

MESSIAH'S
COMING
TEMPLE

EZEKIEL'S
PROPHETIC VISION
of the
FUTURE TEMPLE

UPDATED EDITION

JOHN W. SCHMITT
& J. CARL LANEY

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Messiah's Coming Temple: Ezekiel's Prophetic Vision of the Future Temple, Updated Edition

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*To Mrs. Helen J. Schmitt (John's mother) and
Dr. Stanley A. Ellisen (Carl and John's professor).
Without the influence and timely input of these two,
the events leading to the writing of this book
would never have occurred.*

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FOREWORD

Let them make me a sanctuary . . .” (Exod. 25:8 KJV). This command made possible God’s promise to restore Himself to His people. Since Eden, humanity had wandered the world apart from the divine presence. Then at Mount Sinai, God returned His presence and reestablished the long lost relationship of a Creator-King to His subjects. The building of a sanctuary as a place for His holy presence would enshrine His purpose to make His people a kingdom of priests. The sin of Eden, however, remained, and the people of promise rejected the rule of their true King. So again God withdrew His presence, its symbol—the sanctuary—was destroyed, and His priestly people were exiled. Still the command remained: “Let them make me a sanctuary.”

Once more, as at Sinai, God’s hand reached down into the midst of exile and moved the heart of a captor-king to allow His people to follow His will (2 Chron. 36:23). The sanctuary was rebuilt and its priests restored. Yet the people remained unchanged, and the divine presence remained absent. History was about to repeat itself, but with one great difference: before the destruction, God came in the person of Messiah to make possible a change in His people and the restoration of His presence. The ultimate restoration, however, would await God’s program with the church and His preparation of Israel in the Tribulation. Then God Himself would fulfill His own command, placing His Spirit within human hearts and Messiah’s sanctuary in their midst (Ezek. 37:26–28). The divine presence would return (Ezek. 43:1–7), and a new kingdom of priests would minister to a world in worship (Ezek. 40–48).

This great drama of God’s relationship with His people, symbolized by the Jewish Temple, is admirably portrayed by John W. Schmitt and J. Carl Laney. They have carefully surveyed the growing Temple movement in Israel whose goal is to see a rebuilt Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Their analysis of what the Jewish leaders who direct this movement are

Foreword

doing is both fresh and factual. Each author has contributed from his own area of expertise and scholarship.

John W. Schmitt, executive director of Messianic Temple Ministries, is perhaps the leading expert in the Christian world on the subject of the messianic Temple of Ezekiel. His thorough research and detailed model of this future Temple are the painstaking product of many years of research and thought and have been recognized and well-received by Jewish leaders in Israel. Dr. J. Carl Laney, a veteran seminary professor and popular author, has extensive firsthand knowledge of Israel and the Middle East. He brings to this book not only the fruit of mature biblical scholarship but also his personal experience in dealing with these complex issues. Together they address the most crucial questions Christians ask concerning the future Temple, presenting in a readable fashion the Temple's biblical importance and prophetic significance.

While other books in recent years have presented many details concerning the coming Temple, none have focused in such an in-depth manner on the final Temple of the Millennial Age. In addition, most evangelical commentaries on Ezekiel give only limited attention to this Temple, although it is the subject of nine chapters in the book. The reasons for such a minimal treatment are usually the controversial and complex nature of the subject. Schmitt and Laney are to be highly commended for correcting this deficiency and supplying this much needed information.

Today, as never before in the past two thousand years of history, both Christian and Jew are able to see active preparations in Israel that set the stage for the prophetic plan concerning the Temple. The messianic Temple, at the junction between the end of a time of tribulation and the beginning of an age of redemption, forms the pinnacle of such aspirations. May all who long for the days of the Messiah and the culmination of God's great purpose through Him on earth be stimulated to greater expectation through this book!

J. Randall Price, President
World of the Bible Ministries, Inc.
1979

PREFACE

Since its founding in 1986, I have been privileged to sit on the board of Messianic Temple Ministries, an organization founded by John W. Schmitt to research and communicate the message of Ezekiel's vision of Messiah's future Temple. Having known John from our student days at Western Seminary, I was delighted to give my support to this significant work. Over the past decade, we have seen evidence of God's blessing on Messianic Temple Ministries. John has had the opportunity to speak about the Temple in churches and Bible conferences locally as well as nationally. His model of Ezekiel's Temple has been featured on television broadcasts. The response to these presentations have been both positive and encouraging. But this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Through many providential circumstances, John has been able to meet and interact with the rabbis and leaders in Israel who are in the planning stages of building the Third Temple. They have recognized and appreciated the careful research John has done on Ezekiel's vision of the coming Temple. In fact, at this very time John is leaving for Israel to meet with the leaders of the Temple Institute regarding the possibility of displaying his Temple model in their museum! I know of no other Christian in the world who has this kind of rapport among these key leaders. And they count John as their friend.

It was in light of such exciting developments that the board of Messianic Temple Ministries began discussing how we could advance the cause of the Temple through publications. After much discussion and prayer, John and I met in my office to begin coauthoring a book on Messiah's Temple. We formulated an outline and started writing. For two years we met regularly to work on this project. We truly wrote the book together. We labored over each chapter, studying the issues and composing the text.

I am grateful for John's vision to present to the world what the Bible has revealed about Messiah's coming Temple.

God is doing some very exciting things among His people in the land of Israel! We pray that this book might have some part in preparing the way for Messiah's coming Temple.

J. Carl Laney, Western Seminary, 1979

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We would like to acknowledge the work of Mr. Ken Burkhart for the many hours he spent photographing the model and preparing photographs for this book and other projects of Future Hope Ministries.

We appreciate the work of architect David R. York for making his team (especially Rochelle Wasula and John Sabo) available to us to update all of the temple drawings used in this book. We also acknowledge Bob Bedient for creating 3D drawings giving us access to computer-generated modeling.

Our sincere appreciation goes to Mr. Patrick Kraft, machine manufacturing technology instructor at Portland Community College, for introducing John to 3D computer-generated modeling; and to Craig Casteel of Portland, Oregon, and Edwin Rapparde of Marknesse, Netherlands, for utilizing this technology to produce the temple buildings of the model in this book.

We want to thank John's grandson Jacob Laszlo, who has shown us that little children of four years old can grasp the concept of serving God by holding the end of tape measures, having screws ready when needed, and spreading "grass" where it goes as the model is built.

We deeply appreciate the leaders of Israel's Temple movement for their openness and friendship with John. We especially wish to thank Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, Rabbi Chaim Richman, Torah scholar Yoel Lerner, and the leaders of the Temple Mount Faithful—Gershon Salomon and Zeev bar Tove. These men, though not endorsing every part of this book, have given consent to allow the use of their photographs and thoughts in this book. We realize the trust bestowed by this gesture and are very grateful.

We are especially appreciative to Laury Schmitt, John's wife, for her helpful suggestions regarding English grammar and style.

We both appreciate Dennis R. Hillman at Kregel Publications for his continued support of this project.

A TEMPLE MOUNT WITHOUT A TEMPLE

Carl:

It was twilight in Jerusalem. I was standing in the Old City where I had a splendid view of the Western Wall Plaza. The encroaching darkness produced a mysterious scene of light and shadow before me. The rays of the setting sun still glistened on the golden Dome of the Rock where the magnificent Jewish Temple once stood.

On the plaza before me shadowy figures moved about in the near darkness. Thousands of Jews slowly walked toward the Western Wall. Two thousand years ago, the ancestors of these Jewish people were streaming through the Temple gates for prayer and worship. But not this night. These Jews were coming to but a remnant of the Temple—to *HaKotel*, “the Wall.” They were coming in recognition of Tisha b’Av.

Tisha b’Av—the ninth of Av [July/August] on the Jewish calendar—is a day of mourning recognized by Jewish people around the world. Many Jews fast for twenty-four hours and spend much of the day reciting the book of Lamentations and bewailing the calamities that have come upon them on the ninth of Av.

It was on this day in the year 586 B.C. that the Babylonians burned the Jewish Temple that had been built and dedicated by King Solomon. And it was on this same day in A.D. 70 that the Roman army, under Titus, destroyed the Second Temple, which was built by the Jews returning from Babylon and later beautified by King Herod.

And so the Jews gathered this night to begin their time of mourning near the site of the ancient Temple at *HaKotel*, the Wall, the Western Wall, Jerusalem’s Wailing Wall. Some were dressed in simple, modest attire. Others—the ultra Orthodox—were dressed in black suits and black hats such as their ancestors in eastern Europe wore hundreds of years ago. Many wore beards and side curls. Some were draped in their prayer shawls. Most

were wearing sneakers or tennis shoes instead of their traditional black shoes, for Tisha b'Av is a day when Jews put aside such traditional comforts as leather shoes.

LAMENTING THE LOSS OF A TEMPLE

A half moon shone brightly overhead. It illuminated the Western Wall Plaza and the golden Dome of the Rock just beyond the Wall. I watched as Jewish men stood facing the Wall to pray, rocking and swaying as an expression of their intensity. All along the Wall I saw black hats, black beards, and bobbing side curls. Little boys stood with their fathers, learning the sober tradition of lamenting. Every so often I heard a loud and united wail ascend from those at prayer.

Separating the men from the women was a six-foot screen. The women were weeping and praying as intensely as the men. Many were sitting on mats in little groups. Small children sat nearby holding dolls and small playthings.

But in spite of the peaceful prayers, there was tension in the air at the Western Wall. I counted twenty-five police and army vehicles as well as an ambulance waiting to respond. Soldiers, with weapons ready, were standing at the plaza entrances and on nearby buildings. Why was there such tension in the air? Because praying at the Wall is not quite the same as praying on the Temple Mount—the holiest place for Jewish people, where the First and Second Temples stood, where the Holy of Holies was located.

AT THE WALL BUT NOT ON THE MOUNT

In ancient times, the Jewish people prayed on the Temple Mount. But there is no Temple on the mount today, and the Muslims have built two mosques where the Jewish Temple once stood. The Dome of the Rock and the Mosque of el-Aksa are regarded as among the most sacred in Islam. Their location in Jerusalem is no mere coincidence. It is the tangible expression of Muslim conviction that Islam has superseded the Jewish religion and has the right to inherit Jewish holy places.

Many devout Jews will not set foot on the Temple Mount. They fear that going up to the mount may result in their stepping on the ground that covers the ruins of the Holy of Holies. But a growing number believe that they have a right to pray on the mount where the Temple once stood, especially on Tisha b'Av.

Among this growing number are Gershon Salomon and his followers, the Temple Mount Faithful. For years, these Jewish worshipers have been visiting the Temple Mount on Tisha b'Av for prayer and meditation. But fearing that their actions might promote hostilities between Jews and Arabs, the Jerusalem police denied them permission to worship there this year.

Muslim leaders are keenly aware of the centrality of the Temple Mount in Judaism. They fear that the Jewish worshipers want to destroy the mosques and rebuild the Jewish Temple. In October of 1990, during the Feast of Tabernacles, a group of the Temple Mount Faithful attempted to ascend the Temple Mount. Even though the Jewish worshipers were turned away by police, this event triggered a stoning by the Muslims and subsequent bloodshed.

On this Tisha b'Av, Gershon Salomon, cloaked in a gunny sack as an expression of mourning, brought his Temple Mount Faithful to the very entrance of the Temple Mount. Several of them carried black flags as a sign of mourning. An aged and bearded rabbi, also wearing a gunny sack, stood among his students, shouting a rebuke at Gershon and his followers. He sought to persuade them that they risked desecrating the Most Holy Place by going up to the Temple Mount.

Although Israel's High Court ruled to grant permission for a small gathering there, the police have prohibited the Temple Mount Faithful from entering the Temple Mount. It is believed that their presence there would constitute a threat to security. Gershon and his followers were only allowed to approach the gate of the Temple Mount for a brief time of prayer.

"We shall never give up," said Salomon, "not on the Temple Mount, not on Jerusalem, not on the land of Israel. I want to say to all the world that the struggle of the Temple Mount and Eretz Israel Faithful Movement is a struggle of all the Jewish and Israeli people for this holy mountain, for this city Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, and for the land of Israel. The struggle will continue and grow stronger."¹

THE CENTRALITY OF THE TEMPLE

Tisha b'Av traditions observed by Jewish people illustrate the centrality of the Jerusalem Temple in Judaism. And these activities, we believe, point to the prophetic hope of rebuilding Jerusalem's Temple. For more than two thousand years the Jewish people have lamented the destruction of their Temple. Yet there are Jews today in Israel who would like to stop mourning and start building.

Many Jews, like Gershon Salomon, would like to see the Temple rebuilt. Some are even now preparing for the rebuilding. Temple vessels are being carefully constructed. Priests are being trained. Harps, the ancient instrument of the Temple, are being manufactured in Jerusalem. As Shoshanna Harrari, the wife of a Jerusalem harp builder, said, "By the time that the Temple is ready and somebody calls out for a harp, we will be ready to supply them. That, we feel, is our destiny."²

In this book, we would like to share with you the amazing story of Israel's Temples—those of antiquity and those of the future. Our study will lead us into Israel's past as well as Israel's prophecies. Our goal is not simply to inform you about the exciting events ahead for God's people, Israel, because the study of God's Word should result not only in information but also in transformation. And so it is our goal to help you see how an understanding of Israel's Temples can impact your spiritual life. If you are willing to let the Spirit of God work in your heart, your reading of this book can make a difference in your life.

WHY IS THE TEMPLE IMPORTANT?

Some people have asked why a Christian should be interested in a Jewish Temple. Since we are under the new covenant and the Temple was under the old covenant, should the Temple really be of interest to us? And even if it is of interest, is it important enough to devote a whole book to the subject?

Circumstances surrounding contemporary society often make it difficult for us to decide what is really important. During the energy crunch of the 1970s, getting a full tank of gas was very important. Nowadays, most Americans do not give much thought to driving to a gas station and filling the tank. For my (Carl's) sixteen-year-old daughter, the most important thing in the world was getting her driver's license. But how important is that to someone turning fifty? Getting ahead in a career seems awfully important until one's youngest child leaves for college and one thinks, *I wish I had spent less time at the office and more with my kids!*

Time has a way of giving us perspective on what is really important. Most Christians would agree that the things that are material and physical have little lasting importance. Those things that are spiritually significant, however, have intrinsic value that never diminishes.

The message of the Temple has such lasting value. Its message did not die two thousand years ago when the Temple was destroyed. The message continues to be proclaimed through believers today. The Bible tells us that

those who name the name of Jesus are the bearers of the Temple message. The apostle Paul states in 1 Corinthians 3:16, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you?” But even this is not the end of the story. God’s Word proclaims that there is a future Temple that is destined to grace the earth.

Someday—and no one knows when—we shall wake up to the news that the Dome of the Rock no longer stands on the Temple Mount. God’s Word predicts that another Temple is coming. This future Temple will be grander than Solomon’s Temple or Herod’s Temple and will become more significant than any previous Temple. This Temple will be the future center for world government.

Jesus, the Messiah, will return to this earth. He will set His feet down on the Mount of Olives and proceed across the Kidron Valley to enter His Temple on a white horse through Jerusalem’s open eastern gate. When He comes to claim His kingdom, Jesus will bring with Him the saints of all the ages to share in His sovereign rule over this earth.

John:

To me, the most exciting part is that, as a child of the King through new birth in Jesus, I will have a part in Messiah’s kingdom rule over this world. Jesus told His disciples that they would “sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28). And the apostle Paul said, “We will also reign with Him” (2 Tim. 2:12). All who have been personally redeemed through faith in Christ will enjoy positions of authority in His future kingdom.

This Temple of the Messiah has a great deal to do with your future. Since Jerusalem will be the center of world government in the kingdom and the Temple will be the place of Messiah’s throne, we may be looking at a building complex that will be our future ministry site. At least, we are considering a place that we, as administrators for the King, will frequently visit on government business.

Some people have a difficult time being interested in the subject of heaven. It seems all too hazy for them to get really excited about. They cannot understand the stories about golden streets, pearly gates, and playing harps on clouds. All this just does not seem real. If this also describes you, then I have good news for you. In the book of Ezekiel God has given us a rare look into the future. We find a three-dimensional prophecy about Messiah’s future Temple. It is real. It is tangible. It has measurable dimensions. It can be built. It has been built—at least in model form.

As Christians, we should be encouraged as we visualize ourselves in Messiah's future Temple on His coronation day. Jewish tradition states that when Messiah finally comes to Jerusalem to set up His kingdom, He will ascend to the roof of the Temple, raise His arms and shout with a loud voice, "Humble ones! The time of your redemption is at hand!"³ Can you imagine what it will be like to be in Jerusalem on the day that Jesus enters the Temple to take His throne? What will it be like to stand in the Temple courts as He ascends to the roof of the Temple, raises His hands skyward, and makes His official pronouncement of the beginning of the messianic age? Imagine the excitement as hundreds of thousands of God's people begin to sing, "All hail King Jesus, all hail Emmanuel, King of kings, Lord of lords, Bright Morning Star. . ."⁴

Over the years, I have heard conference speakers say, "If we see each other no more until Jesus comes, I'll meet you at the eastern gate." Friends, in the pages of this book you will view that famous eastern gate. You can pick your exact meeting place. My family has a place already picked out. We decided that the eastern gate was going to be pretty congested, so we chose the southeast corner. It will not be as crowded and it will be easier to see what is going on.

To some, this may seem but a daydream. We are not living in the sweet by and by but the nasty now and now. So how can this teaching about the future Temple be a help to us? Scripture teaches that what we do now will affect our future. Our present service for God will bring rewards in His kingdom. Our struggles to keep going through discouragement and difficulty will definitely be worth it when we see Jesus. Think of what it will be like to hear Him say, "Well done," as He takes us to a prominent place to serve in His kingdom. Then it will be worth it all.

Most of us have in our memories specific days of extreme anguish. May 25, 1990, is one of those days for me. That was the day I answered the phone and heard an unfamiliar voice saying, "Mr. Schmitt, your wife and daughter have just arrived at Emmanuel Hospital. They have been involved in a serious auto accident. Your wife is being prepared for surgery and has less than a 50 percent chance of survival."

As my wife and daughter were returning from the ballpark where my daughter played softball, my wife's car had been struck by a drunk driver. The car was destroyed. My daughter's injuries were serious but not life threatening—mostly cuts and abrasions on her face from flying glass. But Laury's life was hanging in the balance. She was in a coma from a blow to the head. She had a punctured lung, a bruised heart, and many broken bones.

A Temple Mount Without a Temple

I hurried to the hospital, still in shock from the phone call. After a three-hour wait, I was finally permitted to enter the recovery room where Laury had been taken after the surgery. It took a couple of minutes for me to see clearly that the person lying there in the midst of all those tubes and monitors was my wife. She did not look like herself. She was so still, so silent.

In my mind I pondered our situation. *She might never come out of this*, I thought. *And even if she survives, the brain damage may leave her in a vegetative state.* Slowly my thoughts began to shift. I remembered that God is preparing for Laury a new, glorified body for heaven. And someday I will see her standing by the southeast corner of the Temple! She will have her new, glorified body and will be beautiful, without a single flaw or cruel scar to remind us of this awful day.

You can see how the Temple holds a special importance for me, and, I hope, for you too. It enables us to understand and appreciate what eternity will be like. The Temple brings a little bit of heaven into our earthly experience.

The Temple is important for God, and it is important for us. In my study of the Bible over the last twenty-five years, I have found the Temple to be one of those things that has lasting spiritual significance. Throughout this book, we will show you why a study of Messiah's Temple is important. Let us list the reasons that will be developed in this book.

First, the Temple is important because it is the dwelling place of God on earth. God dwelt among His people in the tabernacle and in Solomon's Temple (Exod. 25:8; 1 Kings 6:13). And He promises once again to dwell among His people in a Temple (Ezek. 43:7, 9).

Second, the Temple is important because of the truth that it presents about the person and work of Christ. The articles within the Temple and the Temple court present a picture of Christ as the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, and the Way to God (John 6:35; 8:12; Heb. 10:20). In studying the Temple, we discover many redemptive analogies that help us understand and fully appreciate the truth of our salvation.

Third, the Temple is important because of its place in Israel's history—both past and future. So significant is the Temple in biblical history that archaeologists divide Israel's history into two sections: First-Temple and Second-Temple periods. Although the Jewish Temple was destroyed two thousand years ago, Jews today still talk of rebuilding it.

Fourth, the Temple is important because of its place in the world's future. Although most people do not realize it, Jerusalem is destined to become the

future world capital (Mic. 4:1–2). And the people of the nations will stream to Jerusalem to seek the Messiah in His Temple there (Zech. 8:20–23).

Fifth, the Temple is important because it will one day replace the Dome of the Rock. There is only one place to build Israel's future Temple, and that is on the site of its former Temple. Someday—we do not know how or when—newspaper headlines around the world will announce the destruction of the Dome of the Rock. That event will prepare the way for the rebuilding of the Temple in fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

Sixth, the Temple is important because one of the greatest enemies of God, the Antichrist, recognizes the centrality of this place in the final events of history. The Antichrist will take possession of the Temple during the Tribulation (2 Thess. 2:4). This event was foretold by Christ (Matt. 24:15) and will mark the beginning of an intense period of persecution against the people of God.

Seventh, the Temple is important because Christians will worship there during Christ's reign on earth. The prophet Ezekiel describes how the Zadokite priests will lead in worship through sacrifice and offering (Ezek. 44:15–27). Christians will have the opportunity to celebrate the greatness of God as we participate in these festive occasions.

Eighth, the Temple is important because it has the potential to encourage your spiritual life and motivate you in Christian service. On many occasions, discouraged and weary Christian workers have found that a study of the Temple brings a new enthusiasm and excitement about our part in God's plan for the ages.

Ninth, the Temple is important because it is a New Testament teaching highlighted by Jesus, Paul, and the apostle John (Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4–8; Rev. 11:1–2). This teaching is not a peripheral but a priority issue.

Tenth, the Temple is important because it helps believers understand the realities of heaven. Jesus spoke of heaven but gave us very little information about it. Heaven seems so far away and so distant from our lives on earth, but the Temple is one aspect of the future world that we can describe, measure, and even build a model of. Most people who study the Temple begin to view the future with greater confidence.

JERUSALEM POST HEADLINE

While doing our final editing for this book, our hearts were thrilled by a headline we spotted on the second page of the *Jerusalem Post*. The headline reads, "Justice Minister Favors Temple Mount Worship."⁵ The article, by

journalists Bill Hutman and Evelyn Gordon, reports how Justice Minister Ya'acov Ne'eman has expressed support for permitting Jewish worship at the Temple Mount and vowed that his ministry will provide legal support for such a move. Exciting things are happening in Jerusalem!

The article goes on to quote Professor Abdul Hadi Palazzi, head of the Islamic Institute of Rome, who spoke in Jerusalem at a conference entitled, "Jerusalem: City of Law and Justice." Palazzi said that Islam recognizes the right of any man, regardless of his faith, to pray on the Temple Mount. He also said, "There is no barrier in Islam to Israeli and Jewish sovereignty on the Temple Mount. We must remember that Jerusalem is holy to Judaism, just as it is to Islam." Jewish prayer has been forbidden at the Temple Mount since 1967 on the grounds that it would incite Muslims who worship there at the el-Aksa and Dome of the Rock mosques. But news reports from Israel suggest that this may soon change.

ARE YOU READY?

Through the chapters of this book, we are going to explore the future—your future. We believe that this study has the potential to change your life by giving you a new perspective on eternity. May God be our teacher and the Holy Spirit our guide as we plunge into some of the most challenging and exciting prophecies of the Bible.

NOTES

1. *Ready to Rebuild*, produced and directed by James E. DeYoung (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1992), videocassette.
2. Ibid.
3. Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, *The Odyssey of the Third Temple*, trans. and adapted by Chaim Richman (Jerusalem: G. Israel Publications and Productions Ltd. and the Temple Institute, 1994), 82.
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5. Bill Hutman and Evelyn Gordon, "Justice Minister Favors Temple Mount Worship," *Jerusalem Post*, July 20, 1996, International Edition, 2.