

The Church of the Servant King

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Prophecy Series

(Proph17E_Ezek40 to 48_Kingdom Temple & Associated Regulations – Part 1)

A Brief Outline – The Book of Ezekiel

The book of Ezekiel has three major sections that reveal the undercurrent for the ebb and flow of the narrative.

- Chapter 1 – a vision of God's glory
- Chapters 8-11 – the departure of God's glory
- Chapters 40-48 – another vision of God's glory

Driven by this undercurrent of God's glory we discover that the details of the book flow according to the following outline:

- Chapters 1-3 – Ezekiel's commissioning as a prophet (3 chapters)
- Chapters 4-24 – Oracles of judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (21 chapters)
- Chapters 25-32 – Oracles of judgment on foreign nations (8 chapters)
- Chapters 33-48 – Messages of hope explaining how God would bless the nation (16 chapters)
 - Chapters 33-39 – Israel's restoration to the promised land
 - Chapters 40-48 – the Lord's return and the changes associated with it

J. Dwight Pentecost includes an excellent summary of the book of Ezekiel from the perspective of the kingdom motif – an historical undercurrent that is crucial for the Bible student to grasp. I include a few paragraphs for your consideration.

As a captive in Babylon, Ezekiel was given a vision from God to explain why the Captivity had taken place. God also outlined His program to restore the theocracy to Israel. In his writings Ezekiel further explained why the theocratic administration had terminated and described the program leading up to its reinstatement. For example, chapter 36 of Ezekiel foretells the regeneration of the nation, chapter 37 the cleansing of Israel, chapters 38 and 39 the regathering of Israel, and chapters 40-48 the return of Christ and the setting up of the millennial kingdom and temple.

Ezekiel was even given a revelation of the corruption taking place in the temple. Whether he was transported to Jerusalem physically or saw a vision is unclear, but it is clear that by the power of God he accurately saw the degeneration of Israel's worship. God commanded him to dig through the wall and open a door (Ezek. 8:8). What Ezekiel found was a secret entrance to the holy of holies. There was to have been only one entrance and that was through the veil, but the Israelites had opened up a secret passage into the holy of holies through which Ezekiel was told to enter.

Because he was a priest and would have been eligible to minister in the temple, what he saw must have shocked him greatly. All over the walls were painted pictures of unclean, detestable animals and the idols Israel was worshipping. In addition to Jaazaniah acting as a heathen priest, there were also the seventy elders of the house of Israel, each worshipping "at the shrine of his own idol" (v. 12).

Verse 13 and following describe even more detestable things Ezekiel saw. He saw women mourning for Tammuz, which is another name of Marduk, the god of the Babylonians. This mother-child cult had come out of Babylon after its

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beginning in Genesis 10-11. Babel, meaning “the gate of God,” was the root form of the word Babylon and very similar to the Hebrew word translated confusion. Forty days of fasting for Tammuz commemorated his reputed death and restoration to life by his mother Semiramis. It was the most detestable of false religions, one that even today attempts in various forms to counterfeit the Gospel of grace.

Continuing to worsen, the scene in verse 16 records that there were twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, “bowing down to the sun in the east.” This Canaanite practice demonstrated the merging of Babylonian and Canaanite religious ritual into a syncretistic paganism that required nothing less than divine judgment.

Afterward, chapter 10 records that Ezekiel’s attention was drawn toward the cherubim in the holy of holies where he saw the radiance of the glory of God move out from that sacred place to the court, and then to the threshold of the temple (v. 18), then to the east gate of the Lord’s house (v. 19), and finally to the Mount of Olives on the east side of the city (11:23). This departure of the glory of God from its dwelling place between the cherubim marked the temporary end of this form of theocratic administration.

There were two things that made Israel a theocratic people. The first was Israel’s redemption out of Egypt, and the second was voluntary submission to the Law given at Sinai. God had revealed His presence among His people, first by the shining of the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud visible above the tabernacle by day as they left Egypt; then by the shining of light in the tabernacle itself. Because of God’s presence the people could say “Immanuel” – God with us.

That glory was evident to Israel throughout her history. From the time of the giving of the Law and the founding of the tabernacle, God was with His people. But with the departure of that glory, God no longer dwelt among His people. This signified the end of an administration, after which God would use a new vehicle through which He would accomplish his work.

It is critical that we recognize that this does not mean Israel will not be restored and again become a people of the kingdom. Even the conclusion of the Book of Ezekiel describes the glory of the God of Israel coming again (Ezek. 43) in direct contrast to its departure in the early chapter of the book.¹

A Brief Outline – Chapters 40-48

In 37:26-28, Ezekiel announces that God would set His sanctuary in the midst of His people. In the chapters that are the focus of our present study, God provides a picture of what the sanctuary will look like through the prophet Ezekiel. A brief outline of chapters 40 thru 48 follows:²

¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come* (Wheaton: Illinois: Victor Books, 1990), 161-163. Pentecost goes on to state that “just as Ezekiel described the termination of the program through the kings, so Daniel – as a contemporary of Ezekiel – introduced the new administrative program through the Gentile nations.” This is a subject we will examine in great detail in our upcoming study of the book of Daniel.

² See Thomas Constable, Expository Notes – “Ezekiel” 2002 edition (www.soniclight.com), 182.

- Brief introduction to the vision of Ezekiel – 40.1-4
- Description of the kingdom Temple complex – 40.5-42.20
- The return of God to His Temple – 43.1-9
- Worship that will follow in that Temple – 43.10-46.24
- The changes in the Promised Land that will accompany the restored Temple – 47-48

It is interesting to note that John, the Apostle, used some of the things mentioned in these chapters to describe the eternal state – life in the new earth after the destruction of the present earth (Rev 21-22). Evidently, some of the features of the millennial state will carry forward into the eternal state.

Why did Ezekiel take so much space to describe the millennial temple? Here are two reasons: (1) The sanctuary was the visible symbol of God's presence among His people. The prelude to Israel's judgment began when God's glory departed from Solomon's temple in Jerusalem (Ezek. 8—11). The climax to her restoration as a nation will come when God's glory reenters the new temple in Jerusalem (43:1-5). (2) The new temple will become the visible reminder of Israel's relationship to God through His New Covenant. Since God gave detailed instructions for building the tabernacle to accompany His inauguration of the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Ex. 25—40), it is not unusual that He would also supply detailed plans for His new center of worship to accompany the implementation of the New Covenant. This temple will be the focal point for the visible manifestation of Israel's new relationship with her God.³

The sanctuary in their midst will be also an assurance of God's presence in their midst as God will indwell the millennial temple much as He did the temple of God and the tabernacle before it. The glory of God had left Solomon's temple as described in Ezekiel 8-11. The restoration of Israel as a nation will feature God's presence reentering a temple and being with His people visibly. In keeping with the promise of the New Covenant (37:26), the temple will be the visible evidence of God's presence. Such a large temple is in keeping with the other promises of God's presence and blessing in the millennial kingdom and Israel's restoration to their land.

Though the details of the construction of the temple were not in themselves of prophetic significance, putting these details together involves a description of a building that has never been built in the past and which will be the centerpiece of God's plan for the kingdom when Christ returns. Its size far exceeds anything that was known in previous temples.⁴

Chapter 40

Introduction to Ezekiel's Vision of a New City

Verses 1-4 – *The Vision & the Angelic Messenger.* Ezekiel is transported in a vision to the land of Israel and set on a very high mountain where he sees a city to the south. Based upon Ezekiel's description, the date was about 573 B.C. – twelve years after the messages he had previously delivered (Ezek 33.21-22).

³ Charles H. Dyer, "Ezekiel" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament*, John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, editors (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983), 1304.

⁴ John F. Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1990), 200.

The Israelite religious new year began in Nisan (April-May) and was established at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 12:1-2). However, in Israel's later history the seventh month, Tishri (October-November), became established as the first month of Israel's civil or regnal year. So the date would be either April 28, 573 B.C. or October 22, 573 B.C. The October date was also the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 23:27).⁵

If you add 25 years to this date (40.1), you arrive at a date of 598 B.C. This date corresponds to the second of three invasions by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the associated deportations, i.e. 1) 605 B.C – the first deportation at the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign; 2) 598-597 B.C. – the second deportation in response to Zedekiah of Judah's rebellion during which Ezekiel was taken captive (see 2 Kin 24.10-20 & Ezek 1.1-3); and 3) 588-586 B.C. – the third siege and associated deportation.⁶

Then he was taken to the city where there was a man with a bronze-like appearance. The man has a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand and he stood in the gateway to the city. The man speaks to Ezekiel and tells him to record everything he sees.

The context leads to the conclusion that the city Ezekiel saw in the vision was Jerusalem; however it is not stated specifically to be Jerusalem. The geography of Israel has never included a mountain to the north of Jerusalem; however, some have speculated that it is possible that the mountain could be Mt. Hermon to the north of Galilee since the boundaries of the Land will extend that far in the Messianic Kingdom. Otherwise, it could be a new mountain that is formed with the geographic changes that occur in association with the judgments during the Tribulation and the 2nd Advent of Christ (Isa 13.13; Rev 6.14 cf. Zech 14.1-5).

Description of the Kingdom Temple Complex – 40.5-42.20

As described in Ezekiel (40:5-42:20), the outer dimensions of the temple complex will form a square 875 feet (500 cubits) across and in length. The temple faces east as did the tabernacle and the temples of Solomon and of the Exile. The south, east, and north sides have an outer wall. Thirty rooms were also built on the second and third levels. The temple itself was projected from inside the western wall of the temple complex toward the east, and, except on the western wall, it had outer courts on three sides – south, east, and north, 175 feet in width. The rooms inside the temple area were assigned to their respective uses, including the temple proper in the center with an inner court in front of it extending to the east. The details, while not prophetic in themselves, together give a tremendous vision of the central place of worship in the millennial kingdom.

Ezekiel, who recorded this vision of the temple, was given what amounted to a tour which prompted the detailed description. He was led by an angel described as "a man whose appearance was like bronze" (40:3).

The measuring rod used by the angel was six cubits long (v. 5), with a rod being approximately twenty-one inches in length. The total measuring rod therefore

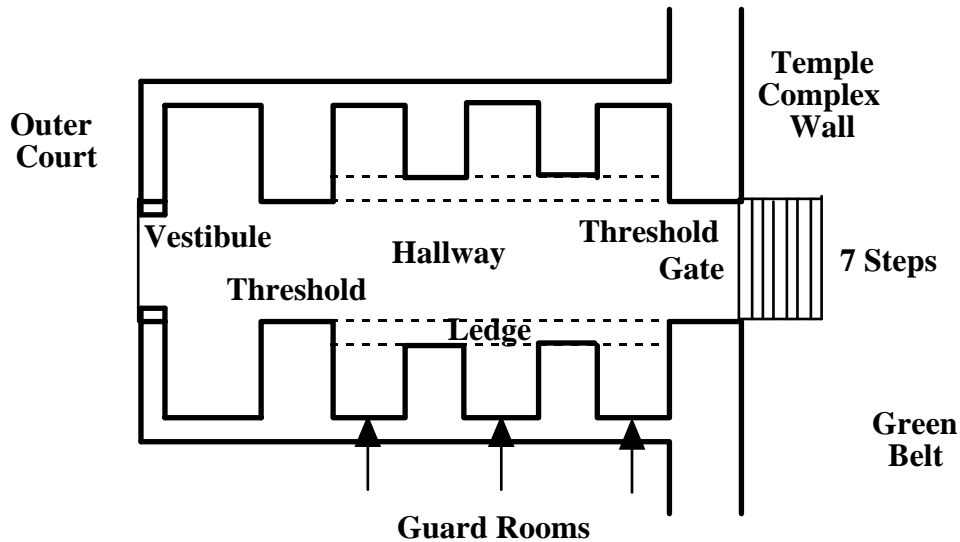
⁵ Charles H. Dyer, "Ezekiel" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament*, John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, editors (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983), 1304.

⁶ Daniel and other princes of Israel were deported in the first deportation (606-605 B.C.) and Ezekiel was taken to Babylon in the second deportation (597-598 B.C.). There are many sources that document these three separate deportations. One source that has already been cited in these notes is Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 161.

was about ten feet six inches. Ezekiel entered through the eastern gate (v. 6); there was also one gate on the south and one on the north, corresponding to the gates of the outer court. Solomon's temple had only a gate on the east.⁷

Verse 5 – The Wall's Dimensions & the Measuring Instruments. Ezekiel saw a wall around the outside of the temple. The dimensions translate to a height and width of about 10.5 feet.⁸

*The Eastern Gateway of the Temple*⁹



The amount of detail that was devoted to the descriptions of the gate complexes, both outer and inner, pointed to the fact that access into the Temple will be strictly controlled. Temple gates were a means of restricting access in relation to God's presence in the Temple. Only the redeemed in the Messianic kingdom will have access to the courts of the Temple since we know that eventually, unbelievers will arise in the kingdom even though the kingdom starts with only believers.

Verse 6 – The Dimensions of the Threshold. The threshold was the area of the gate at the top of the stairs within the walls (see v. 5). This threshold was one rod (~10.5 feet) deep on each side of the entry – a depth that corresponded to the width of the outer wall described in verse 5.

Verses 7, 8 & 10 – The Dimensions of the “Gate Chambers” or Guard Rooms. Each of the six guard rooms (three on each side of the entry way) measured one rod or six cubits-by-six

⁷ Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, 202.

⁸ Dyer, “Ezekiel” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament*, 1304. See also Earl D. Radmacher, editor, *The Nelson Study Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1997), 1399

⁹ See *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1303, 1305, & 1306 for a good set of diagrams of the Temple dimensions. There are many excellent sources for visual diagrams of Ezekiel's Millennial Temple. I have copied diagrams from Thomas Constable, *Expository Notes – “Ezekiel”* 2002 edition (www.soniclight.com) since his notes are available in Microsoft format which allowed for ease of copy and paste.

cubits (approximately 10.5 X 10.5 feet). A wall approximately 5 cubits (~ 8.75 feet) thick separated the guardrooms. Beyond the guardrooms there was another threshold that led to a large portico that had its own threshold of one rod or six cubits (~10.5 feet).

Verse 9 – *The Dimensions of the Portico.* The portico was located at the end of the gate complex and faced the outer courtyard that surrounded the Temple. The portico was 8 cubits (~14 feet) deep and 25 cubits (~44 feet) wide. The pillars that supported the door frames on either side of the portico were about one cubit each (~1 ½ feet each).

Verses 11-16 – *Additional Details & Dimensions of the East Gateway.* Additional details are provided regarding the east gateway including the height of the door frames surrounding the main gate (60 cubits or 100 feet). The total length of the passageway from the front gate to the doorway into the courtyard was 50 cubits (~83 feet). The guardrooms had shuttered windows or alcoves on their exterior facing walls and representations of palm trees will decorate the door frames – one on each side of each door (v. 26). Palm trees may have been used because they were symbols of beauty, fruitfulness, salvation, glory and the millennial age (Lev 23.40; 1 Kin 6.29, 32; 7.36; 2 Chron 3.5; Song of Sol 7.7; Psa 92.12-14; Neh 8.15; Zech 14.16-21).

The Outer Court Surrounding the Temple

Verses 17-19 – *Description of the Outer Court.* The outer court will be entered via either the east gateway described in the previous verses or similar gateways on the North Wall and the South Wall surrounding the Temple complex. (There will be no gateway on the West as the back of the Temple structure abuts the West Wall). The Outer Court contained an Inner Court within it which Ezekiel could see from his vantage point. The Inner Court contained its own set of gate complexes.

Once inside the Outer Court, Ezekiel observed 30 rooms around the perimeter of this Outer Court. Based upon Ezekiel's description, it is possible that the 30 rooms were evenly distributed along the east, north and south walls of the Outer Court. It is not clear what function they may have served. Most likely, these additional details will be provided through additional revelation to be provided during the messianic age.

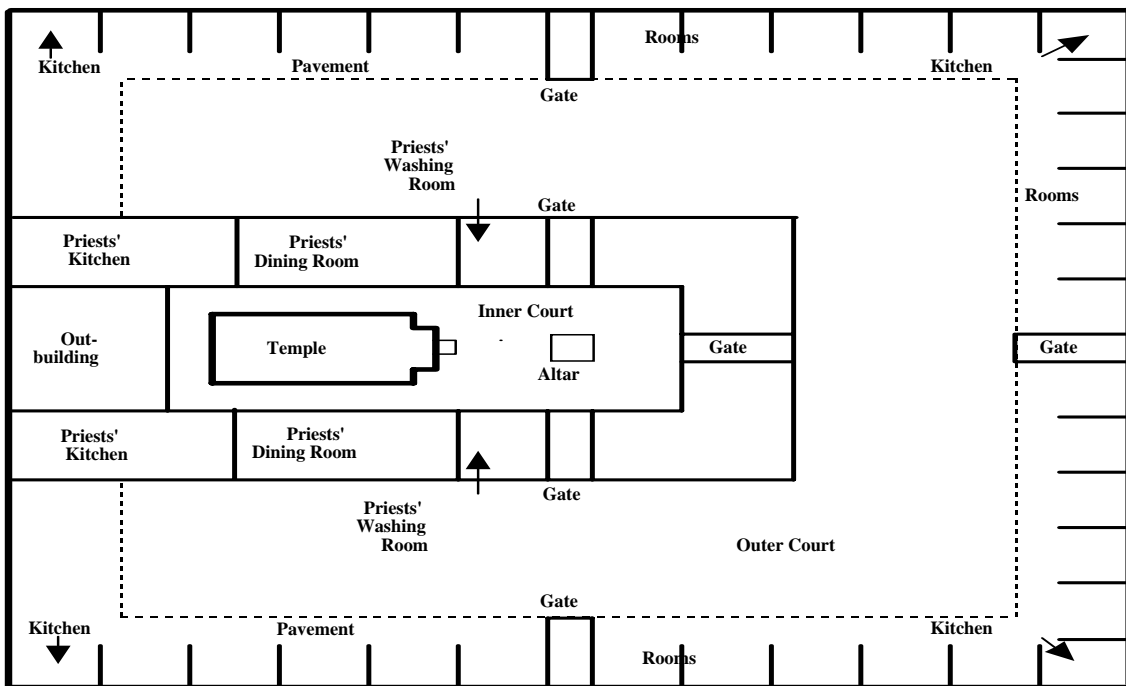
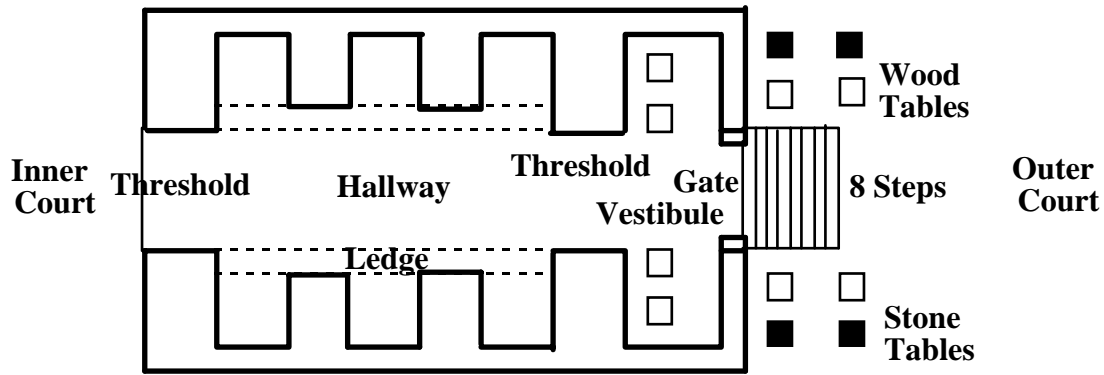
A pavement surface (probably mosaic) formed a border around the outer edge of the outer courtyard (cf. v. 15). The distance between the outer and inner gates was 100 cubits (~175 feet).

The North and South Gate Complexes

Verses 20-27 – These gate complexes described in verses 20-27 are identical to the description of the East Gate Complex described in verses 6-16. Each of these gateways in the Outer Wall corresponded to gate complexes in the Inner Court Wall and will be separated by a distance of 100 cubits (~175 feet).

The Gateways to the Inner Court

Verses 28-37 – *Description of the Inner Court Gateways.* The structure of the inner gate complexes were virtually identical to the dimensions and structure of the outer gate complexes described previously. An exception was that the porticos or vestibules of the Inner Court gate complexes faced the Outer Court and will be accessed first by the worshipper entering from the Outer Court.



The Rooms and Implements for Sacrificial Offerings

Verses 38-43 – *Description of the Place Where Sacrifices Were Prepared.* At the sides of the inner gates, tables were set up for slaughtering the sacrifices. Two tables were placed on each side of the vestibule or portico. The Northern Gate Complex also had four tables placed on the outside of the gate complex for a total of eight in the North gateway. It would be safe to assume that the East and South Gates had the same setup of tables, although Ezekiel doesn't specifically state that fact.

Many passages refer to a sacrificial system in the Millennium or Messianic Kingdom. For instance, see Isaiah 56.7; 66.20-23; Jeremiah 33.18; Zechariah 14.16-21; and Malachi 3.3-4.

Though it is objectionable to some to have animal sacrifices in the millennial scene, actually, they will be needed there because the very ideal circumstances in which millennial saints will live will tend to gloss over the awfulness of sin and

the need for bloody sacrifice. The sacrifices offered will therefore be a reminder that only by the shedding of blood and, more specifically, the blood of Christ, can sin be taken away. Ezekiel was not alone in referring to a sacrificial system in the Millennium (cf. Isa. 56:7; 66:20-23; Jer. 33:18; Zech. 14:16-21; Mal. 3:3-4). The prophets therefore seem to be united in referring to literal sacrifices in connection with a literal temple in the Millennium.

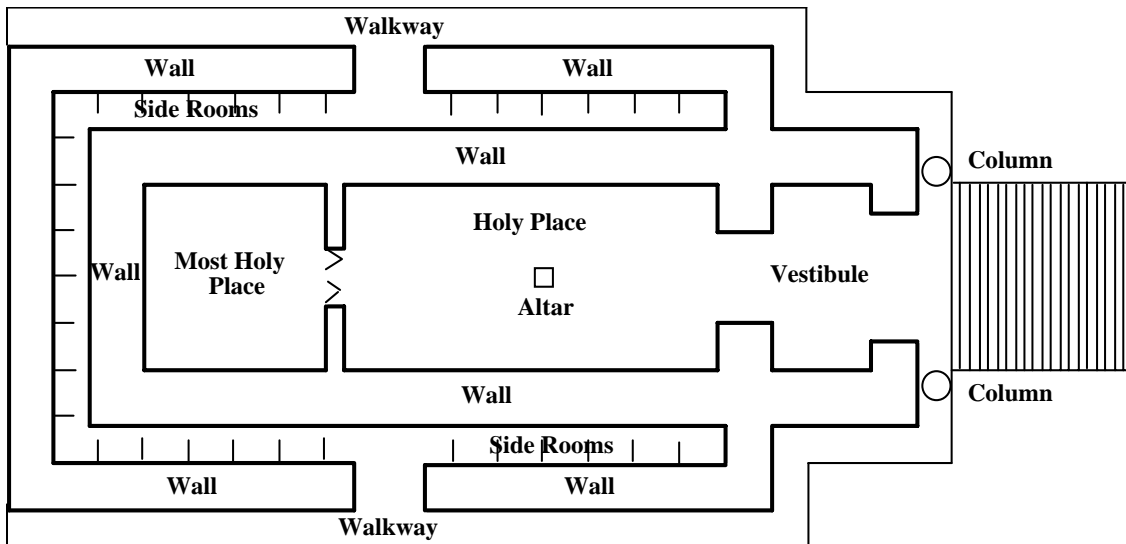
It is natural that a future sacrificial system in the Millennium should raise objections. Bloody sacrifices are offensive to modern culture. Their use in the Mosaic Covenant and before was, however, ordered by God Himself as a typical religious rite that pointed to Christ. Any attempt to spiritualize the temple as well as the millennial sacrifices runs into major difficulties with the details revealed as no satisfactory explanation can be offered which accounts for the details of the prophetic revelation. If bloody sacrifices were proper as typical illustration of redemption in the Old Testament, they are also proper as a memorial to the death of Christ.¹⁰

In addition to these four tables outside the Inner Gate complex, Ezekiel saw four tables of dressed stone, each one and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide and one cubit high. These tables held the instruments used to slaughter the animals. Hooks about three inches long will probably be used to hold the meat. The flesh of the sacrifices was on the tables in Ezekiel's vision.

Chambers for Singers and Priests

Verses 44-46 – *Description of the Chambers for the Singers and Priests.* Ezekiel saw two rooms for singers in the inner court. One was located beside the north inner gate and its door faced south. It also was used by the priests who were responsible for the care of the Temple. The other room stood beside the South inner gate, and its door faced north. It was used by singers and priests in charge of the altar (cf. 43.13-17). These priests were descendants of Zadok, the faithful high priest who served during David and Solomon's reigns. (See 1 Kings 1.5-26, 32-35; 2.26-27, 35; 1 Chron 6.3-8; 24.3 for information about Zadok's faithfulness).

Dimensions of the Inner Court and Portico (Entrance to the Temple Proper)



¹⁰ Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge HandBook*, 204.

Verses 47-49 – Description of the Inner Court. The Inner Court was a square 100 cubits (175 feet) on each side. The Inner Court housed the Temple Court Proper (i.e. the Outer and Inner Sanctuaries including the entryway or portico to these sanctuaries described in 40:48-49; 41:2-4, 21, 26) as well as the numerous side rooms that formed a perimeter around the Inner and Outer Sanctuaries (41:5-11). An altar stood in the square in front of the entrance to the Temple proper.

In verses 48-49, Ezekiel tells us that the walls that supported the door frames that led into the vestibule of the Temple were five cubits (8.75 feet) thick. The distance of these walls from the side walls of the Temple proper was 3 cubits (5.25 feet) – wide enough to constitute a passageway.

The entryway or vestibule was 20 cubits (35 feet) wide and 11 cubits (19.25 feet) deep. Two columns stood at the top of the stairs on either side of the entrance to the vestibule.

Standing in the inner court, Ezekiel's gaze shifted to the temple building itself...He described the structure in great detail as he was led through it. Ezekiel went first to the portico or entrance to the temple (40:48-49). This was the porch-like vestibule on the front of the temple. A flight of stairs led up the portico and pillars were on each side of the jambs. Ezekiel climbed the stairs and entered through the vestibule into the outer sanctuary (41:1). As one enters the building each gate or doorway is narrower than the one before it. Possibly this reflects God's restricting man's access into His holy presence. Ezekiel entered the outer sanctuary but not the most holy place, the inner sanctuary. Instead the angel went into the inner sanctuary to measure it. As a priest (1:3), Ezekiel was allowed into the outer sanctuary, but was barred from the most holy place (cf. Lev. 16; Heb. 9:6-7).¹¹

Chapter 41

Dimensions of the Sanctuary

Verses 1 & 2 – Just beyond the entryway/portico/vestibule, Ezekiel observed the Holy Place – the Outer Sanctuary of the Temple. The passageway between the portico and the Outer Sanctuary was 10 cubits (17.5 feet) wide and 6 cubits (10.5 feet) deep.

Just inside the Outer Sanctuary, the wall of the Outer Sanctuary was offset from the entry door to the Outer Sanctuary 5 cubits (8.75 feet). The Outer Sanctuary was 40 cubits (70 feet) in length and 20 cubits (35 feet) wide.

Verse 3 – Each side pillar of the doorway leading into the Inner Sanctuary was 2 cubits (3.5 feet) deep, 6 cubits (10.5 feet) high, and 7 cubits (12.25 feet) wide.

Verse 4 – the Inner Sanctuary (i.e. the “Most Holy Place”) was 20 cubits (35 feet) square.

Verse 5 – the wall of the Temple was 6 cubits (10.5 feet) and the width of the side chambers was 4 cubits (7 feet).

Verse 6 – There were 3 stories of side chambers – 30 in each story for a total of 90 side chambers or rooms.

Verse 7 – The size of the side chambers increased from floor 1 to floor 2 and from floor 2 to floor 3.

¹¹ Dyer, “Ezekiel,” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1307.

Verse 8 – The side chambers were situated on the same level as the rest of the Temple structure. It seems that the foundation for the side rooms was 6 cubits (10.5 feet) high from the level of the surrounding courtyard.

Verses 9-10 – the outer wall was 5 cubits (8.75 feet) thick. The free space between the side chambers and the outer walls of the Temple was also 5 cubits (8.75 feet). Apparently, another space of 20 cubits (35 feet) was between these side rooms and the priest chambers which were north and south of the Temple proper (42.1-14).

Verse 11 – The doorways of the side chambers were located on both the north and south sides. The Temple proper faced east and west and the side chambers had adjoining walls; therefore, it would not be possible for them to have doors on their east and west sides.

These rooms were probably storerooms for the temple equipment and storage chambers for the people's tithes and offerings (cf. Mal.3:8-10). These rooms were similar to those in Solomon's temple (cf. 1 Kings 6:5-19).¹²

The Building at the Western End

Verse 12 – Behind the Temple (west side) and between its western end and the western wall of the outer court will stand another building. Its use is unknown, but its dimensions are given as 70 cubits (122.5 feet) wide and 90 cubits (157.5 feet) long. Its wall was 5 cubits (8.75 feet) thick, thus when the width of the wall is combined with the length of the separate building, the total length of this building is 100 cubits (175 feet). This point seems to be reiterated in verse 15.

Dimensions and Design of the Temple Area

Verse 13 – The Temple proper measured 100 cubits (175 feet) long or deep.

Verse 14 – The width of the Temple including a separating courtyard was 100 cubits (175 feet).

Verse 15 – See notes from verse 12.

Verses 16-20 – Ezekiel describes various decorations within the Temple. While it is very likely some of the carved images have symbolic meaning that either was understood or will be understood, we can form some reasonable conclusions regarding the symbolism intended. The wood was carved with alternating images of cherubs and palm trees. Each cherub had two faces, the face of a man and the face of a lion with one looking left and the other looking to the right. In other passages of Scripture, cherubim are pictured as guardians of the holiness of God (see Gen 3.22-24; Exod 25.18-22; 26.31).

Carved cherubim and palm trees were etched into the wood that covered the interior of the temple building. The carved cherubim represent the guardians of God's dwelling place (cf. 1:4-28; 10). Possibly the palm trees represent the fruitfulness and blessing provided by God. These decorations are similar to those Solomon included in his temple (cf. 1 Kings 6:29).¹³

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Verses 21-22 – The doorposts between the portico and the holy place were identical to each other and square in shape. The altar in the holy place was completely wooden and its function is not known. However, it may have provided a similar function as the altar of incense or the table of showbread in Israel’s earlier tabernacle and temples. If so, it has a connection to prayer and remembrance.¹⁴

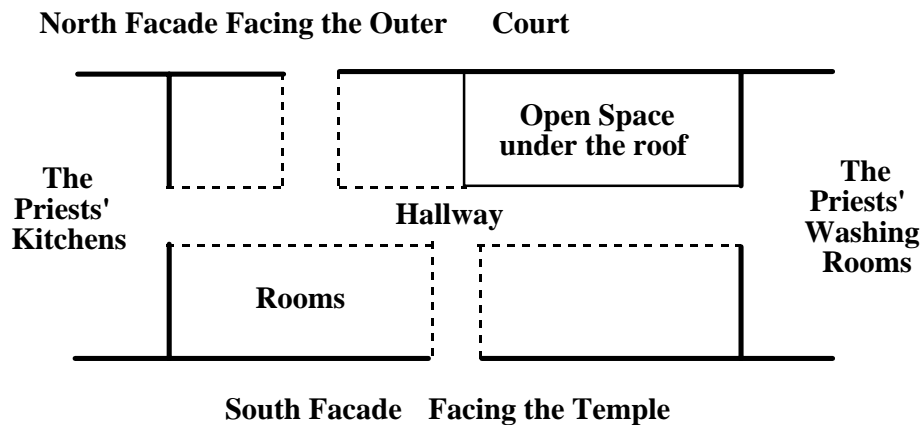
Verses 22- Ezekiel describes an altar that was 3 cubits (5.25 feet) high and 2 cubits (3.5 feet) long.

The only piece of furniture in the temple proper Ezekiel described was a wooden altar three cubits (5 ½ feet) high and two cubits (3 ½ feet) square, called the table that is before the Lord (Ezek. 41:22). Was this the altar of incense in the holy place (cf. Ex. 30:1-3, 1 Kings 7:48) or the table that held the bread of the Presence? (Ex. 25:23-30) The proportions of the piece are closer to those of the altar of incense (cf. Ex. 25:23; 30:1-2).¹⁵

Verses 23-26 – In these verses, Ezekiel describes the doors of the Temple and the Sanctuary. A double set of doors led to the outer sanctuary and the most holy place. The doors to the outer sanctuary had cherubim and palm trees carved on them just like the walls.

Chapter 42

The Chambers for the Priests



THE PRIEST'S EATING AND DRESSING ROOMS

Verses 1-14 – Ezekiel leaves the Temple proper to describe several adjacent structures that were used by the priests. I will simply cite an explanation of this passage since a reading of the passage is confusing and difficult to understand at best. Any attempt to explain it verse-by-verse would obviously be inadequate.

This complex of rooms [described in verses 1-14] was connected with the inner court, with entrances from the outer court. There were two buildings on the north side with a common corridor 17 ½ feet (10 cubits) wide (v. 4). The row of rooms...next to the outer court was 87 ½ feet (50 cubits) long. The other row of

¹⁴ Constable, Expository Notes – “Ezekiel” 2002 edition (www.soniclight.com), 193.

¹⁵ Dyer, “Ezekiel,” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1307.

rooms next to the sanctuary was twice as long, 175 feet (100 cubits, v. 8). These rooms were three stories high, with the rooms on the third level being narrower than those on the first and second floors (vv.3-6). An identical group of rooms was on the temple's south side (vv. 10-12).¹⁶

In those rooms [42.13-14 – the north and south chamber set of rooms]... the priests who approach the Lord will eat the most holy offerings (cf. 46:20) and store their garments (44:19). According to the Mosaic Law the priests received a portion of some offerings (Lev 2:3, 10; 6:16, 26-30; 7:7-10). A similar provision will be made for the millennial priests.¹⁷

The Outer Dimensions of the Temple

Verses 15-20 – After the angel had measured everything within the Temple complex, he then led Ezekiel to the outside of the Temple through the East gate to measure its outside perimeter. Whether “rods” or “cubits” in v. 16 is the correct translation is a subject of debate among Biblical scholars. One rod is roughly equivalent to six cubits (40.5). Therefore, five hundred rods square equates to 5,250 feet per side which is almost a mile square. If the measure was cubits, then the complex was a square that measured 500 cubits (875 feet) on each of its sides. This would equate to an area 765, 625 square feet – more than that of 13 football fields. The large bordering area around the temple complex might be for the purpose of setting it apart in order to stress the holiness of God present in the Temple.¹⁸

Chapter 43

The Glory of the Lord Returns to the Temple to Dwell with His Nation

Climaxing the tour of the temple, Ezekiel prophetically saw the return of the Lord and the glory of the Lord filling the temple (43.1-5). God declared that this temple will be His residence and his throne (vv. 6-7). God promised that the temple would be kept holy (vv. 8-9). Ezekiel was instructed to describe the temple to the people of Israel, including its various aspects of design, that they may be faithful in building the temple when the time comes (vv. 10-11). The area around the temple was also going to be declared “most holy” (v. 12). Details concerning the altar of sacrifice were also described by Ezekiel (vv. 13-17).

A detailed program of how to consecrate the priests and the people was also described by Ezekiel (vv. 18-27). A seven-day period of offering bull, goats, and rams would sanctify the priests and the temple, somewhat similar to how the tabernacle was consecrated by Moses (Ex. 40:2-33) and Solomon consecrated his temple (2 Chron. 7:8-9).

Following the burnt offerings presented for the people, fellowship offerings (peace offerings) would also be offered. The meaning of this was that God was renewing His fellowship with the people of Israel and these sacrifices would point back to Christ as the One who was the supreme sacrifice for sin and who made it possible for them to approach God the Father (Heb. 10:19-25).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1308 and Earl D. Radmacher, editor, *The Nelson Study Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1997), 1405.

As brought out previously, there is no good reason for understanding this passage in other than its literal sense. The offerings here do not take away sin any more than the offerings under the Mosaic Covenant, but they point back to the one offering of Christ on the cross just as the Old Testament offerings pointed forward to the death of Christ. Because the Lord's Supper will no longer be observed, the sacrificial system, somewhat different than the Mosaic system, was reinstated but with similar intent to point people to Christ.¹⁹

Verses 1-5 – Ezekiel describes a vision of the return of the presence of the Lord and His glory. The angel took Ezekiel to the gate on the East side of the Temple complex. The gate on the East side of the Temple complex opened toward the Kidron Valley and the Mount of Olives.²⁰ Earlier in Ezekiel, God's glory is seen to progressively depart from the Temple and move east over the Mount of Olives as His presence left the city and Israel.

Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man went in, and **the cloud filled the inner court**. Then **the glory of the Lord** went up from the cherub, and **paused over the threshold of the temple**; and the house was filled with the cloud, and **the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory**. (Ezek 10.3-4) [See Ezekiel's earlier description of his vision of God in Ezekiel 1.1-28].

Then **the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple** and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight. When they went out, the wheels were beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. (Ezekiel 10.18-19)²¹

So the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was high above them. And **the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain, which is on the east side of the city**. (Ezekiel 11.22-23)

So, Ezekiel saw God's glory progressively move away from the Temple earlier in his ministry – first from the Temple door entrance to the wheeled cherubim throne and then to the east gate of the Temple. Compare Ezekiel's description of the glory of God in 43.2-3 [*And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory*] with the following passages.

It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony was in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain) that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. (Exod 34.29-30, 35)

¹⁹ Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, 205-206.

²⁰ Dyer, "Ezekiel" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1309.

²¹ Ezekiel mentions wheels in association with the cherubim throughout the first several chapters of his book. The Nelson Study Bible includes the following commentary related to the wheel imagery in Ezekiel on page 1335. "The prophet stresses the association of the wheels with the living creatures, as well as the creatures' ability to travel wherever they wished ... It appears that the wheels represented the flexibility and mobility of the living creatures. This is a pictorial representation of God's omnipresence."

Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. (Mark 9.2-3)

His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters. (Rev 1.15)

In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. (Rev 1.16)

And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. (Rev 14.2)

And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. (Rev 19.6)

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. (Rev 21.10-11)

The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. (Rev 21.22-23)

In Ezekiel 43.1-5, Ezekiel witnesses a dramatic reversal of the departure of the Lord's glory that had occurred earlier in his ministry. The vision of God's glory reminded Ezekiel of an earlier vision of God's glory that terrified him. He had witnessed God's glory near the River Chebar (1.3) when he saw God's glory coming to judge Jerusalem (1.4-28; 9.1, 5; 32.18). Ezekiel's response was to again prostrate himself.

In this later section of his book where the context is the Messianic Kingdom, Ezekiel witnesses the glory of the Lord return to the Temple from the east in order to dwell with the nation once again.²² Ezekiel witnesses this phenomenon from the vantage point of the inner court in front of the Temple proper where he saw God's glory fill the Temple. Earlier in Israel's history, the glory of the Lord had filled the Tabernacle at its dedication (Exod 40.34-35) as well as Solomon's temple at its dedication (1 Kings 8.10-11; 2 Chron 5.13-14; 7.1-3).²³

The departure of the glory of God from the Temple that Ezekiel witnessed has parallels. An earlier parallel to this event in Israel's history occurred when God's glory departed with the ark of the covenant into the Philistine camp (1 Sam 4.19-22) and returned when David brought the ark into Jerusalem (2 Sam 6.17-19). Another parallel is found in Jesus' departure in His ascension and return to Jerusalem at the 2nd Advent. In both cases, the Mount of Olives plays a significant role.

²² We know that the context is the Messianic (millennial) kingdom based in part at least on the fact that the glory of the Lord did not re-enter the Temple when Zerrubbabel rebuilt it after Judah's return from Babylonian captivity or when Herod the Great restored the Temple. Haggai's prophecy regarding the wealth to be contributed to the Temple has never been fulfilled to this point in history – "I will shake all the nations and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory," says the Lord of hosts" (Hag 2.7).

²³ Constable, Expository Notes – "Ezekiel" – 2002 Edition (www.soniclight.com), 196.

God States His Case and His Desire to Dwell With Israel Forever

Verses 6-9 – At the time that God establishes His presence permanently in the Temple, there will be no more idolatry and corruption of the Temple precincts due to the spiritual apostasy in Israel. An example of the type of immorality and perversion of God’s design for the Temple and Israel is found in the description of Josiah’s reforms (2 Kings 23.1-20).

The “harlotry” to which Ezekiel refers in verse 7 is probably a double entendre referring to both spiritual and physical unfaithfulness related to their participation in the religious prostitution associated with Baal worship. The carcasses of the kings on high places is perhaps a reference to memorial graves of kings buried near the Temple (see 2 Kin. 23.30).²⁴

The Purpose for the Detailed Description of the Temple

Verses 10-12 – When we have a clear understanding and vision of God’s plan or model, we often find ourselves at a heightened understanding of the effect of our depravity. When we have not fully appropriated His righteousness into our lives, our failures, short-sightedness, and self-centeredness stands in sharp contrast to the new-found vision of God’s model. It is as if a spotlight has been cast upon areas of our lives that were hid in the darkness of ignorance. In Israel’s case, the bad decisions were willful and deliberate (vs. being the result of ignorance) since Israel continually rejected the exhortations of God through His prophets. Through His prophets, God had communicated the model that He desired for His people to follow. If His people had meditated on God’s Word, their willful rejection of that model should have stood in sharp contrast to their behavior. Consider the following comments and passages:

And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the Lord your God. And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I am the Lord who sanctifies you. (Lev 20.6-8)

In the Lord I put my trust; How can you say to my soul, “Flee as a bird to your mountain”? For look! The wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow on the string, that they may shoot secretly at the upright in heart. If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven, His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. The Lord tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. (Psa 11.1-5)

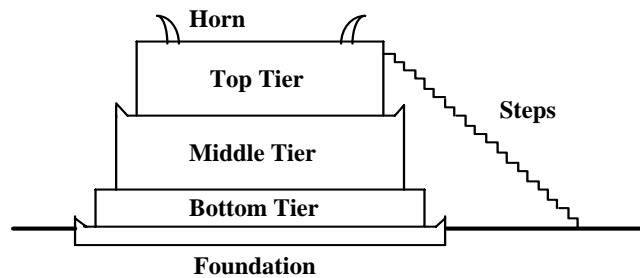
In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!” (Isa 6.1-3)

A clear vision of God’s ideal plan would remind the people of the sins that had led to the destruction of the old temple. Another reason in sharing the design with the nation was to motivate the people to return to God and rebuild the temple: so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations. Though this prophecy was not fulfilled after the return from the Babylonian

²⁴ Radmacher, editor, *The Nelson Study Bible*, 1406.

Captivity (and thus awaits a future fulfillment), the potentiality for fulfillment was there.²⁵

The Dimensions of the Altar



Verses 13-17 – Once again the Biblical narrative is a bit difficult to follow. The Bible Knowledge Commentary has a very good diagram of this altar on page 1308 and should be considered by those who desire to visualize the altar structure.

The height of the altar was 19 ¼ feet ... but part of this was below ground. The height of the altar above the ground (10 cubits) corresponds to the altar constructed by Solomon (2 Chron. 4:1). However, since Solomon used the shorter 18-inch cubit (2 Chron.3:3), the total height of his altar was only 15 feet compared with an above-ground height of 17 ½ feet for the millennial altar. The altar hearth, 21 feet square, was reached by a flight of steps facing east.²⁶

The existence of the millennial temple and the reinstatement of the sacrificial system [though not the reinstatement of the Mosaic Covenant] is not only understandable but predictable. Ezekiel's vision of a restored sacrificial system was really not so amazing after all. The millennium will afford Israel the opportunity for the first time in its history to use the symbols of their covenant with Jesus as Messiah in view. It will be their first time to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation showing forth to the world the redemptive work of Yahweh in the person of Jesus Christ the Messiah (Isa 53:7; 61:1-3; Zech 4:1; John 1:29; Acts 8:32-35; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 7:13-14; 5:9; 13:8; 15:3).²⁷

The Consecration of the Altar

Verses 18-27 – A seven day ritual is specified in these verses to be followed in order to dedicate the altar of the Temple. The sacrifices are required to be without blemish (vv. 22, 23, & 25) thereby representing the sinlessness of Christ. The sacrifices were a type of Christ, but since they were not Christ, they could only atone for sin, not expiate sin. In the Millennium, they will be a memorial just as the Lord's Supper is a memorial today. The sacrifices of the Millennium will be retrospective in contrast to the prospective nature of the sacrifices of the Age of the Law.

²⁵ Dyer, "Ezekiel," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1309.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Lamar Eugene Cooper, Sr., "Ezekiel" in *The New American Commentary Series* (North Carolina: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 381 quoted in Thomas Constable, Expository Notes – "Ezekiel" – 2002 Edition (www.sonidlight.com), 198.

In verses 19-25, God speaks to Ezekiel in a manner that could be interpreted as God commanding Ezekiel himself to perform the sacrifices that were designed to sanctify the altar (v. 22). We know that believers of dispensations prior to the Church Age will be resurrected at the 2nd Advent of Christ (Isa 26.19; Dan 12.2-3, 13). So, it is possible, if this interpretation is correct, that Ezekiel himself in resurrected body will lead this sanctification ritual and sacrifice. Another, perhaps more common, interpretation is that God was simply speaking to Ezekiel as if He were speaking to the person in the future who will perform this ritual.

This consecration ritual and service is similar to that used by Moses (Ex 40.10, 29) and Solomon (2 Chron 7.8-9) to sanctify their respective structures for worship to God. After seven days (v. 15) of offering bulls, goats, and rams the priests will present the people's burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar.

This process will mark the full resumption of God's fellowship with His people, as then God will accept them. These sacrifices will point Israelites to Christ who will have given them access to the Father (Heb 10:19-25).²⁸

Chapter 44

The East Gate and the Prince

Verses 1-3 – In the prior chapter, Ezekiel had been standing in the inner court of the Temple where he received instructions about the altar. However, here in chapter 44, Ezekiel is led out of the inner court to the east gate of the outer court. This gate was and is to remain shut because it is through this gate that Ezekiel in his vision observed the glory of the Lord return to the Temple (43.4). Since the Lord had re-entered His Temple via this gate it was to remain shut with one exception (vv. 2-3).

There is an eastern gate today in what remains of the Temple complex that is known as the "Golden Gate." It dates to a period several centuries after Jesus and it is shut today according to an Islamic tradition. Some have thought that the "Golden Gate" of Jerusalem is the gate that is referenced by Ezekiel in our passage; however, the dimensions do not match.²⁹

The eastern gate that overlooks the Kidron Valley today is closed as it has been since the Crusades, nearly a thousand years ago. Crusaders walled up the gate because they believed that Jesus entered the temple mount by this gate on Palm Sunday and that it should be closed until he returns to reenter the temple mount. Zechariah 14:4-5 presents the Messiah coming to the valley on the eastern side of the temple in preparation for his entry into the temple area. This has been regarded as biblical evidence that the gate should remain closed until Jesus returns. Today the eastern gate, also called the Golden Gate, is a significant holy site for three major world religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Jews believe that when the Messiah comes he will open the east gate and enter the temple mount first and then enter the city of Jerusalem. Moslems believe that the gate is the site of final judgment and call it the gate of heaven and hell. They believe the final judgment of humanity will take place before the eastern gate and the redeemed are those who will be allowed to enter the temple mount; all others will be outcasts.³⁰

²⁸ Dyer, "Ezekiel," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1309.

²⁹ Ibid. See also Radmacher, *The Nelson Study Bible*, 1407.

³⁰ Lamar Eugene Cooper, Sr. "Ezekiel," 388 quoted in Thomas Constable, *Expository Notes – "Ezekiel"* – 2002 Edition (www.soniclight.com), 201.

The Romans destroyed the wall around Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The present Golden Gate dates back to the seventh century A.D. The Crusaders walled it up in the eleventh century. The Ottoman Turks partially destroyed it and then repaired it in the early sixteenth century. The Turkish governor then walled it up again in A.D. 1530, and it has remained closed ever since.³¹

Only one person will be allowed to enter this east gate complex – the “prince” (44.3 cf. 46.2). This “prince” is not the Messiah since Ezekiel 45.22 indicates that the “prince” is to make a sin offering for the people and for himself. While I believe that the resurrected King David will play a significant role in the Messianic Kingdom (particularly in regard to Israel), 45.22 does present one difficulty if we equate the “prince” of these Ezekiel passages with the resurrected King David. The difficulty – why would David in resurrected body have to offer a sacrifice for “himself?”

Other difficulties that arise when the interpreter equates this “prince” (Ezek 44.3) with the Messiah include: 1) this “prince” will produce heirs or sons (Ezek 46.16) and 2) this “prince” is not a priest and exercises no priestly prerogatives whereas Jesus is described as the great high priest. This priest functions in an intermediate status between the priests and the people (see 45.13-22; 46.2, 10, 18; 48.21-22). The identity of this person is unknown, but he will be some type of administrative representative of the Messiah.

The following cite offers a good presentation of argument for the resurrected King David as the “prince” of Ezekiel’s prophecies.

After judging the individual sheep, God will exercise His leadership by appointing a new shepherd (vv. 23-24). This shepherd, God stated, will be His servant David. Many see this as an allusion to Christ, the Good Shepherd (cf. John 10:11-18), who descended from the line of David to be the King of Israel (cf. Matt. 1:1). However, nothing in Ezekiel 34:23 demands that Ezekiel was not referring to the literal King David who will be resurrected to serve as Israel’s righteous prince. David is referred to by name elsewhere in passages that look to the future restoration of Israel (cf. Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 37:24-25; Hosea 3:5). Also Ezekiel indicated that David will be the prince of the restored people (Ezek. 34:24; 37:25). This same “prince” will then offer sin offerings for himself during the millennial period (45:22; 46:4). Such actions would hardly be appropriate for the sinless Son of God, but they would be for David. So it seems this is a literal reference to a resurrected David. In place of the false shepherds God will resurrect a true shepherd to tend his sheep.³²

Only one person will be allowed to enter through the east gate complex: the prince himself (cf. 46.2). This “prince” has already been identified as King David (cf. 34:24; 37:24-25). He will be allowed to eat in the gate, possibly referring to the fellowship offerings which the worshipers will eat after offering them to the Lord (cf. Lev 7:15-21). The portico (vestibule) faces the outer court ... so David, going east, will enter the gate complex from the outer court.³³

Those Who Will Be Admitted to the Temple

³¹ Lamar Eugene Cooper, Sr. “Ezekiel,” 389 quoted in Thomas Constable, Expository Notes – “Ezekiel” – 2002 Edition (www.soniclight.com), 201.

³² Dyer, “Ezekiel,” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1295.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1309.

Verses 4-9 – Ezekiel re-enters the inner court by way of the north gate and he saw the glory of the Lord which filled the Temple of the Lord. This vision caused Ezekiel to bow in an act of awe and worship. The new reference to the “glory of the Lord” and its return to the Temple point to the fact that it is the return of the Lord to the Temple that serves as a basis for all of the regulations that follow (v. 4). This is the reason that Ezekiel was exhorted to pay particular attention to the instruction he was to receive concerning the ordinances and who may enter the Temple precincts (v. 5). Special attention was placed upon the entrances to the Temple since it was through these entrances that the common life of the people crossed paths with the holiness of God Who resided in the inner holy of holies.

The believers of this future generation of Israel will follow God’s ordinances precisely. This is evidence of their righteous standing before the Lord. God emphasizes the necessity of holiness and righteousness, especially in view of Israel’s past apostasy.

Israel had allowed foreigners to access the Temple without any evidence that they were faithful believers (see Josh 9:23-27; Ezra 8:20). Unbelievers are referred to as uncircumcised in heart and in flesh (v. 7). This was in direct defiance of God’s command in such passages as Exodus 19:8; Lev 26:41; Num 3:10; Deut 10:16; 30:6; Neh 13:8; Jer 4:4; 9:25). Apostate Israel was thereby failing to be the set apart nation that God desired her to be since many of the religions of the ancient Near East frequently used foreigners (particularly captives) to serve as temple servants and aides to the priests.³⁴

The Israelites had done this, too. One of the early instances of it took place when they made the conquered Gibeonites temple servants (Josh. 9:23, 27; cf. Ezra 8:20). The Mosaic Law forbade any unauthorized person from serving in the tabernacle or temple as a priest (Num. 3:10). Believing foreigners could offer sacrifices there and assist the priests, but they could not serve as priests (cf. Num. 15:14; Isa. 56:3, 6; Zech. 14:21). In the future temple, foreigners (uncircumcised in heart and flesh, i.e., unbelieving Gentiles) would not be allowed to enter the temple proper and probably not even the temple precincts (v. 9; cf. Ezra 4:1-3; Neh. 13:1-9; Acts 21:27-31).³⁵

Laws Regarding the Priests

Verses 10-14 – Throughout the history of Israel, the Levites (with the exception of the sons of Zadok – v. 15) had not obeyed the commandments of God through Moses. At times, they had even encouraged idolatry (compare Ezekiel 8; 14:1-11; Deut 33:8-11; Judg. 17-19).

The sons of Zadok were the descendants of the priest Zadok in the Levitical line who remained faithful when others did not (see 1 Sam 2:27-36; 2 Sam 8:17; 15:24-29; 1 Kin 2:26-35; 1 Chron 6:7, 8, 50-53). Zadok was appointed chief priest during Solomon’s reign because he faithfully supported Solomon as king (cf. 1 Kings 1:32-35; 2:26-27, 35).

Therefore, in the Messianic kingdom, the Levites will be restricted to a role of ministers, i.e. servants or attendants. They will not be allowed to serve as priests in the inner court or temple, where the holy things are located; but they will be allowed to oversee general Temple operations, e.g. gatekeepers, they will slay the sacrifices, and assist the worshipers. The tasks of the Levites during the Solomonic era were much more extensive (see 1 Chron 15:16; 16:4 & 23:28-31). In effect, they will learn the principle of servitude in the Messianic Kingdom that they did not learn while given the opportunity in God’s theocratic nation Israel. They will not be permitted to approach the Lord and serve Him; they will only serve the people.

³⁴ Ralph H. Alexandar, “Ezekiel” in Everyman’s Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), 975 cited in Constable, Expository Notes – “Ezekiel” (www.soniclight.com), 202.

³⁵ Constable, Expository Notes – “Ezekiel” (www.soniclight.com), 203.

These verses cause an interesting observation to be made. Between the time of this prophecy in Ezekiel (ca. 6th Century B.C.) and its fulfillment in the Messianic Kingdom, hundreds and even thousands of years will have passed. The Jews of that future era will not only know who is of the tribe of Levi, but their understanding of genealogy will also include a knowledge of who is of the sons of Zadok. I doubt very much whether many Jews today can identify the tribe with which they are associated; therefore, I believe that it is quite possible that genealogical details will be among the new and additional revelation given to millennial believers as a result of the supernatural outpouring of the Holy Spirit during the “last days” of the Age of Israel (a period which includes the initial establishment of the kingdom).

Another interesting observation from these verses – this millennial generation of Levites did not sin by committing the apostasies of their ancestors, yet they are prohibited in the kingdom from performing the intercessory rituals that were their privilege as a result of being in the Levitical priestly lineage. We should not interpret this as if God were holding them responsible for the sins of their fathers. Rather, we should keep in mind that in the millennial kingdom, the roles of all believers are the result of the sovereign choice of the King. They will know and recognize His will and be honored in the eternal kingdom for having served faithfully in the service to which they were called. God’s purpose in using them this way in the millennial kingdom in accordance with the terms of the New Covenant surpasses the purposes of the Old Covenant (i.e. the Mosaic Law). The message that God is conveying to men and angels during the Millennium far surpasses any supposed “right” or “claim” one may have to title or position based upon the Mosaic Law. While there are very obvious similarities to the Mosaic law that are inherent in the rituals associated with the kingdom, I would imagine that it will be considered a grievous sin during the kingdom era for one to attempt to gain personal advantage by appealing to the Mosaic Law in those cases where there are differences. Paul captures this logic very eloquently in his discussion of the prerogative of God found in His temporary setting aside of Israel and intercalation of the church – a body of believers principally consisting of Gentiles (see Romans 9-11). Paul asks his readers who might be prone to question the sovereign decision of God:

Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills he hardens. You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will.” But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to Him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? (Rom 9.19-21)

Verses 15-19 – The sons of Zadok are rewarded for the past faithfulness of their ancestors with the privilege of ministering before the Lord.

While salvation is never earned (Rom 3; 4; Gal 2; 3; Eph 2.8, 9), God does reward faithfulness and righteousness ... Responsibility and recognition have to be deserved, but never demanded (see 1 Sam 26:23; Matt 5:12; 25:21-23; Rev 2:10). Again, there is an emphasis upon holiness and righteousness. The Zadokites were honored for their special obedience.³⁶

Principle: A gut check of a believer’s spiritual status is found in how the believer views personal ministry. Is it a bore? Is it something dreaded? Is it viewed as a chore or obligation? Is it viewed as a necessity to maintain one’s image? Or, is it desired, pursued and entered with joyful anticipation of seeing others draw closer to Christ? Is it motivated from one’s love of Christ even when all others in one’s periphery are going in a different direction?

³⁶ Radmacher, *The Nelson Study Bible*, 1408.

In every age the sovereign and gracious God has a remnant of those who cleave to Him in spite of adverse circumstances and the mounting pressures of the majority to conform. The Zadokite priests kept themselves from the idolatry of the nation, even though the other priests complied to the idolatrous desires of the disobedient people. For this faithfulness the reward from the Lord will be access to His presence, the privilege of ministering in any and all phases of priestly duty.³⁷

Several Mosaic laws that governed the activities of the priests were repeated in this passage regarding the Zadokites. The priestly vestments are to be constructed of linen since linen is lighter than wool and would not cause the wearer to perspire as readily (see Exod 28.39-41). Perspiration causes wet clothing which attracts bacteria and dirt more quickly. Before the priests go out among the people in the outer court, they will change from the clothing they wear in ministering before the Lord to other garments as a way of distinguishing the common from the holy.

Verses 20-22 – There will be regulations governing the private decisions and lives of these priests as a further means of setting them apart from the rest of Israel as God’s representatives and mediators of the covenant. These regulations are not designed as punitive. They are designed to highlight the distinction between that which is holy and that which is common.

The priests of the Millennial Kingdom are only permitted to marry virgin Israelite women or the widows of former priests. Under the Mosaic Law, the marriage restrictions bound only the high priest (Lev 21.7, 14), but in the Messianic kingdom, they apply to all priests who are sons of Zadok.

These regulations will also continue practices that have already been prescribed in the Mosaic Law (see Lev 10.6, 9; 21.1-6, 7, 10, 14).

The priests, then and in the future, have the responsibility of modeling and maintaining the highest standards of morality, self-control, self-denial, discipline, and obedience to God’s will. In Israelite culture, shaving the head indicated mourning (see 7.16-19), and growing long hair could mean the taking of a special vow (sometimes connected to complete or controlled abstinence from wine; see Num. 6:3, 4). The point is the priests’ clear separation from the rest of society.³⁸

To shave one’s head or to let one’s hair go unkempt were signs of mourning mentioned in the Mosaic Law (cf. Lev 10.6; 21.5, 10). There is to be no wine drunk prior to the performance of one’s duties lest any question be cast upon the ministering priest, his message or the credibility of his judgment by those in observance of these priestly activities (cf. Lev 10.8-9).

Verses 24-27 – These priests will also serve as judges and arbiters in disputes and debates similar to the Levitical priests responsibilities under the Mosaic Law (Lev 10.10, 11; 11.47; Deut 17.9; 19.7; 21.5; 33.10).

The Zadokite priests will be required to avoid ritual defilement through contact with a dead person (cf. Lev. 21.1-4). Even though death will be very uncommon during the Messianic kingdom (cf. Isa 65.20), God still makes provision for when it does occur. Exception is made for

³⁷ Charles Lee Feinburg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 260 quoted in Constable, Expository Notes – “Ezekiel” – 2002 edition (www.sonlight.com), 204.

³⁸ Radmacher, *The Nelson Study Bible*, 1408.

close family members; however, even then, the priests will be required to wait seven days and then offer a sin offering prior to engaging in Temple service again.

Contact with a dead body was forbidden; however, a partial exception was made for immediate family members. The act still defiled the person, causing ceremonial uncleanness for a certain time. God's concern over purity in practice and procedures is seen in that the priest was to submit to a cleansing ritual and then personally present a sin offering. He was to publicly declare and deal with his own uncleanness, although what he had done was not forbidden. The circumstances that allowed touching a dead body did not overturn its consequences according to the Law. God was preserving the sanctity of His temple and statutes.³⁹

Observance of the Sabbath was obviously a part of the Mosaic system. Evidently, it will be expected during the Millennial kingdom also (v. 24). It is not a part of the present dispensation; however, the spiritual believer would find it a good practice to set aside one day a week (e.g. Sunday) in order to meditate on the Word and disengage from the business and busyness of the world.

It is interesting to note that God makes distinctions between what is permissible to eat in different dispensations.

Verses 28-31 – These verses establish the principle of holiness in the priests' provisions and that the priests were to be subject to the generosity of God's people. This same regulation and principle is embodied in the Mosaic Law (see Lev 21.1-3; Num 19.11-19; Hag 2.13) in regard to the Levitical priesthood. One is closely connected to and one has a special bond with those upon whom one's livelihood depends. Any sense of arrogance, aloofness and superiority is quickly checked. In addition, this system provided the benefit of allowing those to whom the priests ministered to in turn minister to the priests.

These priests were not to inherit or own land. At a minimum, the ownership of land would be a distraction and at worst, the ownership of land would represent an opportunity for the priests to become self-sufficient instead of God sufficient.

Israelites could dedicate possessions as gifts to God (see Lev 27.21, 28; Num 18.14; Judg 11.29-40) under the Mosaic Law and evidently during the Messianic kingdom, the same means of giving will be allowed.

³⁹ Ibid.