

Ezekiel 40-47 • Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

We have 9 chs to cover tonight so we need to **really move**.

Since a good part of this is Ezekiel's **detailed description** of the future Jerusalem, instead of reading & commenting on a good chunk of it, we'll **summarize**.

In Ch. 37, vs. 26-8, God promised to rebuild the temple, which of course had just been destroyed by the Babylonians

Chs 44–46 give the plans for a rebuilt temple.

3 interpretations of these chs are held by Bible students:

- 1 • Ezekiel predicts a **rebuilding** of **Solomon's** temple after the Babylonian Captivity.
This doesn't hold because the Second Temple did not at any time match the dimensions given here.
- 2 • Ezekiel prophesied not a **literal** temple but rather the spiritual temple of the Church.
This view also doesn't work because it makes Ezekiel's detailed description a bunch of nonsense. There's just no correlation between what he writes & the Church.
It's clear he's describing a real, literal building – not some spiritual abstraction.
Those who want to see these chapters as being fulfilled in the Church admit that Ezekiel's earlier prophecies are to be understood literally, but these must be taken purely spiritually.
It's an **inconsistent hermeneutic**.

So it's best to understand what the prophet describes here in the 3rd way people have understood these chs. . . .

- 3 • He foretells a **still-future literal temple** to be built **during** the Millennium.

There are a couple reasons why Ezekiel spends so much time describing this future temple

- 1 • The Temple was the visible symbol of God's presence among His people.
Don't forget that back in chs. 8-11, as the prelude to **Israel's judgment**, God's glory **departed** from Solomon's temple.
The **climax to her restoration** comes when God's glory returns to the temple.
For that to happen – **there has to BE one**.
- 2 • The new temple is the **reminder** of **Israel's relationship to God** thru the New Covenant.
Just as God gave detailed instructions for building the **tabernacle** at His inauguration of the **Mosaic** Covenant in Exodus, it's fitting He'd supply detailed plans for the new center of worship at the installing of the New Covenant.
This temple is the **focal point** for Israel's new relationship w/her God all the world will bear witness to during the Millennium.

Ch. 40

In the 25th year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the 10th day of the month, in the 14th year after the city was captured, on the very same day the hand of the Lord was upon me; and He took me there.

The day is **Yom Kippur, of 573 BC**.

Though Ezekiel is physically among the Jewish exiles in Babylon, God takes him in a vision to Israel.

² In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it toward the south *was* something like the structure of a city. ³ He took me there, and behold, *there was* a man whose appearance *was* like the appearance of bronze. He had a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand, and he stood in the gateway.

Ezekiel is going to be given a tour, and this is his tour guide.

He has the body of a man, but his appearance is shining – so this I most likely an angel.

He has both a line of flax for taking long measurements & a rod for short.

Think of a long construction tape measure & a yard stick.

The **tape measure** is for measuring **boundaries** while the **rod** is used for measuring masonry & **buildings**.

⁴ And the man said to me, “Son of man, look w/your eyes and hear w/your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you; for you *were* brought here so that I might show *them* to you. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see.”

Ezekiel is to be careful to record & report everything; leaving out nothing he sees or is told.

⁵ Now there was a wall all around the outside of the temple. In the man’s hand was a measuring rod 6 cubits *long*, *each being a cubit and a handbreadth*; and he measured the width of the wall structure, 1 rod; and the height, 1 rod.

There were 2 cubits used in the ancient world.

The **standard** cubit was typically from elbow to fingertip ~ 18 inches

The **long** cubit, favored in Babylon added a hand-breadth; another 3” = total of 21 inches.

That’s the cubit used here.

The border of the temple enclosure was fenced by a wall that was 10½ ft. tall & wide.

All ancient ME temples had such walls around their courtyards.

They marked off what was sacred/holy from what was common.

Vs. 6-16 are a description of the **Eastern Gate – main entrance** to the temple courtyard

It’s much more than just an opening in the wall.

The gate was a place of both **ceremony & authority**.

[Show diagram of gate]

¹⁷ Then he brought me into the outer court; and *there were* chambers and a pavement made all around the court; 30 chambers faced the pavement. ¹⁸ The pavement was by the side of the gateways, corresponding to the length of the gateways; *this was* the lower pavement. ¹⁹ Then he measured the width from the front of the lower gateway to the front of the inner court exterior, 100 cubits toward the east and the north.

The best way to do this is simply to diagram it [show diagram of temple]

Vs. 20-27 describe the N’n & S’n gates, which even Ezekiel says were like the Eastern Gate.

²⁸ Then he brought me to the inner court through the southern gateway; [show where on diagram] he measured the southern gateway according to these same measurements.

Then, standing in the Inner Court, Ezekiel sees E’n & N’n gateways like the one he just came thru from the S in vs. 29-37

It’s in the next vs that many Bible students go, “WHAT?!?!?!?”

³⁸ There was a chamber and its entrance by the gateposts of the gateway, where they washed the burnt offering.

³⁹ In the vestibule of the gateway *were* 2 tables on this side and 2 tables on that side, on which to slay the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. ⁴⁰ At the outer side of the vestibule, as 1 goes up to the entrance of the northern gateway, *were* 2 tables; and on the other side of the vestibule of the gateway *were* 2

tables. ⁴¹ 4 tables *were* on this side and 4 tables on that side, by the side of the gateway, 8 tables on which they

slaughtered *the sacrifices*. ⁴² There were also 4 tables of hewn stone for the burnt offering, 1 cubit and a half long, 1 cubit and a half wide, and 1 cubit high; on these they laid the instruments with which they slaughtered the burnt offering and the sacrifice. ⁴³ Inside *were* hooks, a handbreadth wide, fastened all around; and the flesh of the sacrifices *was* on the tables.

What causes so many distress is why – if this is a Millennial temple and Jesus has returned visibly to Earth to reign – **WHY** for goodness sake, are sacrifices still being made?

Didn’t Jesus fulfill the law?

Doesn’t Heb. 10:4 say that the blood of bulls & goats can’t atone for sin – only the blood of Jesus can?

Wasn’t Herod’s temple destroyed precisely because Jesus had come and it was no longer needed as a place of sacrifice?

The answer is simple: these sacrifices **aren't for atonement** – they **DON'T** cover sin.

Only Jesus' blood can atone & make sufficient sacrifice for us.

These sacrifices provide 2 purposes.

FIRST They're **memorials**.

They serve as reminders to Jesus' sacrifice.

In a way similar to Communion for us today.

SECOND They're **celebratory**.

Remember that some of the sacrifices Israel offered were shared back with the worshipper.

They were a way to commune & fellowship with God.

God got some of the meat via the smoke while the worshipper was given a portion back with he brought back to his family and they ate a festive meal together.

They really did NOT eat much meat.

Their diet was mostly bread & veggies.

Meat was a delicacy & reserved for special occasions.

During the Millennium, the temple will be the place of memorial sacrifices to remind everyone what Jesus did as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

It will also be the place of great celebration as people literally **party w/God**.

Vs. 42-46 describe the rooms set aside for the priests use.

Vs. 47-49 are the measurements for the Inner court.

Ch. 41

In vs. 1-11 Ezekiel is show the main temple building. [show diagram of Sanctuary]

¹² The building that faced the separating courtyard at its western end *was* 70 cubits wide; the wall of the building *was* 5 cubits thick all around, and its length 90 cubits.

[Show diagram of temple courtyard]

The purpose of this room **isn't described**.

Vs. 13-17 give the dimensions of the entire temple complex.

¹⁸ And *it was* made with cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub. *Each* cherub had 2 faces, ¹⁹ so that the face of a man *was* toward a palm tree on one side, and the face of a young lion toward a palm tree on the other side; thus *it was* made throughout the temple all around. ²⁰ From the floor to the space above the door, and on the wall of the sanctuary, cherubim and palm trees *were* carved.

Cherubim and palm trees had been used as a decoration in both the tabernacle of Moses and in Solomon's temple.

They're used in the 3rd Temple as well.

²¹ The doorposts of the temple *were* square, *as was* the front of the sanctuary; their appearance was similar. ²² The altar *was* of wood, 3 cubits high, and its length 2 cubits. Its corners, its length, and its sides *were* of wood; and he said to me, "This *is* the table that *is* before the Lord."

This is the altar of incense that stood btwn the Holy Place to the Holy of holies. [show sanctuary]

²³ The temple and the sanctuary had 2 doors. ²⁴ The doors had 2 panels *apiece*, 2 folding panels: 2 *panels* for 1 door and 2 panels for the other *door*. ²⁵ Cherubim and palm trees *were* carved on the doors of the temple just as they *were* carved on the walls. A wooden canopy *was* on the front of the vestibule outside. ²⁶ There were beveled window *frames* and palm trees on 1 side and on the other, on the sides of the vestibule—also on the side chambers of the temple and on the canopies.

Ch. 42

In vs. 1-14, Ezekiel describes the rooms that are around the inside of the wall enclosing the inner courtyard.

They're 3 stories high and each floor is a bit smaller than the one below it.

These rooms are used for storing the supplies needed for the temple service & for the priests who work there.

Then in vs. 15-20, we get the total dimensions of the entire temple complex.

It's a square, 875 ft. to a side = **17½ acres.**

Ch. 43

Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. [Main gate] ² And behold, 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. ³ It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw—like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. [that is, foretelling it's destruction] The visions *were* like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. ⁴ And the glory of the Lord came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. ⁵ The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

He'd seen it depart as the sign of God's judgment. Now he sees it return as the sign of His favor.

⁶ Then I heard *Him* speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. ⁷ And He said to me, "Son of man, *this is* the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places. ⁸ When they set their threshold by My threshold, and their doorpost by My doorpost, with a wall between them and Me, they defiled My holy name by the abominations which they committed; therefore I have consumed them in My anger. ⁹ Now let them put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever.

¹⁰ "Son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern.

God invites them to come and set their own measuring stick against the rebuilt temple as they read Ezekiel's prophecy & **REALIZE God KEEPS HIS WORD!**

¹¹ And 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. ¹² *This is* the law of the temple: The whole area surrounding the mountaintop *is* most holy. Behold, *this is* the law of the temple.

Then Ezekiel returns to describing things in detail.

First is the big altar in the inner courtyard in vs. 13-27

Its **dimensions** are in vs. 13-17, then the **routine** they're to use for **dedicating** it in vs. 18-27.

Ch. 44

After describing the temple, Ezekiel is shown its daily operation.

A new way of life & worship will be practiced by those living during the Millennium.

As Ezekiel describes this, knowing this is what people will do **when Jesus rules visibly on Earth** – it calls us to evaluate **our lives & worship today** to see if we line up w/the way things OUGHT to be, **because Jesus already rules within.**

Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it *was* shut. ² And the Lord said to me, "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut. ³ As for the prince, *because he is* 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."

Ezekiel had been standing in the inner court. Now he's led out to the East gate of the outer court.

It's shut.

This East Gate opens toward the Kidron Valley & Mount of Olives.

Ezekiel had just seen the Lord enter it on His return to His temple.

His presence had **hallowed** the gate. So it's to **remain** shut as a perpetual memorial to the fact that God has come and **won't be leaving!**

Some have thought that the "Golden Gate" in Jerusalem's Old City wall, which is indeed presently sealed, is the

gate spoken of here.

The problem is, the dimensions of the Golden Gate don't correspond w/Ezekiel's gate.

Only 1 person will be allowed to enter thru the East gate complex: **the prince**.

Who as we saw last time was probably **King David**.

In fact, he'll hang out at this gate, eating the fellowship meal; and the idea is, WITH Jesus.

⁴ Also He brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; so I looked, and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord; and I fell on my face. ⁵ And the Lord said to me, "Son of man, mark well, see with your eyes and hear with your ears, all that I say to you concerning all the ordinances of the house of the Lord and all its laws. Mark well who may enter the house and all who go out from the sanctuary.

⁶ "Now say to the rebellious, to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "O house of Israel, let Us have no more of all your abominations. ⁷ When you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to defile it—My house—and when you offered My food, the fat and the blood, then they broke My covenant because of all your abominations. ⁸ And you have not kept charge of My holy things, but you have set *others* to keep charge of My sanctuary for you.'" ⁹ Thus says the Lord God: "No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter My sanctuary, including any foreigner who *is* among the children of Israel.

In a word, the temple was only for those **in covenant** w/God & who **lived by the terms** of that covenant.

It was not for unbelievers or people whose lifestyle didn't jive with a genuine relationship w/God.

During the last several generations of Jerusalem before the Babylonian conquest, things were so bad at the temple, they'd erected obscene idols right in the temple courtyard and offered sacrifices to them.

Only priests, devoted to God and who'd gone through the elaborate rituals of purification were supposed to enter the inner courtyard.

But they'd allowed just anyone to wander around there.

God said – "No more!"

So careful were the Jews who returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple about what Ezekiel says here, that they carefully guarded the temple courtyard and would allow no Gentile to enter the holy places.

If they went through a ritual cleansing, they could stand in the outer court to pray, but were strictly forbidden from going into the inner court.

In fact, in Acts, the riot in the temple that saw Paul arrested & eventually carried to Rome for trial **began** when his enemies accused him of bringing a Gentile into the forbidden precincts of the temple.

This is obvious – but no less needed to be reminded of . . .

Just **claiming** to be a Christian, believer, follower of Jesus isn't enough.

God is not like Facebook, where He **feels validated** if He gets a billion people to "Like" Him.

He's not pushing for a billion Twitter-followers.

Everything He says is **super-tweetable** – but He's not on Twitter!

If we're going to claim His name, we need to live a life **compatible w/Him**.

Holiness isn't an option; it's a requirement.

A local church building **isn't** the Temple; the 2 are not the same; not even close.

BUT – The Church, that is the people of God indwelt by the HS is a **real thing**.

And it's supposed to be a HOLY thing!

When those people gather to worship, **the collection of their consecration** to God **marks out** a sacred & holy place.

People who "go to church" **pretending** to be holy **when they have no real concern** for it; are in great peril & they imperil others.

Remember what happened to Achan.

God doesn't do that kind of thing often, but He DOES do it every so often to awaken people to the reality of His holiness.

He did it in Acts 5 w/Ananias & Sapphira.

I rejoice that we have people who begin attending here who are convicted of sin and forsake it.

People who put a filter on their internet and toss out their porn collection.

Couples who go get a license and get married after 3rd service on Sunday.

People who stop unethical business practices.

If you're still immersed in sin and have talked yourself into the thinking it's okay – look at what God says here about those prohibited from the Temple.

Going thru the gate will probably be like a bug zapper.

If you're heart isn't right with God, you'll probably get zapped.

We need to have that kind of attitude about coming to our services here, now.

And not satay away – but rather, to repent and ask God to deliver us.

In vs. 10-14, God **demotes** the Levites from serving as priests to being **servants** in the Millennial temple.

The Levites had forsaken their role as mediaries between God & His people & **accelerated** the nations' fall into idolatry.

In vs. 15-19, the priests that serve in the Millennial temple will come from those who'd remained faithful when the rest of the nation had fallen away.

²⁰ “They shall neither shave their heads, nor let their hair grow long, but they shall keep their hair well trimmed. The idea is that they aren't to adopt **extreme** hair-styles.

They're to avoid worldly fashions; choosing instead to align w/their unchanging God.

²¹ No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court.

There's to be no threat to his sobriety.

²² They shall not take as wife a widow or a divorced woman, but take virgins of the descendants of the house of Israel, or widows of priests.

The idea here was that priests were to be **living examples of holiness** to the people.

A woman who'd been married to another man, whether he died or divorced her, had a much higher likelihood of bringing spiritual-baggage w/her that could hinder the priest from serving w/o distraction.

The **widow of a priest** was a different matter, since she'd already know what the lifestyle was like.

This is not in any way disparaging modern widows & divorcees!

Let's keep in mind that divorce was not nearly as common back then as it is today.

It was almost always a sign of some real problems.

I've said this before: Today, I think it's a **commendable** thing for older single men to consider marrying a single mom, to be a husband and provider for her and a dad to her kids.

Instead of shopping for a young single lady – why not be a man & step into God's heart & put that single mom & her kids into a family with a dad?

There are too many boys in men's bodies running around today bedding women & having kids; then they're too busy playing video games in their mom's house to get a job & be a dad.

So – let's see the Church turn that around.

Christians of the early centuries were known to go out to the places where pagan parents left their unwanted babies exposed, took them home, adopted them & raised them as their own.

Exposing unwanted children was a fairly common form of post-birth abortion;

The pagan world's version of being Pro-Choice.

The Christian response was an early version of the Pro-Life movement.

It's believed that a good proportion of those who made up the early Church were these adopted children.

Well, here's a way the Church today can **respond** to the brokenness of our culture

By putting single parents into healthy, loving families.

That the priests were to do these things because they were called to be holy is made clear by . . .

²³ “And they shall teach My people *the difference* between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. ²⁴ In controversy they shall stand as judges, *and* judge it according to My judgments. They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths.

As leaders they're to be **examples** of holiness.

God goes on & repeats for the priests some of the guidelines for holiness given in the law.

Ch. 45

Now we get some measurements for other parts of the land during the Millennium.

“Moreover, when you divide the land by lot into inheritance, you shall set apart a district for the Lord, a holy section of the land; . . .

Then its dimensions are given.

Before we take a quick look at them, note that it looks like the regions of the land that had been portioned out to the tribes under Joshua aren't going to apply during the Millennium.

New assignments will be given.

Okay Whereas under Moses & Joshua the priests & Levites were given different cities around the nation, in the Millennium, they will all be located in a large section of land at Jerusalem.

It measures 8.3 by 6.6 miles.

That's divided into 2 equal parts w/half going for the temple & priests; their houses & neighborhoods
And the other half is for the Levites to live.

Next to this rectangle a 1.7 & 8.3 mile section is added, making it a square.

It's there that the new Jerusalem is laid out.

⁷ “The prince shall have *a section* on one side and the other of the holy district and the city's property; and bordering on the holy district and the city's property, extending westward on the west side and eastward on the east side, the length *shall be* side by side with 1 of the *tribal* portions, from the west border to the east border. ⁸ The land shall be his possession in Israel; and My princes shall no more oppress My people, but they shall give *the rest of* the land to the house of Israel, according to their tribes.”

King David will be allotted a band of land on the E & W of Jeruz plot stretching to W to Sea & on E to Jordan.

In vs. 9-17 God commands the rulers of Israel to use their civil authority & power to **enforce genuine justice**, especially in the realm of commerce & trade.

Then in vs. 18-25 He tells them that they will continue to commemorate their annual feasts.

Ch. 46

In vs. 1-15 we find various rules for how worship will be conducted for the Sabbath, for monthly events and other regular days of religious importance.

Vs. 16-18 are an **interpretive challenge**.

¹⁶ ‘Thus says the Lord God: “If the prince gives a gift *of some* of his inheritance to any of his sons, (what?) it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession by inheritance. ¹⁷ But if he gives a gift of some of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his until the year of liberty, after which it shall return to the prince. But his inheritance shall belong to his sons; it shall become theirs. ¹⁸ Moreover the prince shall not take any of the people's inheritance by evicting them from their property; he shall provide an inheritance for his sons from his own property, so that none of My people may be scattered from his property.” ’ ”

We've been saying the prince refers to King David.

If he returns with Jesus to rule – how's he going to have kids? Say WHAT?!?!?

The prince referred to here isn't David.

This is a generic term for **civil rulers**; of which there will be during the Millennium.

The point Ezekiel is making is that during the Millennium, rulers won't be able to just take other people's land as they have throughout history.

The Law of the Year of Jubilee will still be in effect so that every 50 years, all land has to go back to it's rightful, original owner.

In vs. 19-24, Ezekiel describes how some of the offerings are prepared.

Ch. 47

We looked at vs. 1-12 2 Sundays ago in the message titled, “The River.”

In vs. 13-48:29, the borders of the land of Millennial Israel are given. [show map]

Ch. 48

The Gates of the City and Its Name

³⁰ “These *are* the exits of the city. On the north side, measuring 4,500 *cubits* ³¹ (the gates of the city *shall be* named after the tribes of Israel), the 3 gates northward: 1 gate for Reuben, 1 gate for Judah, and 1 gate for Levi; ³² on the east side, 4,500 *cubits*, 3 gates: 1 gate for Joseph, 1 gate for Benjamin, and 1 gate for Dan; ³³ on the south side, measuring 4,500 *cubits*, 3 gates: 1 gate for Simeon, 1 gate for Issachar, and 1 gate for Zebulun; ³⁴ on the west side, 4,500 *cubits* with their 3 gates: 1 gate for Gad, 1 gate for Asher, and 1 gate for Naphtali. ³⁵ All the way around *shall be* 18,000 *cubits*; and the name of the city from *that day shall be*: THE LORD IS THERE. Yahweh Shammah