

EZEKIEL

page 6

The Temple Glory. [Ezekiel 40 to 48.](#)

The final chapters were written in 573 BC, which was sometime after the earlier chapters. This however does not apply to,

[Ezekiel 29:17-21](#),

This message, received by Ezekiel, was dated April 26, 571 BC.

Most of the information in the message found in the final chapters concerns the design of a future temple. The Book of Ezekiel began with a vision of God near Babylon, it ends with God returning in glory to the New Temple. The city mentioned does not appear to be Jerusalem,

[Ezekiel 40:2](#)

But the temple described does appear similar in construction to the one built by Solomon. In addition it is all set up for the normal sacrifices,

[Ezekiel 40:38ff.](#)

God returns to this temple in all His glory to live for ever there in the temple amongst His people, who have been made clean,

[Ezekiel 43:1ff.](#)

Perfection, yet still seems to be operating as an earthly Temple.

In the final chapters of Ezekiel we find a detail description of the New Temple with the presence of God, it's used and the arrangements of the tribes of Israel in the Promised Land.

Ezekiel is taken by God, in this vision, to an high mountain in the land of Israel. He is instructed to note all that he hears and can see and take it back to the people of Israel. A man is visible who is measuring various parts of the building using "*a measuring reed which was six cubits long.*" (The Old Testament cubit is normally the length of the forearm, about 18 in/46 cm. the one mentioned in Ezekiel is believed to be about 21 in/52 cm and is often called "a long cubit"), Ezekiel records all the measurements made by the man.

The vision, which Ezekiel is given, has given Bible scholars many problems in how to interpret, there are at least four ideas, as given below, all have problems, none fit the vision perfectly.

1) **Worship for the people of God.**

This way of interpretation rejects the idea that a physical temple will be built in Israel, instead the information in the vision is applied to the Church today. The temple is the glorious presence of God with His people,

[1 Corinthians 3:16.](#)

Note: There is no evidence that a Jewish type temple should apply to the church today. In addition, due to the death, resurrection and ministry of Jesus Christ as our High Priest there is no need of a physical temple on earth where sacrifices can be offered.

An additional problem with this interpretation comes with all the details given, if the vision is of the Church's spiritual worship, there is no physical building, then why all the measurements and details of construction?

Note that there is only three references to Levitical sacrifices and two of the Jewish feasts, no other reference to the Old Testament worship involving objects such as the ark, altars, veil, table of bread and so on.

The river flowing from the "temple" for blessing of the church and the spread of the gospel to the world does not appear to be true in practice. Sin has flowed into the earthly church from the world instead.

2) **These are the plans for the new temple to be built on returned from exile in Babylon.**

When the Jews returned to the land of Israel, the temple was rebuilt according to the previous instruction of Exodus,

[Ezra 3:10-13.](#)

It was not like the temple of Solomon which had been destroyed. If this vision and measurements were meant as the plans for the new temple in Jerusalem, the Jews did not use them.

3) **Ezekiel's vision is the same as John, [Revelations 21:1ff.](#)**

There are similarities, John and Ezekiel see the glorious city of God from an high mountain, there is a man measuring the city, a life-giving river, and no sin is present. But there is no temple in the vision of John, verse 22. The temple of Ezekiel is made of earth materials, while John's city is constructed out of jewels and precious metals.

4) Ezekiel is describing a temple to be used during the 1000 years reign of Christ.

This interpretation makes this a physical church to be used during the thousand year reign of Christ, this building will be the center of worship during this period for the Jews. There will be a tribulation temple built according to and for the Antichrist, and this will be destroyed. It is thought that this Ezekiel described temple will then be built.

This final situation is the most likely as there appears to be other prophecies of a holy temple during the millenium period,

see [Isaiah 2:1-5](#);

[Isaiah 60:1-14](#);

[Micah 4:1,2](#);

[Haggai 2:7-9](#);

[Zechariah 6:12-15](#);

[Zechariah 14:16,20,21](#);

[Ezekiel 37:24-28](#).

It is worth noting that though many people will be killed during the Tribulation period, when the Messiah come to rule for the thousand years, there will still be many alive who may not believe in Him. This will explain why after the 1000 years, when Satan is released, many will still follow him against the Messiah.

The New Temple. [Ezekiel 40:1 to 46:24](#).

The vision.

Ezekiel's vision took place on 28th April, 573 BC, this was the beginning of the Jewish year and the first day of the Passover celebration, which took place to remind them of their release from Egypt,

[Exodus 12:1-20](#).

Again Ezekiel is taken to the land of Israel in his vision, but now there was no sin, or a destroyed land. Instead there was a new land and new temple. The new temple will be on a high mountain,

[Ezekiel 40:2](#);

[Ezekiel 20:40](#);

The previous location of the temple in Israel is not on an high mountain, but what physical changes of the land could have happened in those last days? Both

[Isaiah 2:1-5](#);

[Micah 4:1,2](#);

Refer to an high mountain.

The measuring of the temple.

The man that Ezekiel can see is a bronze colour, which suggests an angelic being. He has a linen cord and a reed or rod, both were used for measurement during this time. The cord is for long measurements,

[Ezekiel 47:3](#)

The reed for the shorter measurements, this was probably 10 feet / 3.1 m long,

[Ezekiel 40:5](#).

To the Jews, when a place was measured, it was to make out a claim to ownership.

See [Zechariah 2:1-5](#);

[Revelations 11:1,2](#),

This action shows that the temple is the property of God and one day it will be the place of worship.

The guided tour.

The structure, as describe by Ezekiel, appears to be in three terraces, the temple, facing east, is at the top, a middle terrace contains the rooms and kitchens arranged for use by the priests and a court yard containing the altar for the burnt offerings. The lowest terrace, surrounded by a thick wall, contains an outer court with kitchens and rooms for use of worshipping visitors.

Access to the lower area and building is via three gateways, there are further matching gateways up to the second layer.

Starting at the east gate the man takes Ezekiel into the temple, having instructed him to remember all he can see and take the information to the exiles in Babylon. This temple cannot be as an example of "spiritual worship" as the angel would not have given this instruction to remember the construction!!

The outer court. [Ezekiel 40:5-27](#).

The entire size was approximately 870 feet square and include a wall ten feet high and ten feet thick, verse 5. The temple was found on the west side of this walled area, verse 5, see fig 1 as possible drawing of the description.

The New Temple.

There are three entrance gates built at the centre of the east, north and south walls. On either side of these gates, built into the walls, were 5 special rooms for the worshippers to eat the meals associated with the sacrifices.

There is no special area for the Gentiles,

[Ephesians 2:14](#)

Neither is there a special area for the women, this temple will be an house of prayer for all men and women of all nations.

The inner courtyard. [Ezekiel 40:28-47](#); [43:13-17](#).

Any of the outer gates will lead you straight onto the three gates leading into the inner court. Eight steps will take you up into this area, passing the guard rooms and on into the inner court. The walls of this inner court contain rooms for the priests and the preparation of the offerings. There is an "*altar of sacrifice*" in the center of this court. This altar will be about 20 feet tall and have a single stair way on the east side for access. the altar will be in the form of a tier of four layers.

The sanctuary. [Ezekiel 40:48-43:12](#).

The angelic guide takes Ezekiel into the sanctuary, past the pillars on each side of the door, he is shown the various rooms nearby for use of the priests in their work.

There is no mention of a veil between the Holy place and the Holy of Holies, this will be unnecessary as we all shall see the glory of the Messiah.

There is no mention of the mercy seat, the ark of the covenant, the golden altar or the seven branch lampstand, these are not now required as the Lord will be present with the people. There is an additional wooden table, placed before the entrance to the Holy of Holies, no mention is made of its use,

[Ezekiel 41:21,22](#).

The angel continues the tour pointing out the special rooms for the priests physical preparation and their actions in the ceremonies.

The Glory of the Lord. [Ezekiel 43:1-12](#).

Earlier in the Book of Ezekiel we had seen the departure of the glory of the Lord from the temple, now we see the return. Ezekiel and the angel go to the east gate in the outer court and Ezekiel can see the Glory of the Lord approaching from the East. With the glory come a sound of a "*voice was like the sound of many waters*;" Everything shone with the glory. It enters the temple by the east gate and Ezekiel fell to the ground, as before at the River Chebar,

[Ezekiel 1:28](#).

The temple is filled with the glory and Ezekiel is taken back to the inner court by the Holy Spirit, there "*I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me.*"

"Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever."

Dedication of the alter. [Ezekiel 43:18-27](#).

The lord issues instruction on how the alter must be dedicated by the offering of sacrifices.

The voice continued, Ezekiel was to tell the people that they will be ashamed of their sins and turn from them. "*Tell your people what you have seen so they will turn to me.*"

Look also at [Ezekiel 44:4-8](#).

"Mark well who may enter the house and all who go out from the sanctuary."

The Alter and the sacrifices. [Ezekiel 43:13-27](#) and [Ezekiel 45:13 to 46:24](#).

In this passage we find the Lord's instructions to the priests on their behaviour towards Him, their preparation, way of living and their inheritance.

Animal sacrifices.

The animal sacrifices seem to not make sense when Jesus has died on the cross for the sins of the world, satisfying the law and bringing in the new covenant, why would the Jews want to carry on this procedure? This is one of the main arguments against the temple being an actual building.

The offerings mentioned in these passages are below, see Leviticus 1 to 7 for the regulations to apply.

- 1) **The burnt offering.** An offering indicating total dedication to God.
 - 2) **The trespass offering.** The sinners offenses towards God and the people, the person was required to restore any property involved plus a fine of about 20% of the property value.
 - 3) **The sin offering.** For those who sinned through ignorance. Deliberate sin had no sacrifice.
 - 4) **The peace offering.** An offering of praise and thanksgiving. Part of the offering was returned to the worshipper to have a celebration / feast with the family and friends. The Jewish people rarely kill an animal just for food, it was a luxury to eat meat. This was therefore a time of special fellowship.
 - 5) **The grain or meal offering.** An acknowledgement that God provided all the food.
 - 6) **The drink offering.** Offered with another sacrifice, the wine symbolized a life poured out for God.
- Each offering was a symbol of the coming sacrifice by Christ for our sins,

[Hebrews 10:1-18.](#)

If the worshipper came in faith and trust then forgiveness was available from God. No animals death can remove a persons sin,

[Hebrews 10:4.](#)

Old Testament offerings for sin were dependant upon their faith in God, not the death of the animal. This fact applied with the sacrifice of Christ for each of us, so these sacrifices will not affect the sacrifice of Jesus, they will be just an expression of love for the Lord.

[Ezekiel 45:21-25,](#)

Indicates that only the Passover Feast and the Tabernacles will be observed during this period.

[Ezekiel 44:24](#) indicates that there will be a Sabbath during this period.

The office of Priest. [Ezekiel 40:44-49;](#) [Ezekiel 42:1-14;](#) [Ezekiel 43:19-27.](#)

When God chose Abraham to create the Jewish nation it was His plan for the Jews to be a kingdom of priests for Him,

[Exodus 19:5,6,](#)

This has never been fulfilled. The true Believers are now part of the *"holy priesthood,"*

[1 Peter 2:5,9](#)

Through the sacrifice of Christ who is now the High Priest.

According to these passages, in the millennial temple the priests and Levites will minister to God and the people, the priests will have various tasks to perform such as to offer the sacrifices brought to the temple and to sing praises. There is no mention of an high priest, that position is taken by Jesus, the King-Priest, who will be reigning from the temple.

We are informed three times that the priests will be descendants of Zadok,

[1 Chronicles 6:1-8 and 50-53.](#)

The rooms and facilities for the priests are given, plus instructions on their behaviour and how the temple is to be used, outsiders are not permitted to defile the temple. They will be instructed on what to wear and when, the access to food and drink and their relationships with others. The Levites will be allowed to take part in the sacrifices, help in the worship but because of their failures before the captivity, will not have access to the priestly privileges.

The physical organization associated with the temple.

[Ezekiel 45:1 to 48:35.](#)

The final chapters of Ezekiel concern the future land of Israel, how it will be divided during this period. One area will be assigned to the Lord, another to the prince, then one to each of the twelve tribes. The first arrangement is found in,

[Numbers 26:52-56;](#)

[Numbers 34:16-29](#)

[Joshua chapters 13 to 22.](#)

The area assigned to the Lord. [Ezekiel 45:1-6;](#) [Ezekiel 48:8,9.](#)

There will be a section reserved for the Lord and the prince, this will be between Judah and Benjamin. The area will be divided into three sections, the top section will be set as the holy area for the temple and priests, the next area is for the Levites, finally the bottom area will be for "a city,"

[Ezekiel 40:2](#);

[Ezekiel 48:35](#),

Possibly a new Jerusalem.

The priests were not allowed to own land, [Ezekiel 44:28-31](#);

[Numbers 18:20](#);

[Deuteronomy 10:9](#);

[Joshua 13:14,33](#).

The prince's area. [Ezekiel 45:7 to 46:18](#); [Ezekiel 44:1-3](#).

We are not told who this person is, Ezekiel first mentioned the person in [Ezekiel 44:1-3](#) and refers to him a number of times in the rest of the book. No where is he identified as being of royal descent, a priest or a Levite. Neither is the name of the tribe he comes from given. His position appears to be as a civil ruler working under the Messiah's control and authority but with a religious function.

He will offer sacrifices for his own person, so cannot be the person of the Messiah, and provide sacrifices for special situations,

see [Ezekiel 44:3](#);

[Ezekiel 45:13-18](#);

[Ezekiel 45:22-25](#).

On the Sabbath he will be permitted to use the east gate which is normally closed,

[Ezekiel 46:1-8](#).

He will not be allowed to go near the altar in the inner court. It will be his duty to ensure that the daily burnt offerings are made, just as in the tabernacle and temple.

[Exodus 29:42](#);

[Numbers 28:6](#).

The year of Jubilee. [Ezekiel 48:16-18](#).

God instructed the people to rest the land, slaves are set free and any property restored to the original owners,

[Leviticus 25:1ff](#).

The Jews failed to obey the laws relating to the Sabbatical rest year and the year of Jubilee so God sent the people into exile to rest the land as instructed.

[2 Chronicles 36:14-21](#);

[Leviticus 26:14ff](#);

[Jeremiah 25:9-12](#);

[Jeremiah 27:6-8](#);

[Jeremiah 29:10](#).

The river of life. [Ezekiel 47:1-12](#).

Ezekiel noted that there was a small river of water coming from the Holy of Holies on the right side.

Ezekiel is now taken out via the north gate, (the east gate is closed) they move round the temple to the east gate, there he sees the water coming from under the building. The guide now measures the depth of the water at various distances from the gate. The depth goes from ankle deep to "*the water was too deep, water in which one must swim*," verse 5. The water appears to flow into the Dead Sea, to restore life to that area, to supply food and healing. This life comes from God not Mankind.

See [Joel 3:18](#)

[Zechariah 13:1](#);

[Zechariah 14:8,9](#);

[Revelations 22:1,2](#), for further references to this future river.

The Jewish tribe boundaries. [Ezekiel 47:13-48:7](#); [Ezekiel 47:23-29](#).

In the millennial kingdom the layout of the land boundaries for each tribe will be different, each block of land will be across the land, giving each tribe access to the Mediterranean Sea. They will be arranged as follows from north to south, Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, Judah. We now find that the next strip of land is set aside for the Lord, the prince and the city. Then the remainder of the tribes, Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun and Gad. Judah, the royal tribe will be next to the area set

for the temple, from where the Messiah will reign. There is no reference to the size of each piece of land, only the location and order.

The land for the city. [Ezekiel 48:30-35](#).

There will be a New City, apparently equivalent to Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom. This city will have twelve gates, each named after the Jacobs twelve sons, there will not be gates for "Manasseh," and "Ephraim," the sons of Joseph but just one gate called "Joseph." Levi will also have a named gate. This means that anyone coming to the city must pass through one of these gates. These gates are similar to the Holy city seen by John in,

[Revelation 21:10-3, 21](#).

The city will have a new name, "*from that day shall be: The Lord is there, - Jehovah shammah.*"

Throughout the book of Ezekiel there is one theme, "*They shall know that I am the Lord,*" this or a similar statement appears over sixty times. The glory of God and His name is emphasized throughout. We see it depart the temple because of the sinful nature of His people and then return into the new temple.

Whatever happens in the world, past, present and the future, we must remember that God is still on His throne and in full control.

What is your attitude to Him?