

Ezekiel 40    “A New Temple for a New Exodus”  
Psalm 84  
Revelation 21

February 20, 2011

Iain Duguid points out that the way most commentators treat Ezekiel 40-48  
“there may possibly be some...meaning and value in this passage,  
but precisely what it is for ordinary people is frequently not clear.” (478)

Dispensationalists insist that it is a description of the millennial temple in Jerusalem –  
but of course that means that a study of its details would have only esoteric value for us,  
and even less for Ezekiel’s original hearers!

If these are the plans for an architect, we would need things like building materials –  
something that God described in detail to Moses and Solomon –  
but are utterly lacking in Ezekiel!

What is more,  
there is nothing in what God says to Ezekiel  
that even hints at anything like a command to build this temple.

This is not a blueprint for a future temple  
but a vision of the heavenly temple.

Originally, when I laid out my sermon series on Ezekiel,  
I had planned on covering Ezekiel 40-48 in 3 weeks.  
After all, these chapters aren’t very complicated –  
they have a pretty simple point.  
We could easily cover it in 3 weeks.

But after working through the oracles against Jerusalem in chapters 1-24,  
and the oracles against the nations in chapters 25-32,  
and the “when I deliver you, you’ll be ashamed of yourselves!” in chapters 33-39,

I realized that you really need to spend some time in chapters 40-48!

There was a reason why Ezekiel spent 9 chapters  
(nearly a quarter of the book) on this vision.  
Ezekiel has made it perfectly clear that you are sinners –  
that God owes you *nothing* (except death!) –  
and that judgment and destruction is coming upon all the earth  
so that all the earth might know that *he* is God.

I think you now understand that there is *no way* to glory, except through the cross.

But in order to bear the cross more joyfully,  
you need to hear something about the glory!

That's why we are singing Psalm 84...  
Sing Psalm 84  
Read Revelation 21

There are three main sections in Ezekiel 40-48:  
Chapters 40-43 deal with the new temple –  
chapters 44-46 talk about the new prince and priesthood –  
and chapters 47-48 show us the new division of the land.

As we go through this, I will suggest that Ezekiel  
is describing the new covenant in old covenant language.

One simple way of saying it is this is that Ezekiel is the Hebrews of the Old Testament:  
In the New Testament, Hebrews describes the old covenant in the light of Jesus.  
In the Old Testament, Ezekiel describes the new covenant in the light of Moses.

One thing to remember as we go through Ezekiel 40-48  
is that the Mosaic covenant itself admitted that it was only a shadow:  
as God said to Moses, "See to it that you do everything  
*according to the pattern* you saw on the mountain" (e.g., Ex 25:40)

Here in Ezekiel 40, the prophet is taken to a very high mountain –  
there are lots of echoes of Moses on Mt. Sinai –  
and Ezekiel sees the same pattern that Moses saw.

Ezekiel 40-48 is a symbolic vision of the cosmos the way it should be –  
and will be, when God does this.

Because this is not a temple that man can build –  
this is the eschatological temple made without hands that God himself will build.

As Hebrews 8 says,  
Jesus is the "minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man....  
Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all,  
since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law.  
They serve a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things.  
For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying,  
'See that you make everything according to the pattern  
that was shown you on the mountain.'" (Hebrews 8:1-5)

According to Hebrews 8, the OT tabernacle and temples  
were copies and shadows of the heavenly temple.

People sometimes say that they believe in a "literal" interpretation of Ezekiel's temple.  
What they really mean is that they believe in a "shadowy" interpretation of Ezekiel's temple.  
They refuse to see the reality of the heavenly things,

but only the shadows that pointed forward to them.

Over the next few weeks, we will follow Ezekiel on his tour of the heavenly temple,  
and see that what he saw was nothing less than the “real thing”  
that God had shown Moses.

And not surprisingly, since he comes before the resurrection of Christ,  
he describes this vision in fairly Mosaic language!

We see this already in the first 4 verses which introduce the vision:

**Introduction: A New Exodus (40:1-4)**

**a) When: Halfway to the Jubilee Year, on the Day that the Passover Lamb Is Selected (v1)**

*<sup>1</sup> In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me to the city.*

Why is the 25<sup>th</sup> year important?

It is halfway to the 50<sup>th</sup> year!

Why is the fiftieth year important?

Because in Leviticus, the 50<sup>th</sup> year is the year of Jubilee.

After seven weeks of years (49 years), the 50<sup>th</sup> year is the year of release –  
the year when the slaves are freed and the land returns to its proper heirs.

In other words, after 25 years of exile, we are halfway there!

We are halfway to the year of release!

“What we have in Ezekiel 40-48 is nothing less  
than the visionary reordering of an entire new world,  
following on the creation of the new people of God in chapter 37  
and the birth pangs of chapters 38-39.

It is a view of heaven from halfway there...

showing a people living with the absence of God

a vision of what his presence would be like.” (Duguid, 479)

But also, it has been more than 12 years since Ezekiel had heard the voice of the LORD.

When Jerusalem fell, God continued to speak to Ezekiel for a short time,

but after God loosed Ezekiel’s lips,

Ezekiel did not again hear the voice of the LORD (as far as we know)  
for twelve years.

But even more importantly, it is the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month (at the beginning of the year)  
which suggests the first month.

And the tenth day of the first month was the day when each household

was supposed to select the Passover lamb.

But for the last 14 years, there has been no Passover lamb!

And for the Exiles, it has been 25 years since the last time they celebrated the Passover.

For 25 years this day has come –

and rather than celebrate the feast of deliverance from Egypt,  
the Exiles would remember that once God had shown favor!

But now...

Ezekiel's 25<sup>th</sup> Passover would have come around his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday –

according to Numbers 4, the priest's active duty went from age 30 to age 50.

Had he ever been able to serve in the temple in Jerusalem,  
this would have been his last Passover.

Ezekiel's ministry as a prophet began around his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday –  
and ends around his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday!

*on that very day, the hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me to the city.*

**b) Where: A Very High Mountain and a Structure Like a City (v2)**

*<sup>2</sup>In visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south.*

Now, there are no “very high mountains” near Jerusalem.

So why does he call it a “very high mountain”?

Ezekiel is here portrayed as a new Moses.

Ezekiel 40-48 is the only instance of law-giving outside of the Five Books of Moses,  
and there are lots of similarities.

Both times the Law was given to an intermediary to be communicated to the people.

Both Laws were revealed on a high mountain (Sinai and here).

Both Moses' tabernacle and Ezekiel's temple follow God's covenant-making.

Both see the glory of the LORD fill the sanctuary.

If you have ever read the Mosaic Law,

you know that a very large chunk of it is dealing with the tabernacle,  
the priesthood, and the sacrificial system.

So also Ezekiel 40-48.

And – neither mediator is allowed to enter the land he envisions!

Moses dies in the wilderness.

Ezekiel will die in exile.

**c) Who: The Bronze Man with a Linen Cord and Measuring Reed (v3-4)**

<sup>3</sup>*When he brought me there, behold, there was a man whose appearance was like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand. And he was standing in the gateway.*

Back in chapter 8, the Spirit had carried Ezekiel to Jerusalem  
and showed him visions of the temple – as the glory of the LORD departed.

Then, too, a gleaming man had given Ezekiel a tour of the temple.  
Now, the man whose appearance was like bronze  
will give Ezekiel a guided tour of a new temple –  
one that will last, because it is the new covenant temple!  
The man has a linen cord and a measuring reed.  
The cord is for measuring long distances;  
the reed is for measuring short distances.

<sup>4</sup>*And the man said to me, "Son of man, look with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your heart upon all that I shall show you, for you were brought here in order that I might show it to you. Declare all that you see to the house of Israel."*

When do you build a temple?  
When did Moses build the tabernacle?  
After the Exodus – when God delivered his people from Egypt.  
When did Solomon build the temple?  
After David defeated his enemies.

Temple-building follows victory.  
After defeating Gog and his allies in chapters 38-39,  
God is ready to build his glorious temple.

Ezekiel's temple-vision assures the people of God that God has not abandoned them forever.  
And so he gives them "a tour of the house that the divine warrior built  
on completion of his cosmic victory over the nations" in Ezekiel 38-39. (Duguid, 479)

Incidentally, this is what you see in the NT as well.  
When Jesus said,  
"Destroy this temple, and I will rebuild it in three days,"  
he was asserting that his death would be his triumph over his foes,  
and his resurrected body would be the new temple where we worship.  
Likewise, the triumph of God over his foes in Revelation 20  
is followed by the vision of the glorious temple-city in Revelation 21.

## **1. The Outer Court (40:5-27)**

### **a. The East Gate (v5-16)**

<sup>5</sup>*And behold, there was a wall all around the outside of the temple area, and the length of the measuring reed in the man's hand was six long cubits, each being a cubit and a handbreadth in length. So he measured the thickness of the wall, one reed; and the height, one reed.*

We start with the wall –  
roughly 10 feet high and 10 feet thick.  
(this is the only vertical dimension we are given)

The wall around the temple area provides a clear dividing line between the holy and the profane.  
Nothing common or unclean may enter.

*<sup>6</sup>Then he went into the gateway facing east, going up its steps, and measured the threshold of the gate, one reed deep. <sup>7</sup>And the side rooms, one reed long and one reed broad; and the space between the side rooms, five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the vestibule of the gate at the inner end, one reed. <sup>8</sup>Then he measured the vestibule of the gateway, on the inside, one reed. <sup>9</sup>Then he measured the vestibule of the gateway, eight cubits; and its jambs, two cubits; and the vestibule of the gate was at the inner end. <sup>10</sup>And there were three side rooms on either side of the east gate. The three were of the same size, and the jambs on either side were of the same size. <sup>11</sup>Then he measured the width of the opening of the gateway, ten cubits; and the length of the gateway, thirteen cubits. <sup>12</sup>There was a barrier before the side rooms, one cubit on either side. And the side rooms were six cubits on either side. <sup>13</sup>Then he measured the gate from the ceiling of the one side room to the ceiling of the other, a breadth of twenty-five cubits; the openings faced each other. <sup>14</sup>He measured also the vestibule, twenty cubits. And around the vestibule of the gateway was the court. <sup>15</sup>From the front of the gate at the entrance to the front of the inner vestibule of the gate was fifty cubits. <sup>16</sup>And the gateway had windows all around, narrowing inwards toward the side rooms and toward their jambs, and likewise the vestibule had windows all around inside, and on the jambs were palm trees.*

The tour begins from the east side.

As he enters the gate, Ezekiel sees six side rooms (three on each side).  
This was a typical feature in ancient cities (and temples).

These side rooms were for the guards, who were there to defend the city or temple  
from attack or desecration.

The whole gateway would form a rectangle 25 cubits by 50 cubits (around 45x90 feet)

And the gateway has windows (v16) –  
probably designed for archers to be able to shoot through.

Just to help you imagine this –  
archeologists have excavated several city gates in ancient Israel.  
None are anywhere near this size.

The largest Israelite gate complex was about 20 feet by 70 feet.  
This space is three times that square footage

Why is the gateway so well defended?

Remember Eden?

Adam had been called to defend and protect the Garden.

And when he failed, he was cast out of the holy place,

and cherubim with a flaming sword were placed there to guard the way.

Remember what had happened in Solomon's temple?  
Ezekiel 8-11 showed us how the temple had been profaned –  
how God's holy sanctuary had been desecrated.  
The new temple – the heavenly temple – will be better defended!

There are also palm trees on the jambs,  
reminding people of Eden – the garden of God.

When you come into the temple,  
you are reminded that this is the way back to the presence of God.

**b. Chambers and Pavement (v17-19)**

*<sup>17</sup>Then he brought me into the outer court. And behold, there were chambers and a pavement, all around the court. Thirty chambers faced the pavement. <sup>18</sup>And the pavement ran along the side of the gates, corresponding to the length of the gates. This was the lower pavement. <sup>19</sup>Then he measured the distance from the inner front of the lower gate to the outer front of the inner court, a hundred cubits on the east side and on the north side.*

Now Ezekiel passes through the East Gate.

And he sees a pavement in the courtyard along with 30 chambers.  
We're not told exactly how large these chambers were,  
but they appear to be places for worshipers to gather and pray and eat.  
The pavement is called the "lower pavement" because there are eight steps (v34)  
that lead upward to the temple.

And from the East outer Gate to the east inner gate is 100 cubits (about 170 feet).

**c. The North Gate (v20-23)**

*<sup>20</sup>As for the gate that faced toward the north, belonging to the outer court, he measured its length and its breadth. <sup>21</sup>Its side rooms, three on either side, and its jambs and its vestibule were of the same size as those of the first gate. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. <sup>22</sup>And its windows, its vestibule, and its palm trees were of the same size as those of the gate that faced toward the east. And by seven steps people would go up to it, and find its vestibule before them. <sup>23</sup>And opposite the gate on the north, as on the east, was a gate to the inner court. And he measured from gate to gate, a hundred cubits.*

Ezekiel then looks north and sees a second gate that looks identical to the East Gate.

**d. The South Gate (v24-27)**

*<sup>24</sup>And he led me toward the south, and behold, there was a gate on the south. And he measured its jambs and its vestibule; they had the same size as the others. <sup>25</sup>Both it and its vestibule had windows all around, like the windows of the others. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. <sup>26</sup>And there were seven steps leading up to it, and its vestibule was before them, and it had palm trees on its jambs, one on either side. <sup>27</sup>And there was a gate on the south of the inner court. And he measured from gate to gate toward the south, a hundred cubits.*

And then the bronze man leads him to the south gate,  
which is the same as the north and the east gates.

In other words, unlike the tabernacle – and unlike Solomon’s temple – (both rectangular)  
Ezekiel’s temple courtyard is a giant square.

## **2. The Inner Court (40:28-49)**

### **a. The South Gate (v28-31)**

*<sup>28</sup>Then he brought me to the inner court through the south gate, and he measured the south gate. It was of the same size as the others. <sup>29</sup>Its side rooms, its jambs, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others, and both it and its vestibule had windows all around. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. <sup>30</sup>And there were vestibules all around, twenty-five cubits long and five cubits broad. <sup>31</sup>Its vestibule faced the outer court, and palm trees were on its jambs, and its stairway had eight steps.*

Now the bronze man brings Ezekiel into the inner court through the south gate.

The south gate of the inner court is exactly like the south gate of the Outer Court.

And the east gate of the inner court is exactly like the east gate of the outer court.

And the north gate of the inner court is exactly like the north gate of the outer court.

In other words, the inner court is guarded just as carefully as the outer court!

Visually, as you came through the outer gate, you would see the inner gate 170 feet ahead.

But you would have to look up to see the inner gate,

because there are eight steps leading up –

which suggests that this temple draws your eyes upward as you approach it.

### **b. The East Gate (v32-34)**

*<sup>32</sup>Then he brought me to the inner court on the east side, and he measured the gate. It was of the same size as the others. <sup>33</sup>Its side rooms, its jambs, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others, and both it and its vestibule had windows all around. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. <sup>34</sup>Its vestibule faced the outer court, and it had palm trees on its jambs, on either side, and its stairway had eight steps.*

### **c. The North Gate (v35-37)**

*<sup>35</sup>Then he brought me to the north gate, and he measured it. It had the same size as the others. <sup>36</sup>Its side rooms, its jambs, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others, and it had windows all around. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. <sup>37</sup>Its vestibule faced the outer court, and it had palm trees on its jambs, on either side, and its stairway had eight steps.*

### **d. Chambers and Tables for Offerings (v38-43)**

*<sup>38</sup>There was a chamber with its door in the vestibule of the gate, where the burnt offering was to be washed. <sup>39</sup>And in the vestibule of the gate were two tables on either side, on which the burnt offering and the sin offering and the guilt offering were to be slaughtered.*



Ezekiel then pauses to tell us a little more about this inner court.

He says that there was a chamber with its door in the vestibule of the inner gate, where the burnt offering was to be washed.

Solomon had built ten basins of bronze to wash sacrificial animals in (1 K 7:38), as Leviticus 1:9 and 13 had said,  
the legs and the entrails were to be washed in water.

Because there in the vestibule of the gate to the inner court were two tables – on which the burnt offering and the sin offering and the guilt offering were to be slaughtered.

The burnt offering was entirely consumed by fire.  
By definition, the whole animal was burnt.  
The burnt offering declares that only God can save.  
All sacrificial worship begins with the burnt offering.  
The burnt offering was called a “pleasing aroma” to the Lord.  
It was designed as a propitiatory sacrifice,  
to turn away divine wrath.

The sin offering was designed to cleanse sacred objects and places (Lev 12), which could also have an atoning sense – as a cleansing from sin.  
The worshiper laid his hand on the head of the animal,  
the animal was slain, and the blood sprinkled in the appropriate places,  
and (depending on who the offering was for)  
the remains were either eaten or burned.

The guilt offering had a variety of uses, but especially focused on  
“misappropriating or misusing sacred objects, inadvertent or unknown sin,”  
false oaths, purification of lepers, etc. (Block, 533)

*<sup>40</sup>And off to the side, on the outside as one goes up to the entrance of the north gate, were two tables; and off to the other side of the vestibule of the gate were two tables. <sup>41</sup>Four tables were on either side of the gate, eight tables, on which to slaughter. <sup>42</sup>And there were four tables of hewn stone for the burnt offering, a cubit and a half long, and a cubit and a half broad, and one cubit high, on which the instruments were to be laid with which the burnt offerings and the sacrifices were slaughtered. <sup>43</sup>And hooks, a handbreadth long, were fastened all around within. And on the tables the flesh of the offering was to be laid.*

Verses 40-43 then describe the tables for slaughter.

If you have ever been in a slaughter house – or even a butcher’s shop,  
you may have some sense for the sights and smells of the temple thus far.

But when Ezekiel describes the rooms and tables  
where the washing and the slaughtering of the sacrifices would take place,  
this is really good news for the exiles of Jerusalem!

On the day when the Passover lamb would have been selected,  
Ezekiel sees a vision of a restored temple where everything will finally be done right!

If this temple is the place where the people of God  
are finally able to return into the presence of God,  
then this emphasis on the offerings is essential.

Because there is no way into the presence of God without a sacrifice.

**e. Chambers for the Priests (v44-46)**

*<sup>44</sup>On the outside of the inner gateway there were two chambers in the inner court, one at the side of the north gate facing south, the other at the side of the south gate facing north. <sup>45</sup>And he said to me, This chamber that faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple, <sup>46</sup>and the chamber that faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar. These are the sons of Zadok, who alone among the sons of Levi may come near to the LORD to minister to him.*

Ezekiel then sees another feature of the new temple:  
chambers for the priests.

By the north gate and by the south gate of the inner court, there is a room specifically designated for “the priests who have charge of the temple” and  
“the priests who have charge of the altar.”

This word “have charge” is a military term that means “to keep, guard, or watch.”  
It is the word used in Genesis 2:15 when Adam was commanded to “guard” the Garden.  
It was used in Genesis 3:24, when God placed the cherubim there with a flaming sword!  
Abraham was told in Genesis 17 to “keep” (or guard) God’s covenant.  
It is the word used for “keeping” or “guarding” the Sabbath day in the 10 commandments

In Leviticus the priests were supposed to guard the tabernacle –  
and that continues in the heavenly temple.

While some priests would be engaged in the holy service of the temple –  
others would be focused on the defense of the holiness of the temple!  
Never would the defilements and desecrations of Ezekiel 8-11 happen again  
because the priests will guard and keep the tabernacle.

But – whereas Moses had spoken of priesthood including all the sons of Aaron,  
Ezekiel says that only the line of Zadok could serve in the holy place.

Zadok was priest in the time of David.  
He became high priest after the line of Eli was removed from the priesthood –  
but God had never said anything  
about restricting the high priesthood to Zadok’s line.  
[We’ll come back to Zadok in a couple weeks]

**f. The Measurements of the Inner Court (v47)**

<sup>47</sup>And he measured the court, a hundred cubits long and a hundred cubits broad, a square. And the altar was in front of the temple.

Now for a second time, a key measurement winds up as a square.

The inner court – is 100 x 100 cubits (170 by 170 ft).

The square is the geometric shape of the holy.

The holy of holies – the most holy place –  
is a cube.

And there, in front of the temple is the altar.

At the geometric center of the inner court is the altar.

We have already seen all the rooms and tables for the preparation of the offerings.

Now we see the place where they are offered.

We'll stop there for today – at the altar before the temple –  
but we do need to ask:

what is Ezekiel seeing?

What is this temple?

John tells us “the Word became flesh and dwelt [lit., tabernacled] among us.” (1:14)

Jesus says “Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days.” (2:19)

Jesus is the new temple – and what is more he *is* the once-for-all sacrifice.

And, thanks be to God, he is also the great high priest who defends and guards his temple  
so that nothing unclean can ever contaminate it again!

Everything that Ezekiel's temple stands for – Jesus is.

Jesus *is* the literal fulfillment of Ezekiel's temple!

Let me ask you this:

is Jesus the fulfillment of the Passover? – or do we need some other lamb?

is Jesus the fulfillment of the promise to David? – or do we need some other king?

Jesus *said* that he was the fulfillment of the temple.

As Duguid puts it,

“Ezekiel's vision is not a heavenly construction plan

that we are to establish on earth as part of a program of building the kingdom.

Rather, the prophet saw something that already exists in heavenly form...

As Edmund Clowney put it:

‘It is not so much that Christ fulfills what the temple means;

rather Christ is the meaning for which the temple existed.’” (483)

The *whole point* of the temple throughout history had been to point forward to him!  
God's glory dwelt in houses of wood and stone –  
not because wood and stone are suitable dwelling places for him  
(remember Solomon said, “heaven of heavens cannot contain you,  
how much less this house that I have built!”)  
but God's glory dwelt in houses of wood and stone  
because his desired dwelling place – humanity –  
was unclean (remember the first 24 chapters of Ezekiel!).

And yet now, in Christ, Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:4,

“As you come to him, a living stone,  
rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,  
you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house,  
to be a holy priesthood,  
to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

Therefore, we are being built into this holy temple.  
But, when you look at what that holy temple looks like in Revelation 21,  
you can see that all the squares are gone.

(the outer court, the inner court, etc.)

All that is left is the cube – the Most Holy Place.

Ezekiel spent a lot of time showing you how heinous your sin is.  
Now, he turns and shows you how beautiful your Savior is!

### **3. The Temple (40:48-41:26)**

- a. The Vestibule (v48-49)**
- b. The Nave and Most Holy Place (v1-4)**
- c. The Side Chambers (v5-11)**
- d. The Building on the West (v12-15a)**
- e. The Interior of the Temple (v15b-20)**
- f. The Temple Furniture (v21-26)**

### **4. The Outer Chambers (42:1-20)**

- a. The North Chambers (v1-9)**
- b. The South Chambers (v10-12)**
- c. The Outer Chambers Are for the Priests to Eat the Most Holy Offerings (v13-14)**
- d. The Measurements of the Temple Area: to Separate the Holy and the Common (v15-20)**

PHSS 203 “O God of Bethel”