

Having established that there is a need for a temple in the future age at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in our previous consideration, we now move on to consider its relative size. In Robert Robert's work entitled True principles and Uncertain detail, he outlined there that the physical details of a future temple cannot be insisted upon, however that there was to be a physical temple was a matter upon which it was impossible to compromise without distorting plain scriptural teaching.

Accordingly, we shall examine number of different areas which indicate how we might view the temple in terms of its size. Having established that the temple detailed in the book of Ezekiel in the latter chapters will become a physical reality, the main difference between the size is between the outer walls being 500 cubits or 500 reeds on each side. The construction of a plan of this small temple, being 500 cubits is based upon an analysis of the detail and a computation of the various elements given. On the other hand, the large temple being 500 reeds on each side is a matter of express teaching as we can see in chapter 42 verses 15 to 20. Reeds is the unit of measurement given in the prophecy, when there is no doubt, that this is repeated in the text nine times. It cannot be an insignificant fact, that the dimensions of this future temple were clearly set out in this way. The reed is the unit of measurement of the temple and is expressed as being 6 cubits by the cubit and a hand breath. The large temple therefore has a surface area of some 36 times of the smaller temple, so the difference between these two options is significant.

Advocates of the small temple regard these walls as not being part of the temple but is instead a surrounding retaining wall often without gates. This is done in an attempt to square the computations of 500 cubits with the express dimensions given of 500 reeds. However, it will be noted in verse 15 that the Prophet is *"brought forth toward the gate whose prospect is toward the east and measured it roundabout"*. There is no latitude here for an

additional surrounding wall further out but instead a plain reading of scripture requires it to be understood that the 500 reeds on the North, South, West and East to be from the gate.

We could of course have stopped there and argued that a small temple is therefore in direct contradiction to the explicit teaching of scripture, however there are a number of different areas which reinforces understanding from the text in Ezekiel and other supporting passages which underlay the scriptural teaching concerning a future physical temple in other parts of the Bible.

In Ezekiel chapter 40 verse 2 The House of prayerful nations is introduced by the prophet in the opening vision with the description of it as being "*as the frame of a city on the South*". In the consideration of the larger temple the dimensions of 500 reeds on each side equate to 3000 cubits. This gives either 1750 yards using a 21 inch cubit or 2000 yards using a 24 inch cubit. There being 1760 yards in a mile, the large temple using reeds for its dimensions could be considered as the frame of a small city. However, the small temple cannot be so described as its dimensions are only about 300 yards square. There is no habitation so small regarded as a city elsewhere in scripture.

The consideration of its size is important as Isaiah 66 verse 23 informs the reader 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*". The logistics of a small temple made to accommodate the continual flow of all flesh becomes extremely strained. However, in the large temple with a range of outer buildings including a double tiered three storey building, with massive corner towers, multiplies the assembly areas considerably and allows a practical understanding of how this building is to be understood as "*the House of prayer for all nations*".

At the centre of this new physical temple is to be the altar this is inside both the outer and inner range of buildings which the text details. No mortals are allowed to approach this altar, however upon it all the offerings of the assembly assembled masses are to be made. In Haggai 2 verse 9 it says, *“the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former saith the LORD of hosts”*. In Solomon’s temple which of course is the former temple, the altar upon which the offerings were made was 20 cubits by 20 cubits and 10 cubits being the heights thereof, 2 Chronicles chapter 4 verse one. However, in Ezekiel 43 verse 16 the new altar is described as being 12 long by 12 broad, with the unit of measurement not explicitly given in the text. Using the construct of the small temple this would mean that the Melchizedekian altar is almost three times smaller than the Solomonic altar. Whereas, in the large temple construct the units of measurement being the reed as the default scale for this new temple, means that's in Ezekiel’s temple the altar is 13 times the size of the altar in Solomon’s temple. On a practical basis it seems awkward if not impossible that God would reduce the size for the offerings of the whole world to 1/3 the size of the altar required for the offerings of just the nation of Israel during biblical times.

In Ezekiel 43 verse 12 we read *“this is the law of the house: upon the top of the mountain the whole limit roundabout shall be most holy. Behold this is the law of the house”*. Which informs us that the house is placed upon the top of the mountain. If we compare this with Zechariah 8 verse 3 another vision of future glory which talks about Zion and Jerusalem being called a city of truth and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain. The dynamic of Zion being a city upon a mountain with the dimensions of a small temple of 500 cubits some 300 yards on each side is strained. However, if the temple is indeed the larger construction of 500 reeds, then a mile square temple with a mountain in the centre becomes viable. In keeping with this the idea of the altar being at the very centre of this new temple would place it upon the top of the mountain and in a suitable position to be seen from every side

by those who have assembled to worship the LORD there and to see the offerings of the sacrifices they have brought heaved up high upon that central altar. In the large construction of the temple this altar is some 48 yards square which contrasts with the small temple with a maximum extent of only 300 yards on each side. See also Micah 4v1,2.

The various internal details require a larger temple. For instance, in Ezekiel 40v45,46 details that the chambers are for the keepers of the charge of the altar, these are the immortal priests of Zadok, the glorified saints, and a smaller temple cannot accommodate them in the same way that a larger temple could. They dwell there, and even with a shared living space there is just not enough room for them, especially when Psalm 48 requires the understanding of “palaces” see verse 3 *“God is known in her palaces for a refuge”*. Also verse 13 *“Mark well her bulwarks consider her palaces”*. This is a large, bulwarked edifice not a limited small temple.

The abundance of water is also a consideration. In Isaiah 33v21 *“but there the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams wherein shall go no galley with oars neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.”* This is not a water course of a small temple but the size of an inland port, but forbidding sizeable ships to dock which could otherwise do so. Zechariah 14v8 also details that living waters shall proceed from Jerusalem which will cleanse the dead sea and it seems awkward that there would be room for such an issuing in a small temple. Where is there any room for the water? In the larger temple the central mountain can be understood to be the source of larger volumes of water as such passages require.

The accumulation of water from a small temple does not satisfy the vision of an abundance of water amassing into *“a river that could not be passed over”* 47v5. More on this subject later as we have a whole section devoted to this very topic.

In Mark 11v17 Jesus himself confirms that this future temple will be *“called of all nations, the house of prayer”*. Adding his personal

testimony to the physical nature of this future edifice, and its universal scope. The sheer number of continual visitors requires a larger temple than one only some nine football pitches in area.

There are then seven major area of evidence which influence the understanding of the size of Ezekiel's temple.

- 1 Greater glory than Solomon's temple
- 2 Number of future worshippers
- 3 Considered also as a city
- 4 Mountain contained within
- 5 Dimensions expressly given
- 6 Internal details
- 7 Water issues

Whilst not a conclusive argument in its own right, these ideas have been accumulated over many years and have been robustly argued and defended against counterclaims none of which have provided sufficient evidence to refute any of the above points let alone all of these above points. In the absence of any workable alternative, there therefore seems no rationale for abandoning the long-held view in the history of the Truth of well over 100 years of understanding that the temple of Ezekiel in the future age, to be built by Christ after his return is a large temple or 500 reeds on each side, not the smaller temple of 500 cubits.

It should be noted that all earlier depictions of the smaller temple are in effect based upon the diagram and calculations in the book about the future temple written by Davidson, a Plymouth brother in the mid-19th century. Indeed, in an early analysis or whether the temple was large or small Davidson's diagram was utilised without reference to his work. This can be found in all Darby Bibles. With the large temple as outlined by in the exposition of Henry Sulley, in his book "the Temple of Ezekiel 's prophecy", while it is not without the need for some corrections, can be regarded as a basis for

seeking a practical understanding not only how the temple might look but also how it's ordinances can only be carried out in such a larger building, having the added advantage of being written by a Brother in the Truth.

A Voice from the Altar

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