

Session 5 The Forerunner Message in Ezekiel 40-48

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Ezekiel 33-39 describe Israel's return to the Lord and the land. Ezekiel 40-48 describe the Lord's return to Israel and the land. Ezekiel saw God's glory depart from the temple (Ezek. 8-11). His ministry ended with a vision of the return of God's glory to the temple (Ezek. 40-48).
- B. Ezekiel prophesied the millennial temple in light of Solomon's temple having been destroyed. The temple built in the Great Tribulation is not to be confused with Ezekiel's millennial temple which will be built after Jesus returns (which will be much bigger than the Tribulation temple).
- C. *"It is considered as one of the most difficult portions of scripture. Yet, it is a part of God's Word and definitely there is a message there for us. Many commentators, both ancient and modern, admit that they are at a loss in trying to write on these chapters. (Matthew Henry)*
- D. Outline for Ezekiel 40-48
- Ezekiel 40-42** Ezekiel saw the millennial temple complex
 - Ezekiel 43** The Lord returns to His temple
 - Ezekiel 44-46** The ordinances for worship in the temple
 - Ezekiel 47-48** The distribution of the land
- E. The Lord showed Ezekiel a vision of Jerusalem and the temple in the Millennium.
- ²In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it...was something like the structure of a city...⁴The man [angel] said to me, "Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you... declare to the house of Israel everything you see." (Ezek. 40:2-4)*
- F. The Lord chose Jerusalem as the place where He will live and establish His throne to rule forever (1 Kgs. 8:13; 9:3; 2 Kgs. 21:7; 1 Chr. 23:25; 2 Chr. 7:16; 30:8; 33:4, 7; Ps. 2:6; 48:1-2; 78:68-69; 87:2-3; 99:2; Isa. 2:3; 4:2-6; 18:7; 24:23; 27:13; 56:7; 59:20; 60:13-14; 62:1, 7; 65:18; 66:20; Jer. 3:17; 31:12; Ezek. 37:28; 43:4, 7; Joel 3:17; Mic. 4:2)
- ¹⁷"Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem." (Jer. 3:17)*
- G. Jesus will live in Jerusalem forever. He has great zeal and affection for this city (Zech. 8:2-3).
- ²"I am zealous for Zion with great zeal...³I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst..." (Zech. 8:2-3)*
- H. One way that we "walk around" Jerusalem is by searching out the glorious things spoken of her.

12Walk about Zion and go all around her. Count her towers; 13mark well her bulwarks; consider her palaces, that you may tell it to the generation following. (Ps. 48:12-13)

II. SUMMARY OF THE TEMPLE AND LAND MEASUREMENTS IN THE MILLENNIUM

- A. There is debate about the measurement used in 42:16. The NKJV uses “rods,” the NIV “cubits,” and the NASB “reeds.” A long cubit was 21 inches, and a rod was six cubits or 10.5 feet (40:5). Since one rod or reed is equal to 10.5 feet, 500 rods equal about 5,000 feet or one mile.
- B. By using 4,500 rods instead of 4,500 cubits in 48:16, 30-35, we conclude the following—that *Jerusalem* will be about **9 by 9 miles** (4,500 rods by 4,500 rods or 47,250 feet by 47,250 feet). The *temple complex site* will be a **one-mile square** (500 rods by 500 rods; 42:15-20; 45:2). The *entire district* around Jerusalem will be nearly **50 miles x 50 miles** (25,000 rods x 25,000 rods; 48:20-21)—25,000 rods, each being 10.5 feet, equals 262,500 feet or 49.7 miles. The *priests* will live on the land around Jerusalem that will be about **50 miles by 20 miles** (25,000 rods by 10,000 rods; 48:9-20).
- C. Ezekiel does not tell us if the units of measure are cubits or rods. If cubits (21 inches), then the land area is 8 miles square. If rods (10.5 feet or 6 cubits), then it is about 50 miles square (from Mediterranean to Jordan River). *Most believe the missing unit of measure is rods, not cubits.* The NKJV adds the word *cubits* in italics to designate that it is not actually in the Hebrew text.
- D. God’s holy presence flowing from the millennial temple to a sin-tainted earth creates a dilemma. *Jacob [said]..., “For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” (Gen. 32:30)*
“...warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the LORD, and many of them perish. (Ex. 19:21)
3“...I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people”...¹⁵[Moses said]..., “If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here...” ²⁰He said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.” (Ex. 33:3-20)

III. ANIMAL SACRIFICES IN THE MILLENNIUM

- A. There will be animal sacrifices in the Millennium (43:13-27; cf. Isa. 56:7; 66:20-23; Jer. 33:18; Zech. 14:16-21; Mal. 3:3-4). Jesus’ death was the all-sufficient sacrifice that fulfilled what the animal sacrifices anticipated in the Old Covenant (Heb. 8-10). They will be commemorative, not propitiatory, similar to the Lord’s Supper being a memorial of Jesus’ death (1 Cor. 11:24, 26).
- B. The offering of sacrifices in Millennium are *commemorative* as they *consecrate* places as sacred. The offering of sacrifices in the millennial temple will not in any way contribute to paying the price of our personal salvation that was fully, finally, and freely paid by Jesus’ blood.

- C. Sacrificing animals in the Levitical model was related to people and property being transferred from the status of *common* to *sacred*, enabling God's people to come near to Him.
- D. Nearness to God included *maintaining a physical place of His Presence where people draw near* to Him. The sacrificial system illustrated the dangerous aspects of God's holiness along with His gracious desire for intimacy with His people. He ordained the use of sacrifices to maintain and proclaim the *sanctity of geographic places* where He manifests His presence in an unusual way.

IV. EZEKIEL SAW THE MILLENNIAL TEMPLE COMPLEX (EZEK. 40-42)

- A. Ezekiel introduced the vision that he received (40:1-4). In a vision, he was taken up to a mountain in Israel to see the millennial temple complex (Ezek. 40-42). This occurred in 573 BC or 25 years after he was taken captive to Babylon in 597 BC and 14 years after Jerusalem's fall in 586 BC. The Lord had promised to set His sanctuary in the midst of Israel (20:40; 37:26-28).
- B. He paid careful attention to many details. An angelic guide led him through the temple complex and told him to pay close attention to what he saw and declare it all. Its details are important.

¹In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity [573BC], at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city [Jerusalem] was captured [in 586 BC]...the hand of the LORD was on me...²In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain...[I saw] something like the structure of a city. ³...there was a man [angel] whose appearance was like...bronze. He had a line of flax and a measuring rod... ⁴[He] said, "...fix your mind on everything I show you...declare to the house of Israel..." (Ezek. 40:1-4)

- C. The angel measured the wall around the temple complex (40:6-16). Temple gates will provide access to the unusual manifestation of God's presence, while the walls will restrict access to sacred areas. In the Old Testament, the people worshipped God outdoors, in the outer courtyards that surrounded the temple. Only priests entered the temple buildings and its inner courtyard.

⁵There was a wall all around the outside of the temple. In the man's hand was a measuring rod six cubits long, each being a cubit and a handbreadth; and he measured the width of the wall structure, one rod [ten feet]; and the height, one rod [ten feet]. (Ezek. 40:5)

1. ***A wall:*** These walls identify the sacred space of the temple. The wall will keep the sacred or holy sanctuary distinct from the common ground in the rest of the world (42:20).
 2. ***A measuring rod:*** This rod was six long cubits (6 cubits x 21 inches) or **10.5 feet long**.
- D. Around the perimeter of the outer court were 30 rooms, possibly for meetings (40:17-19). There were 30 side rooms on three levels, similar to Solomon's temple (1 Kgs. 6:5-10). The angel showed Ezekiel the north (40:20-23) and south gates (40:24-27) which will be identical in design and size to the east gate.

¹⁷Then he brought me into the outer court; and there were chambers [rooms] and a pavement made all around the court; thirty chambers [rooms] faced the pavement. (Ezek. 40:17)

- E. He saw the inner court (40:28-49) and eight tables used for preparing the animals (40:38-43). He also saw two rooms to be used by the priests to rinse and slaughter the animals for the burnt, sin, and trespass offerings and two rooms for singers in the inner court (40:44).

³⁸There was a chamber...where they washed the burnt offering...³⁹[and] two tables on this side and two tables on that side, on which to slay the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering... [and] eight tables on which they slaughtered the sacrifices...⁴⁴Outside the inner gate were the chambers [rooms] for the singers in the inner court... (Ezek. 40:38-44)

- F. He saw the dimensions of the temple buildings (41:1-26), including the sanctuary or the holy place (41:1-2) and the holy of holies (41:3- 4). The holy place will be 40 cubits long (840 inches or 70 feet) and 20 cubits (35 feet) wide. The most holy place will be 20 cubits square (35 feet).

- G. The priest's private rooms for dressing and eating will be on the walls in the inner court (42:1-14). The rooms in 42:13-14 are used for the priests to eat the holy offerings that people bring to sacrifice (44:29) and to change from their priestly garments to street or common clothes (44:19). A 500-cubit wall will separate holy areas from common area, stressing God's holiness (42:20).

⁶For they were in three stories...¹³Then he said, "...the holy chambers where the priests...eat the most holy offerings—the grain offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering...¹⁴The priests ... leave their garments in which they minister...they shall put on other garments..." ²⁰...it had a wall all around, five hundred cubits...to separate the holy areas from the common. (Ezek. 42:6-20)

V. THE LORD RETURNS TO HIS TEMPLE (EZEK. 43)

- A. The Spirit transported Ezekiel in a vision to the inner court of the millennial temple to see God's glory fill it, indicating the time when Jesus will take up residence in His temple (43:1-5).

¹Afterward he brought me to the gate...²Behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory... ³I fell on my face. ⁴And the glory of the LORD came into the temple... (Ezek. 43:1-4)

- B. Jesus told him that the millennial temple was the place of His throne and where He will live with Israel forever (43:5-7; cf. 1 Kgs 8:12-13; 1 Chr. 28:2; Ps. 99:5; 132:7; Jer. 3:17; 17:12).

⁵The Spirit...brought me into the inner court...the glory of the LORD filled the temple. ⁶Then I heard Him [Jesus] speaking to me from the temple...⁷He said to me, "...This is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name... (Ezek. 43:5-7)

- C. Ezekiel was told to describe the details of temple so that Israel *would be ashamed of their past sins*. Each detail is calculated to highlight God's holiness and His tender mercy for Israel.

¹⁰"Son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; let them measure the pattern. ¹¹And if they are ashamed of all that they have done,

make known to them the design of the temple and its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, its entire design and all its ordinances, all its forms and all its laws. Write it down in their sight, so that they may keep its whole design and all its ordinances, and perform them.
(Ezek. 43:10-11)

- D. The altar of burnt offerings is at the center of the millennial temple complex (43:13-27).

¹³“...the measurements of the altar in cubits (the cubit is one cubit and a handbreadth)... this is the height of the altar...¹⁵with four horns extending upward... (Ezek. 43:13-15)

VI. THE ORDINANCES FOR WORSHIP IN THE TEMPLE (EZEK 44-46)

- A. Ezekiel received instructions on the east gate being shut and for the temple workers (44:1-31). This gate is not the eastern gate of Herod’s temple nor the Golden Gate on Jerusalem’s east side today (that has been sealed since the Crusades when Saladin walled it up in the twelfth century).

¹Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. ²...“This gate shall be shut...and no man shall enter by it, because the LORD God of Israel has entered by it...³As for the prince...he may sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way.” (Ezek. 44:1-3)

- B. The only exception is for the prince who will sit in that gate to eat the sacrificial meal (44:3). The identification of this prince is unknown. Rabbis suggest this as a reference to Messiah. This is not possible since this prince offers a sin offering for himself and has children (45:22; 46:16).

- C. He received ordinances for foreigners (44:4-8) and the Levites (44:9-14).

⁸...but you [Levitical priests] have set others to keep charge of My sanctuary for you...¹⁰The Levites...who strayed away from Me...shall bear their iniquity. ¹¹Yet they shall be ministers... as gatekeepers...they shall stand before them [the people] to minister to them...¹³They shall not come near Me to minister to Me as priest, nor come near any of My holy things, nor into the Most Holy Place...¹⁴Nevertheless I will make them keep charge of the temple... (Ezek. 44:8-14)

- D. The priests of Zadok will receive special blessings (44:15-31). These priests are descendants of the high priest Zadok who faithfully served under David and Solomon (44:15; cf. 1 Sam. 2:31-33; 2 Sam. 15:24-29; 1 Kgs. 1:5-26, 32-35; 2:26-27, 35; 1 Chr. 6:3-8; 24:3; Ezek. 44:15).

¹⁵“But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me...¹⁶They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me...” (Ezek. 44:15-16)

- E. Ezekiel received instructions for offerings on Sabbaths (46:1-7), for how people would enter the temple (46:8-10), for general offerings (46:11-15), for inheritances (46:16-18), and more.

VII. THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE LAND (EZEK. 47-48)

- A. A river flows from the temple in Jerusalem, healing the land (47:1-12). As the river flowed east, it grew in depth, first reaching to his ankles, then to his knees and waist, and then deep enough to swim in. The angel measured 1,000 cubits (one-third of a mile) east from the temple.

1...water was flowing from under...the temple...³the man...measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters...up to my ankles. ⁴Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters...up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the water...up to my waist. ⁵Again he measured one thousand...the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed... (Ezek. 47:1-5)

- B. He led Ezekiel across the river with the depth increasing every 1,000 cubits as it went east.
- C. Water will flow from Jerusalem—half will go westward toward the Mediterranean Sea and the other half eastward to the Dead Sea (Zech. 14:9). Ezekiel only described the branch flowing east.

⁸And in that day it shall be—that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur. ⁹And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. (Zech. 14:8-9)

- D. This river from the sanctuary has supernatural properties that heal the waters of the Dead Sea (47:12). The eastern region (47:8) refers to Jordan River valley including the Dead Sea and south to Gulf of Aqaba. The Dead Sea has a high percentage of minerals in it (25% instead of 5% for sea water), making it impossible for fish to live in it. For this it is called the Dead Sea.

⁶Then he...returned me to the bank of the river. ⁷...along the bank of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other. ⁸...[It] flows toward the eastern region...and enters the sea. ⁹And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed...¹⁰It shall be that fishermen... from En Gedi to En Eglaim...their fish will be...exceedingly many. (Ezek. 47:6-11)

- E. The Dead Sea will be so full of fish that fishermen would fish from Engedi, on the west side of the sea, to Eneglaim on the east side of the sea.
- F. As this river flows through the nation from Jerusalem, it will cause trees to grow bearing fruit that possess supernatural properties to heal and restore the land and its people (47:12). The water will transform the desert region. This river is a prophetic picture of salvation with the river of the Spirit flowing in our spirit as well as being a literal river fulfilling the details of Ezekiel 47:1-12. This river is one of the key reasons for the transformation of Israel's vegetation (Isa. 11; 35).

¹¹Its swamps and marshes will not be healed...¹²Along the bank...will grow all kinds of trees... they will bear fruit every month...their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine.”
(Ezek. 47:11-12)

- G. The swamps and marshes will remain salinated, maybe to provide salt and or minerals for people.
- H. Fruit trees will grow in the region around the Dead Sea, and the desert region will blossom like a rose (36:35; cf. Isa. 35:1-2, 6-7; Joel 3:18; Rom. 8:19-22). These trees will bear fruit every month of the year. People will eat their fruit and use their leaves for medicinal purposes.
- I. There are some similarities with Revelation 22, but these two passages are distinct. Revelation 22 refers to the eternal state, while Ezekiel 47 refers to the millennium.
- J. Ezekiel saw the land allotments for Israel and the 12 tribes (47:13-48:35). Each tribe will receive the same amount of land. There will be two tribal regions—a northern and a southern section. North of the holy district will be seven tribal portions divided equally (Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, Judah, and Dan) and south of the holy district will be five tribes (Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad).