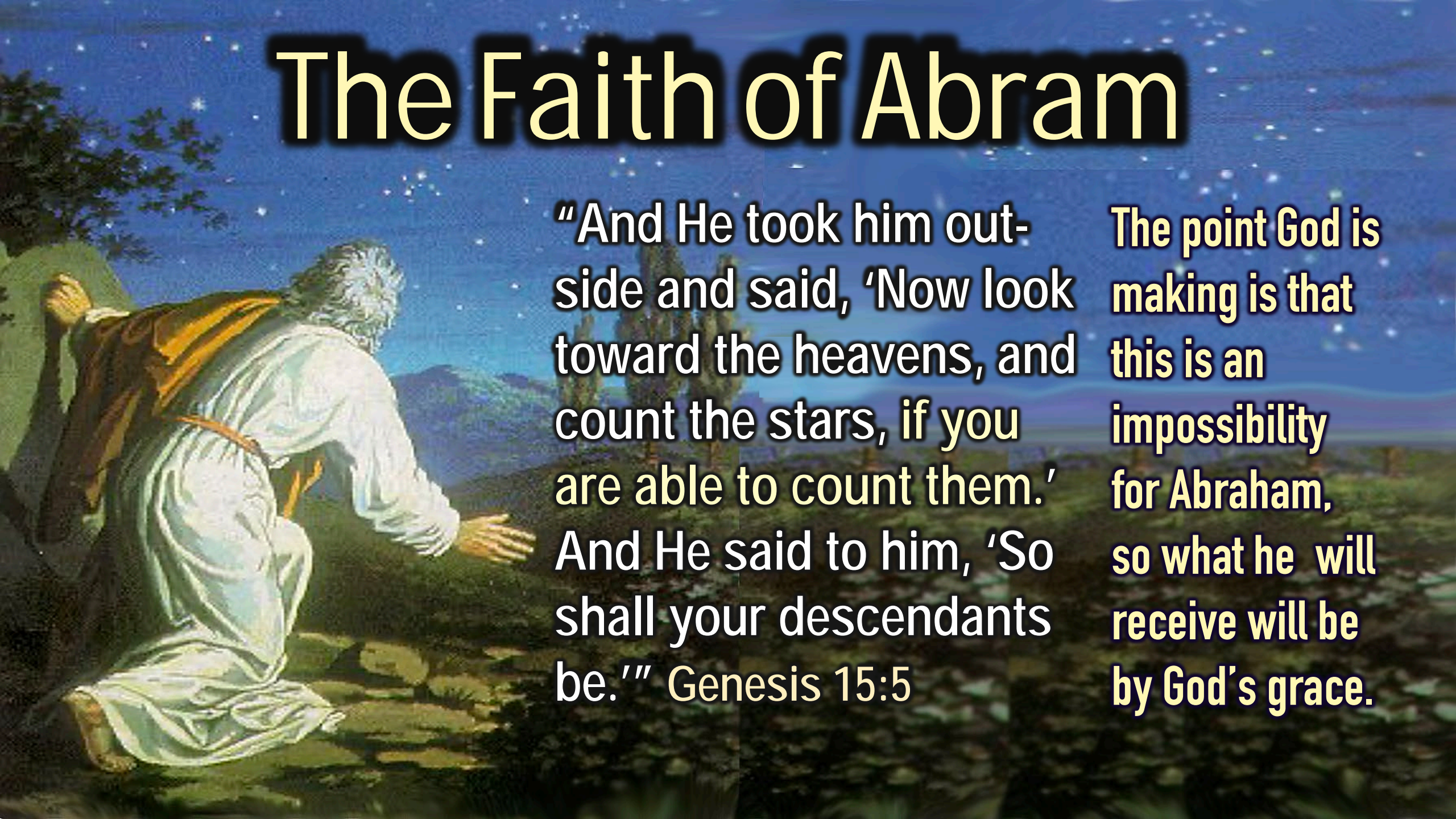


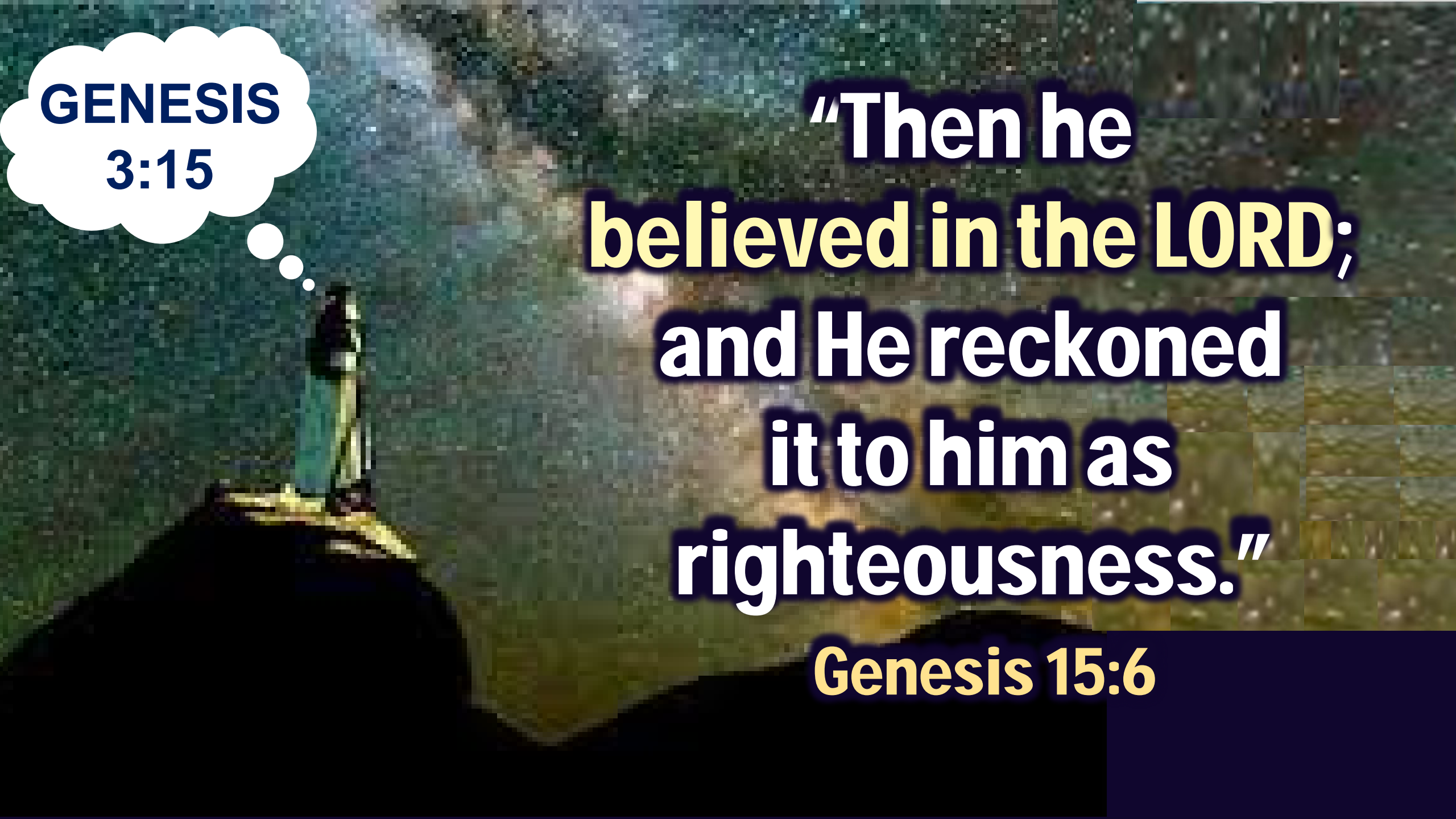
A sinless animal can substitute for a sinful human

The Faith of Abram

“And He took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’” Genesis 15:5

The point God is making is that this is an impossibility for Abraham, so what he will receive will be by God’s grace.





**GENESIS
3:15**

**"Then he
believed in the LORD;
and He reckoned
it to him as
righteousness."**

Genesis 15:6



“the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached to gospel before-hand to Abraham.” Galatians 3:8

Thinking Biblically About the Sacrificial System

The Law was not given to save anyone. For the first 2500 years of biblical history there was no Law, but there was sacrifice. Abel, Noah and Abraham all offered sacrifices and were said to be righteous (Heb. 11:4-8). Moreover, the Law was only given to the Jewish People, so how did Gentiles get saved? The purpose of the Law was to enable the covenant people to live in God's Land. Salvation for both Jew and Gentile was always by faith and was always apart from the Law. Whatever purpose the Law and sacrifice had during Israel's time in the Land it should also have in the Millennial Kingdom, since the New Covenant, like the Old Covenant, was made with Israel.

What Sacrifices Were Not Meant to Do

“For it is *impossible* for the blood of bulls and goats to *take away sins* ... And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can *never take away sins* ...”. Hebrews 10:4, 11

What Sacrifices Were Meant to Do

“For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify *for the cleansing of the flesh* ...” Hebrews 9:13



“you shall be to Me a
kingdom of priests
and a holy nation ...”

Exodus 19:6

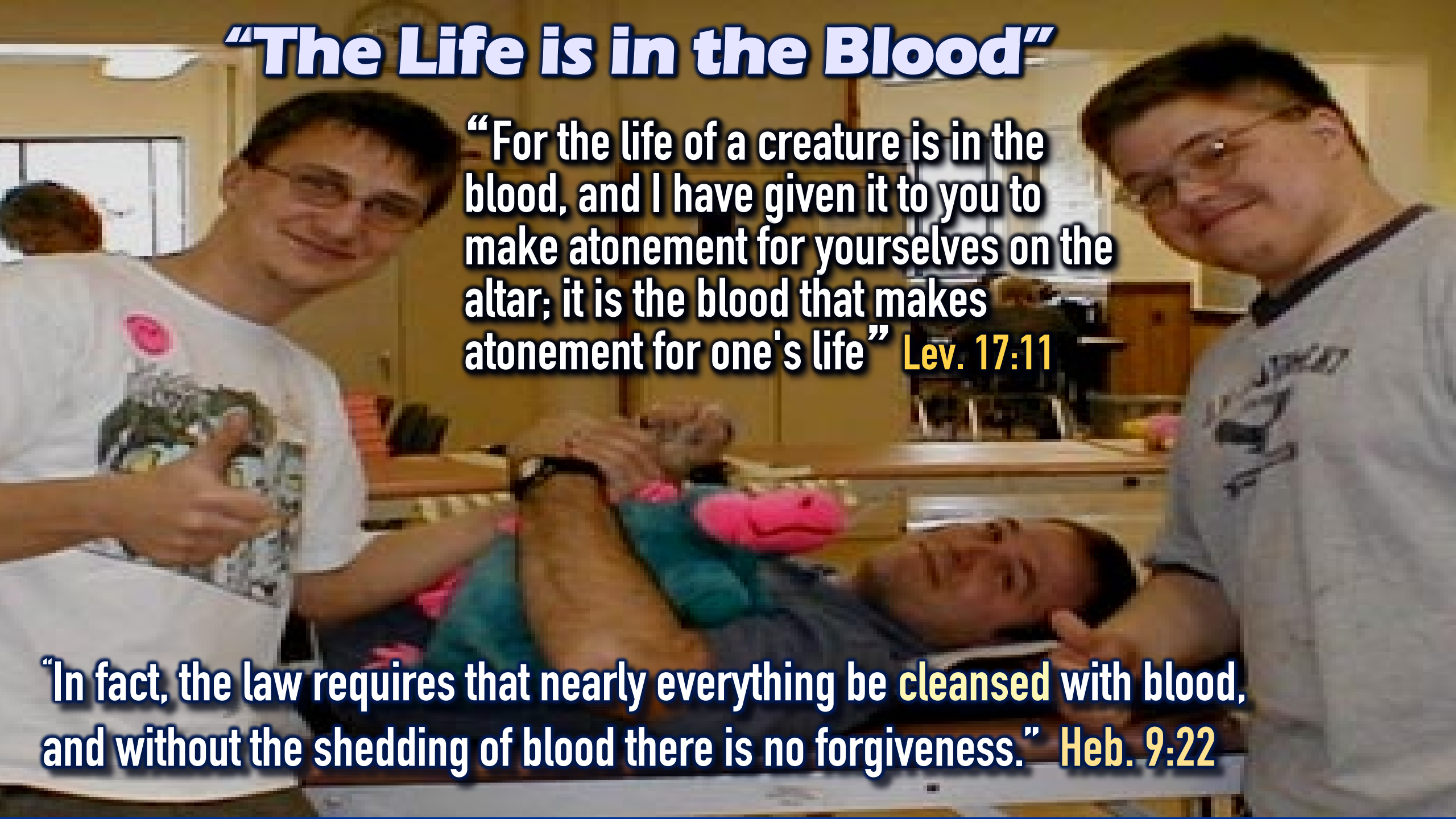
“Thus you are to be
holy to Me, for I the
LORD am holy; and I
have set you apart
from the peoples to be
Mine.”

Leviticus 20:26

“The Life is in the Blood”

“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life” Lev. 17:11

“In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” Heb. 9:22



Why Millennial Sacrifices?



PAST

Looked toward Christ's Death



FUTURE

Looks back on Christ's Death

Theocratic: like confession of sin (1 John 1:9)

Memorial: like Lord's Supper

- Paul offered a Temple sacrifice in AD 57 (Acts 21:26) without seeing a "digression problem" — the Temple is God's institution (past, present, future)

Statement of the Memorial View

"These sacrifices do not take away sin in the millennial age any more than animal sacrifices did in Old Testament times. Their purpose seems to be that of being a vivid reminder of the Lord's death. As the Lord's Supper is a reminder of the death of Christ to the church today, it is probable that the animal sacrifices will uniquely memorialize Christ's horrible death on the cross. This will be a powerful teaching tool to people born in an age where righteousness and holiness prevail—in an age that is so free from the external effects of sin that its exceeding sinfulness is not clearly understood."

Charles H. Dyer, "Ezekiel," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 1303–4.



Memorial View Insufficient

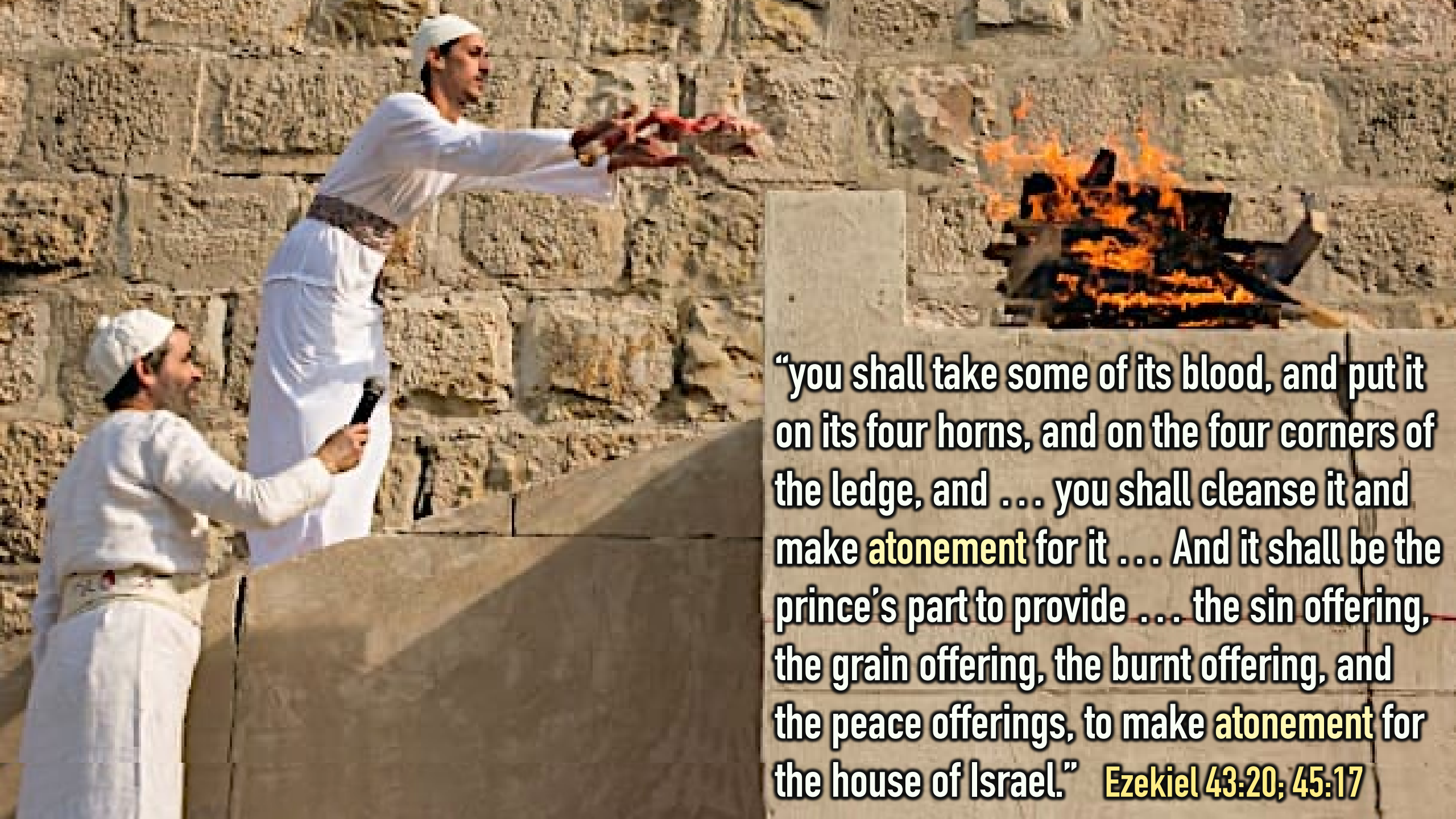
“However compelling and non-conflicting (with the concept of the once for-all sacrifice of Christ) the memorial view may be, it is insufficient to explain the details recorded concerning the sacrifices and the fact that it is said that they relate to “atonement” (Ezekiel 43:20, 26; 45: 15 , 17, 20).”

Charles C. Ryrie, “Why Sacrifices in the Millennium?,” *The Emmaus Journal* 11 (2002), 301

Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple



“to make
ATONEMENT
for the house of Israel”
Ezekiel 45:17



“you shall take some of its blood, and put it on its four horns, and on the four corners of the ledge, and ... you shall cleanse it and make **atonement** for it ... And it shall be the prince’s part to provide ... the sin offering, the grain offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make **atonement** for the house of Israel.” **Ezekiel 43:20; 45:17**

“And it shall be the prince’s part to provide the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the libations, at the feasts, on the new moons, and on the sabbaths, at all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel; he shall provide the sin offering, the grain offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make atonement for the house of Israel.” Ezekiel 45:17



What Does the Term כפר *KPR* Mean?



“Make yourself an ark of *gopher wood*; make rooms in the ark, and cover (*kapharta – Qal perfect*) it inside and outside with *pitch* (*kopher*).” Genesis 6:14

The use of *kpr* in Genesis is non-ritual and is the only use of the Qal stem. The use of *kpr* in ritual contexts is only in the Piel stem (*kipper*) from a different root that does not mean “cover.”



What Does the Term כפר *KPR* Mean?



The better understanding of “atone” (*kipper*) is to purify” or “cleanse,” based on the Akkadian cognate *kuppuru*.

The offerings purge people and objects of ritual or ceremonial impurity (defilement) so as to make them again fit for regular worship or use in worship (i.e., within the sacred Temple service).

טהר ("cleanse") and כפר ("atone") in Ezekiel

House of Israel – "I will sprinkle clean water (מֵיִם טְהוֹרִים) on you, and you will be clean; (טְהַרְתֶּם) I will cleanse (אֶטְהַר) you from all your filthiness and from all your idols." Ezek. 36:25, 33; 37:23 "make atonement (כַּפֵּר) for them" Ezek. 45:15, 17

Land of Israel - "For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land" (טְהַר אֶת־הָאָרֶץ). Ezek. 39:12, 14, 16

Sanctuary - " take a young bull without blemish and cleanse (חִטְּאֵת) the Sanctuary." Ezek. 45:18. "make atonement (כַּפֵּרְתֶּם) for the house." Ezek. 45:20

Altar – "offer a sin offering; and cleanse (חִטְּאוּ) the altar, as they cleansed it with the bull." Ezek. 43:22 "you shall cleanse (חִטְּאֵת) it and make atonement (כַּפֵּר) for it." Ezek. 43:2 "make atonement (יִכַּפְרוּ) for the altar and purify (שִׁהַרְוּ) it." Ezek. 43:26

The Purpose of New Covenant Sacrifices in the Theocratic Kingdom

The Sacrificial System was never intended to take away sins (internal permanent cleansing) but under a Theocracy, where God's Presence dwelt in the midst of the Nation, it was necessary for external temporary cleansing. This permitted defiled people to approach the Temple in a ritually purified state and restored the individual with respect to their place within the community and in their relationship to YHWH.



NO LONGER A MEMBER IN GOOD
STANDING IN THE THEOCRACY

OUT OF FELLOWSHIP
WITH THE LORD

Could be
offered by
anyone who
was ritually
defiled to
purge the
impurity.

Purpose of the New Covenant Sacrifices in the Theocratic Kingdom

- 1) Sacrifices under the Old Covenant did not take away sin. That was not their purpose. Those under the Old Covenant were saved as are those under the New Covenant, by grace through faith in Christ. Christ alone put away sin by His penal substitutionary sacrifice (Heb. 9:26).
- 2) Those in non-resurrection bodies in the Millennial Kingdom will need external ritual (ceremonial) purification to serve within the Temple since God's Divine Presence will be there and cannot He co-exist with ritual impurity (Lev. 10:3; Hab. 1:13). Violations would result in divine judgment (Lev. 10:6).
- 3) New Covenant sacrifices achieve a national-Theocratic purpose: to restore ritual (ceremonial) purity (Lev. 4-5) to avoid temporal judgment (Lev. 7:21, 27), "the rod of iron" (Ps. 2:9; Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). This is comparable to "confession of sin" (1 Jn. 1:9) during the Church Age to avoid "the sin unto death" (1 Jn. 5:16-17).
- 4) Life and physical blessing in the Millennium will depend on conformity to the ritual (ceremonial) purity laws that protect the pervasive holiness of the Temple and city of Jerusalem (Isa. 4:3-6; Zech. 14:20-21) and its blessings mediated to the world (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 2:3-4; 4:2; 12:5-6; 25:7-9; 27:12-13; Jer. 33:15).

Benefits of the Millennial Sacrifices

“Thus, millennial sacrifices ... will render payment for sins committed against the government to effect theocratic forgiveness. They will proclaim the once-for-all death of Christ on the cross - a proclamation that will be frequent and clear, for the people will have available the presence of the Savior and the entire Bible to read. And they will offer proof of changed lives by those who will bring them out of love and a pure heart. These are all worthy purposes and in no way backward steps in the progressive revelation of the glory of God.”

Charles C. Ryrie, Why the Millennial Sacrifices,” *The Emmaus Journal* 11:2 (2002): 310

Summary of Atonement View Conclusions

- 1) Sacrifices did not disappear with the Old Covenant but continued under the New (Acts 21:26; 24:17-18).
- 2) Ezekiel's sacrifices are for those living under the New Covenant during the Millennial Kingdom when a new Temple is functioning with the Divine Presence in residence (Ezek. 37:25-28; 43:1-7; 48:35).
- 3) Sacrifices could not cleanse the conscience (spiritual cleansing), Heb. 9:9; 10:1-14 but were effective for the temporary cleansing of the flesh (ritual cleansing), Heb. 9:13. Christ's sacrifice was for permanent (eternal) internal cleansing of the conscience (Heb. 9:14).
- 4) Jesus coming as the Lamb of God to take away sin (Jn. 1:29, 36) did not make sacrificial system obsolete. Christ as our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7) did not end the commemoration of the Passover (1 Cor. 5:8). Redemption through the blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:19) did not cancel the need for temporal cleansing by blood (1 Jn. 1:7).
- 5) Offering "spiritual sacrifices" (Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:5; Rom. 15:16) in the Church as a function of worship does not exclude the future offering of physical sacrifices as a function of ritual purity within a Theocratic Kingdom .

Inconsistent Hermeneutical Practice

**“We can hardly
spiritualize the sacrifices
and then
literalize the Temple.”**

Anthony Hoekma, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 204

The Danger of Inconsistent Literal Interpretation

“In my opinion, such an exposition of Holy Scripture is not only fanciful but dangerous, causing the student to wonder whether each expositor is not, after all, a guide unto himself, the blind leading the blind. If the commentator rejects the literal interpretation of the passage and fails to find support elsewhere in Scripture for a consistent figurative or symbolic interpretation, he should confess his ignorance, leave the passage alone, and go elsewhere. For many centuries the Church has been subjected to various spiritualizing interpretations of Old and New Testament prophecies concerning the Second Coming of Christ. It is our prayer that God will raise up many faithful students of His Word in these last days who will search the prophetic Scriptures in the belief that God actually means what He says.”

John C. Whitcomb, “The Millennial Temple of Ezekiel 40–48 (An Exercise in Literal Interpretation),” 17

Hermeneutical Confusion Resulting from an Inconsistent Literal Interpretation of Prophecy

- 1. Inaccurate and misleading reading of Scripture**
- 2. Contradicts the doctrine of a literal future for National Israel**
- 3. Justifies the spiritualization of all OT restoration texts**
- 4. Removes believer's hope in a literal future fulfillment on earth**
- 5. Obscures the outworking of prophetic fulfillment in the present age**

Arguments for a Literal Interpretation

The background of the slide is a vibrant, detailed illustration of the Temple of Ezekiel. The temple is a massive, multi-tiered structure with a prominent portico supported by tall, fluted columns. The roof is adorned with a row of golden, pointed finials. In the foreground, a large, diverse crowd of people is gathered, some appearing to be in a state of celebration or prayer. The scene is set against a bright, hazy sky, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall style is that of a classic religious painting or a detailed architectural rendering.

- (1) The Literary Unity of the Book.
- (2) The Context of the Temple's Restoration.
- (3) The Detailed Design of the Temple.
- (4) The Description of the Shekinah's Departure and Return.
- (5) The Conditions of the Restoration Context.
- (6) The Harmony with other Old Testament Prophetic Passages.
- (7) The Requirement of Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple.

“Those who have discovered that *the key to interpreting God's Word properly* is to understand it in a normal/literal way, will also discover that **Ezekiel 40-48 is not a burden to the Bible student, but a *delight*. What joy God brings to the heart of the believer when he realizes, perhaps for the first time, that God did not give us any portion of His Word to confuse us, but rather to *enlighten* us.**

God really *does* mean what He says!”

John C. Whitcomb, “The Millennial Temple of Ezekiel 40-48 (An Exercise in Literal Interpretation),” *The Diligent Workman Journal* 2:1 (May 1994).