

Ezekiel 43:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about shall be a span: and this shall be the higher place of the altar.

Analysis

And these are the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit is a cubit and an hand breadth. This begins Ezekiel's detailed description of the altar for the millennial temple. The Hebrew middôt hammizbēah (מִדּוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, "measures of the altar") introduces precise specifications that demonstrate God's concern for exact obedience in worship. The **"cubit and an hand breadth"** defines a long cubit (approximately 20.4 inches) versus the standard cubit (approximately 18 inches)—the same royal cubit used in Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 3:3).

"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." The altar's base (hêq, חֵק, "bosom" or "bottom") is one cubit high with a protective border (gəbûl, גְּבוּל) of one span (half a cubit, about 9 inches). This gutter or ledge prevented sacrificial blood from flowing onto the ground, channeling it properly—maintaining holiness through separation. **"And this shall be the higher place of the altar"** introduces the ascending stages, each elevation signifying progressive approach to God's holy presence.

The meticulous measurements reveal God's character: He is a God of order, not

chaos (1 Corinthians 14:33). Every dimension of worship matters to Him because true worship approaches His holiness correctly. The altar, where atonement occurred, required exact specifications because it typified Christ's perfect sacrifice. New Testament fulfillment appears in Hebrews 13:10: "We have an altar"—Christ Himself, whose sacrifice requires no earthly measurements because it accomplished eternal redemption.

Historical Context

Ezekiel received this temple vision in 573 BC (40:1), the 25th year of exile and 14 years after Jerusalem's destruction. The exiles had witnessed the temple's devastation and loss of sacrificial worship. This detailed vision of a future temple and altar provided hope of restoration and renewed communion with God. The altar described here is larger than Solomon's bronze altar (2 Chronicles 4:1), symbolizing greater glory in the eschatological temple. Jewish and Christian interpreters debate whether this describes a literal millennial temple or symbolizes spiritual realities in the church/new creation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's concern for exact measurements in worship challenge casual or careless approaches to Him?
2. What does the altar's ascending stages teach about progressive sanctification and approach to God's presence?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵלֶּה	מִדּוֹת	הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:	וְאַמָּה	וְאַמָּה	וְאַמָּה
H428	And these are the measures	of the altar	The cubit	The cubit	The cubit
	H4060	H4196	H520	H520	H520
וְטַפַּח	וְהֵי יֶקֶד	וְאַמָּה	וְאַמָּה	רֹחַב	
and an hand breadth	even the bottom	The cubit	The cubit	and the breadth	
H2948	H2436	H520	H520	H7341	
וְגִבּוֹלָהּ	אֶל	שְׂפָתָהּ	סָבִיב	זָרָת	הָאֶחָד
and the border	H413	thereof by the edge	thereof round about	span	shall be a
H1366		H8193	H5439	H2239	H259
וְזֶה	גֹּבַהּ	הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:			
H2088	and this shall be the higher place	of the altar			
	H1354	H4196			

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 40:5 (Parallel theme): And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits long by the cubit and an hand breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed.

Ezekiel 41:8 (Parallel theme): I saw also the height of the house round about: the foundations of the side chambers were a full reed of six great cubits.

2 Chronicles 4:1 (Sacrifice): Moreover he made an altar of brass, twenty cubits the length thereof, and twenty cubits the breadth thereof, and ten cubits the height thereof.