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The Altar, a Sign of Hope

Definitions in **bold** letters are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance
Other definitions are from **Webster's** Dictionary, 1828 Edition
or Roget's Thesaurus – **November 9, 2014**

Ezekiel 43:13-21

Introduction: The prophet, having given us a view of the mystical (figurative) **temple**, the gospel-church, as he received it from the Lord, that it might appear not to be erected in vain, comes to describe, in this and the next chapter, the worship that should be performed in it, but under the **type** (SYMBOL) of the Old-Testament services. In this chapter we have, **I.** Possession taken of this temple, by the **glory** of God **filling** it, Ez. 43:1-6. **II.** A **promise** given of the continuance of God's presence with his people upon condition of their return to, and continuance in, the instituted way of worship, and their abandoning idols and idolatry, Ez. 43:7-12. **III.** A description of the **altar** of **burnt-offerings**, Ez. 43:13-17. **IV.** Directions given for the consecration of that altar, Ez. 43:18-27. Ezekiel seems here to stand between God and Israel, as Moses the servant of the Lord did when the sanctuary was first set up. (Source: *The Matthew Henry Commentary on the whole Bible classic.studylight.org/com/mhc*)

Ezekiel 43:13, And these are the **measures** of the **ALTAR** after the **cubits**: The CUBIT is a cubit and an hand breadth; even the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit...

Cubit, in mensuration, the length of a man's arm from the elbow to the extremity of the middle finger. The cubit among the ancients was of a different length among different nations. Dr. Arbuthnot states the Roman cubit at seventeen inches and four tenths; the cubit of the scriptures at a little less than 22 inches; and the English cubit at 18 inches.

...and the **border** (outer edge) thereof by the **edge (lip)** thereof round about shall be a **span** (nine inches): and this shall be the higher place of the **altar**.

NOTE: This relates to the altar in this mystical (figurative) temple, and that is mystical (figurative) too; for **Christ is our ALTAR**. The Jews, after their return out of captivity, had an altar long before they had a temple, Ezra. 3:3. But this was an altar in the temple. (Source: *The Matthew Henry Commentary on the whole Bible classic.studylight.org/com/mhc*)

Hebrews 13:10, We have an **ALTAR**, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

NOTE: ...the cubit is a cubit and an hand breadth; not the common CUBIT, but what was larger than that by a hand breadth, or three inches: **even the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit**; or, "the bosom"; that is, the **FOUNDATION** of the altar, as the Targum and Jarchi; the basis, FOOT, or settle of it; this was a cubit high, and a cubit broad: **and the border...** the edge or "LIP", of this bottom or settle, was a cubit broad, for the priests to stand and go round the altar, and to this there was a border of a **SPAN**, or half a cubit, to prevent their slipping; or else to keep the blood, poured at the foot of the altar, from running upon the pavement: ...**shall be the higher place...** or the

projection or **jetting of it out** beyond others, which was further than any other part; otherwise it was the LOWER PART of the altar.

(Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

Ezekiel 43:14-15, And from the **bottom** upon the ground even to the **lower settle** shall be two cubits, and the breadth one cubit; and from the **lesser settle** even to the **greater settle** shall be four cubits, and the breadth one cubit. So the ALTAR shall be four cubits; and from the **altar** and upward shall be **four horns**.

NOTE: Upon the **base** rests the **upper levels** of the **altar**, which are blocks of **decreasing** size. The first of these is from “the ground even to the lower settle.” The height of this level is to be “two cubits, and the breath one cubit.” The Hebrew word translated “settle” is found only in this description, and it most likely designates a **LEDGE**, or border. The level being described here would have a one-cubit ledge because the level above it is smaller in perimeter.

Upon this first box-like tier rests another, described this way: “From the lesser settle even to the greater settle shall be four cubits, and the breath one cubit” (Ezek. 43:14). “Lesser” and “greater” refer to the relative height of the **two tiers** to which the ledges belong. The lower one is two cubits wide, and the upper one is smaller in perimeter, it is **greater** in **height** and area. This level again has a ledge of a cubit on all sides.

Our translation, “So the altar shall be four cubits” (Ezek. 43:15), could make it sound as if the entire altar would be only **four cubits high**. But the levels already considered are together **seven cubits high**. The Hebrew word used here refers only to the **altar hearth**, where animals sacrifices are **burned**. It means, literally, “hill of God”; a related form of it later in this verse and in verse 16 means “**hearth** of God.” As with the previous level, this hearth is four cubits high.

Upward from this “hearth of God” project **four horns**. Horn-like projections were widely used on altars, among pagans as well as the Israelites. **Both altars** in the tabernacle had horns (Ex. 27:1-2; 30:2-3), and sacrificial blood was sprinkled on them (cf. 29:12; 30:10). There is also one reference binding a sacrifice to the horns of the altar (Ps. 118:27), though we do not know whether this was common.

The **horns** of the **altar** of the sacrifice also provided temporary **refuge** for a person fleeing an avenger of blood until his case could be adjudicated (tried and decided). Adonijah (1 Kings 1:50) and Joab (2:28) grasped the horns of the altar, hoping to escape the wrath of Solomon. This gained Adonijah a temporary reprieve (1:51-53), but Joab was adjudged a **murderer** and **executed** on the spot (1 Kings 2:29-34; cf. Ex. 21:12-14).

What then horns of the altar symbolized is never stated. But we know that in other contexts, horns signify **aggressive strength**, like that of the animals that possessed them. To exalt one’s horn meant to increase one’s strength (cf. 1 Sam. 2:1, 10); to cut off, or break off, one’s horn was to take it away (cf. Dan. 7:8; 8:5-7.) Thus, the **horns** of the **altar** symbolize **God’s power**.

(Source: *The Bible Expositor and Illuminator, Union Press Publication-Christian Life Series*)

1 Kings 1:24-25, 32-34, 49-51, And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? For he is gone down this day ...hath slain oxen ...fat cattle... called all the king's sons,... captains of the host ...Abiathar the priest; and ...eat and drink... and say, God save **king Adonijah**. ...And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest ...Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. ...Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause **Solomon** my son to ride upon mine own mule ...bring him down to Gihon: ...let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet **anoint him** there **king** over Israel: ...blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save **king Solomon**. ...And all the guests that were with Adonijah were afraid ...rose up, and went every man his way. And **Adonijah** **feared** because of **Solomon**... arose ...went ...**caught hold** on the **horns** of the ALTAR. And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon: for, lo, he hath caught hold

on the **horns** of the **altar**, saying, Let king Solomon **swear** unto me to day that he will not **slay** his servant with the sword.

2 Samuel 22:1-3 ...David spake unto the LORD the words of this **song** in the day that the LORD had **delivered** him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul: ...he said, The LORD is my **rock** ...my fortress ...my deliverer; the God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield ...and The **horn** **(POWER)** of my salvation...

Ezekiel 43:16-17, And the **ALTAR** shall be **twelve cubits** LONG, **twelve BROAD**, square in the four squares thereof. And the **settle** (bench) shall be **fourteen cubits** LONG and **fourteen BROAD** in the four squares thereof; and the **border** about it shall be half a cubit; and the **bottom** thereof shall be a cubit about; and his **stairs** shall look toward the **east**.

NOTE: Up to this point, the **height** of each **level** has been indicated, proceeding from the bottom to the top. Now, the Lord, starting from the top, revealed the perimeter of each level. The word for altar in verse 16 refers only to the "**hearth of God**," the topmost part where sacrifices are offered. It is "twelve cubits long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof."

The ledge on which the **altar hearth** rests is fourteen by fourteen cubits. In other words, it extends outward from the sides of the hearth one cubit on each side, forming a larger cube. But here we also learn that this ledge, like the base, has a border of half a cubit **turned upward**.

In the measurements of the perimeters, one ledge appears to be missing, for the text continues, "And the bottom (base) thereof shall be a cubit about" (Ezek. 43:17). Most believe it is eliminated for brevities sake and that there are three cubes of **twelve cubits**, **fourteen cubits**, and **sixteen cubits square** placed on a base of eighteen cubits square. Others believe the top TWO levels are the same (twelve cubits square) and that these rest on a **fourteen-cubit** enclosure set on a **sixteen-cubit base** (cf. Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Eerdmans).

The dimensions of the **millennial altar**, then are **11 cubits** (about 17.5 feet) high and **18 cubits** (about 31.5 feet) square at its BASE. However, some expositors believe some of the lower part is below ground level, leaving a height above ground of only **10 cubits** (cf. Walvoord and Zuck, eds. *The Bible knowledge Commentary*, Cook). It is a large structure, approached by **stairs** on its **east side**. It will be the focal point for anyone approaching the temple.

(Source: *The Bible Expositor and Illuminator*, Union Press Publication-Christian Life Series)

Ezekiel 43:18, And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord (Yahweh) GOD; These are the **ordinances** (command, instructions) of (about) the **altar** in the day when they shall make it, to **OFFER burnt offerings** thereon, and to sprinkle **blood** thereon.

NOTE: **...son of man, thus saith the Lord God** This is the voice of the Lord continued, speaking out of the house to the prophet; see (Ezekiel 43:6) : **these are the ordinances of the altar**: not what go before, concerning the measures of it, but what follow, concerning the sacrifices to be offered on it: **...and sprinkle blood thereon**; this plainly shows that this altar is the altar of **burnt offerings**; such were to be offered on it, and the **blood** of them to be **sprinkled** thereon, as follows; that is, upon the horns, corners, and border of it... (Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

Hebrews 9:11-12, 21, But **Christ** being come a **high priest** of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the **blood** of goats and calves, but by his **own blood** he entered in **ONCE** into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. ...Moreover he (Moses) **sprinkled** likewise with **blood** both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

Ezekiel 43:19, 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**.

NOTE: ...priests the Levites, that be of the seed of Zadok ...Who, in Solomon's time, was put in the room of Abiathar; see (Ezekiel 40:46), his name signifies a **"righteous" one**, a type (SYMBOL) he was of Jesus Christ the righteous; and here his seed signify the seed of Christ, such whom he makes priests unto the Lord; to these, in a visionary way, the prophet was to give this altar, for them to serve at, and eat of; and all the rites and ordinances to observe and keep; and the sacrifices to offer on it, after mentioned: **...to minister unto me**, (See Gill on Ezekiel 40:46): **a young bullock** ...typical of Christ, strong and laborious, able to **bear** the **SINS** of his people; to become a sin offering, and to be **MADE SIN** itself for them.

(Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

Isaiah 53:6, All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD (Yahweh) hath **LAID on him** the **iniquity** of us all.

2 Corinthians 5:21, For he (*the Father*) hath **MADE him** (*Jesus*) to **BE SIN** for us, who knew no sin; that WE might be made the righteousness of God IN him.

Hebrews 9:27-28, And as it is appointed unto men once to **DIE**, but after this the judgment: so Christ was **ONCE offered** to **bear** the **sins** of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Ezekiel 43:20, And thou shalt take of the **blood** thereof, and put it on the **four horns** of it, and on the four corners of the **settle**, and upon the border round about: thus shalt thou **cleanse** and **purge** (*purify*) it.

NOTE: ... take of the blood thereof Ezekiel being a **priest**. This must be understood in a visionary way; for, as Kimchi observes, Ezekiel did not live to come up out of the captivity, but died, and was buried in the land of Babylon, and so did not actually do this... **...put it on the four horns of it, ...corners of the settle, and upon the border**; that is, on the four horns of the altar, and on the four corners of the settle which went round it, for the priests to walk on, and do their business; either the **uppermost**, or as others the **lowermost**, and as some both; and also on the border or ledge that enclosed the settle. The prophet's doing this, putting the **blood** on these several things, **represents** the nature of the **Gospel ministry**, and the business of it; which is to hold forth the **blood** of **Christ**, and the blessings of **GRACE** through it, as redemption, peace, pardon, righteousness, and **LIFE**. **...thou cleanse and purge it**; the altar; thus Christ, though without SIN, and needed no cleansing and purging for himself, yet was sanctified by his **own blood**; that he might sanctify his people, and **perfect** by his sacrifice **THEM** that were sanctified, (John 17:19) (Hebrews 10:14; Hebrews 10:29) (13:12).

(Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

Hebrews 10:10-14... we are sanctified through the **offering** of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering often times the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered **one sacrifice** for **SINS for ever**, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by **ONE** offering he hath **perfected** (**complete**) for ever **them** that are **sanctified** (**holy** [pure: CLEAN]).

Ezekiel 43:21, Thou shalt take the **bullock** also of the **SIN OFFERING**, and he shall **burn it** in the **appointed place** of the **house (temple)**, **without** (**outside**) the sanctuary.

NOTE: ...take the bullock... Which was appointed for the sin offering, according to the

divine direction, (Ez. 43:19) , the prophet was to take it out of the herd, and separate it from the rest for this purpose, and deliver it into the hands of one of the priests: that is, one of the sons of **Zadok** should receive it of (from) the prophet, and burn it in its proper place; **not within** the house (temple), without the court, but within the wall of the house: this burning of it was typical of the dolorous (dismal, painful) sufferings of Christ; (See Gill on Ez. 40:39), or of the zeal and fervency of the ministers of the Gospel, in preaching a crucified Christ in the proper place, in the house and church of God: without the sanctuary; the holy place or temple, properly so called; or **without** the **camp**, typical (SYMBOLIC) of Christ's suffering **without** (on the outside of) **Jerusalem**, and of his being preached not only there, but in the Gentile world; see (Hebrews 13:11-12) , this was the work of the first day of the consecration of the altar.

(Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

Ezekiel 43:22, And on the SECOND day thou shalt offer a **kid** of the **goats** without blemish for a sin OFFERING; and they shall **cleans**e the **altar**, as they did cleanse it with the **bullock**.

NOTE: ...offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin offering Jarchi observes, that this was not in the tabernacle, but ordered to be in future time by him that speaks; instead of this, another **ram** was appointed by the law, (Ex. 29:15, Ex. 29:19), this shows the ceremonial law to be changeable, and now abolished: this was typical (SYMBOLIC) of Christ, without spot and blemish, and yet figured by the goat, being **made sin** for his people: **and they shall cleans**e the **altar**, as they did cleanse it with the bullock; (See Gill on Ez. 43:20). (Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

Ezekiel 43:23, When thou hast made an end of **cleansing it**, thou shalt **offer** a young bullock without blemish, and a **ram** out of the flock without blemish.

NOTE: ...of **cleansing it** The **altar**, by the sacrifices of the **bullock** and the **kid**, on the first and second days; then, on the third day, thou shalt offer a young bullock without blemish, and a ram out of the flock without blemish; all these sacrifices point at the **ONE sacrifice** of **Christ**; which was **pure** and **perfect**, and once offered up for the sins of many, and needs no reiteration; only the doctrine of it is to be frequently inculcated (impressed or enforced by frequent admonitions) in the ministry of the word and ordinances. (Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

Hebrews 9:22-26, And almost all things are by the law **purged (cleansed)** with **blood**; and without **shedding** of **blood** is no remission. *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be **purified** with these; but the **heavenly** things themselves with **better sacrifices** than these. For **Christ** is not entered into the **holy places** made with hands, *which are* the figures of the TRUE; but into **HEAVEN** itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with **blood** of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now ONCE in the end of the world hath he appeared to **put away SIN** by the **sacrifice** of himself.*

Ezekiel 43:24, And thou shalt offer them before the LORD, and the priests shall cast **salt** upon them, and they shall offer them up for a **burnt offering** unto the LORD.

NOTE: ...cast **salt** upon them; which was to be used in all sacrifices under the law, (Lev. 2:13), this may denote the **savoury doctrines** and **lives** of the ministers of the Gospel, who thereby recommend the truths they deliver, concerning a crucified Christ, his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, to others; see (Matt.5:13): **and they shall offer them up for a burnt offering unto the Lord**; throughout the whole SEVEN days of the consecration and cleansing of the altar, as follows...

(Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

Ezekiel 43:25, Seven days shalt thou **prepare** every day a **goat** for a **sin offering**: they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a RAM out of the flock, **WITHOUT BLEMISH**.

NOTE: By this it appears that the altar was **seven days** a consecrating and cleansing; and that on **each day** a goat was prepared and offered, typical of Christ, as before observed. Here Kimchi owns that this was not according to the order of Moses, or was done by those that came out of the captivity of Babylon; and is obliged to confess that there will be a **CHANGE** or an innovation in the order of sacrifices in time to come, or under the **Messiah**.

Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

Ezekiel 43:26, Seven days shall they **purge** the altar and **purify it**; and they shall consecrate themselves.

NOTE: Seven days shall they purge the altar... Which denotes the **perfect** purity and sanctification of it; which how to be applied to Christ, (See Gill on Ezekiel 43:20); **and** ...the priests shall consecrate themselves, or devote themselves to the service of the altar; so Gospel ministers to the ministry of a crucified Christ: or they themselves should consecrate the altar by the above rites: or rather it may be literally rendered, **and they shall fill its hands**, or "their own hands"; that is, either they shall fill the sides of the altar with sacrifices, as much as it could hold; or the hands of the priests with parts of the sacrifice, or **with gifts**, as a token of their being inaugurated into, and invested with, the priestly office: so Gospel ministers should have their hands full of, or be filled with, the **gifts** and **graces** of the **Spirit**, and with the knowledge of Christ, his person, offices, grace, righteousness, and sacrifice, that they may **minister unto others**.
(Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

Ezekiel 43:27, And 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 (Yahweh) GOD.

NOTE: ...days are expired The seven days of consecration, and all these rites and sacrifices observed: **...upon the eighth day...**; that is, on the **first day** of the week, or Lord's day, the Christian **SABBATH**, the next day **AFTER** the seventh, and so upon every return of it; in which Christian ministrations are exercised, the word preached, ordinances administered, and works of righteousness and charity done; see (John 20:19, John 20:26; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).

John 20:18-19, Mary Magdalene ... told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her. Then the **same day** at evening, being the **first day** of the **week**, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst...

...priests shall make your burnt offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings; or "THANK OFFERINGS"... preach Christ and him crucified to the people, and OFFER up the **sacrifices** of prayer and praise unto God for them: **...accept you...** through Christ, the Mediator, in whom he is well pleased; **who is the ALTAR** on which such **sacrifices** are **accepted**, and become well pleasing to God, (Is. 56:7; 1 Pet 2:5).

(Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)

Romans 12:1, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a **living sacrifice**, holy, **acceptable** unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Hebrews 13:15-16, By him (Jesus) therefore let us **OFFER** the **sacrifice** of **praise** to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such **sacrifices** God is well pleased.