

### Ezekiel's Vision of the Millennial Temple – Part 1

#### Ezekiel 40

Ezekiel 40:1-4 - *In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured, on the very same day the hand of the Lord was upon me; and He took me there. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> And the man said to me, "Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with 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."*

#### Background Notes

Ezekiel 40 is the beginning of the final division of the book. Chapters 40-48 are about Israel's future. They contain prophecy about Israel during the future millennial kingdom of Christ here on this earth. In chapters 40-43 there is a description of the future Temple that will be built for that millennial kingdom.

This vision of the future came to Ezekiel in 573 BC, in the twenty-fifth year of his captivity in Babylon, and fourteen years after Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians.

In the vision, Ezekiel was taken into a very high mountain in Israel and there he was shown the large Temple complex, which looked like a city. The high mountain may well be the literal location of Jerusalem in the future, because these final chapters of Ezekiel reveal that there will be topographical changes in the land of Israel in the future. Isaiah 2:2 and Zechariah 14:10 indicate that Jerusalem and the Temple Mount will be raised above all surrounding hills and mountains. The "man" who gave Ezekiel the tour of the Temple (v3) was probably "the Angel of the Lord" - the Lord Himself! This suggestion is based on Ezekiel 44:2 & 5, where Ezekiel refers to Him as Lord.

#### Doctrinal Points

##### 1. The Temple of Ezekiel's vision was *not* a "rebuilt" Temple.

In verses 5-27 the first part of the detailed description of this Temple was given. Verse 5 was a description of the low wall surrounding the Temple complex that defined the Temple area. "*Now there 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; and the height, one rod."*

In verses 6-27 a description was given of three gates in this wall that gave entrance into the outer court. The eastern gate was described in verses 6-19; the north gate in verses 20-23, and the south gate in verses 24-27. Each one of these gates followed the same details and design, including steps, porches, thresholds, chambers, doors, and windows. Let's read some of these verses about the east gate. *"In the eastern gateway were three gate chambers on one side and three on the other; the three were all the same size; also the gateposts were of the same size on this side and that side"(v10). And, "There were beveled window frames in the gate chambers and in their intervening archways on the inside of the gateway all around, and likewise in the vestibules. There were windows all around on the inside. And on each gatepost were palm trees" (v16).*

In verses 17-19 a description was given of the outer Temple court that would be entered through one of the three gates. Thirty chambers lined the perimeter of this outer court. Verse 17: *"Then he brought me into the outer court; and there were chambers and a pavement made all around the court; thirty chambers faced the pavement."*

Solomon's Temple had been destroyed fourteen years before the time when Ezekiel received this prophetic vision of the Temple in 573 BC. So was Ezekiel's vision a description of the Temple that would be rebuilt by Zerubbabel, when the first group of Jews returned from captivity in Babylon? No, it can't be a description of that Temple, because the dimensions and details here do not agree with the information in the book of Ezra about the rebuilt Temple of that time. "Zerubbabel's Temple" was much smaller than the glorious Temple described in Ezekiel's vision.

What about "Herod's Temple," which was an expansion of Zerubbabel's Temple? Herod's Temple was the Temple that stood on the Temple Mount at the time of Christ; it was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD. Here again, from what we know of the details and dimensions of that Temple from written sources and the archaeological remains, Herod's Temple was not the Temple predicted in Ezekiel's vision of Ezekiel 40. The Temple of Ezekiel's vision was **not** a rebuilt temple of history.

## **2. The Temple of Ezekiel's vision was *not* the Christian church now.**

Let's read some of the rest of this chapter, that was a description of the inner court with its gates and chambers and tables. In verses 28-37 a detailed description was given of three more gates - one to the east, one to the north, and one to the south. These are not the same gates described earlier, which were entries to the outer court. These three further gates led from the outer court into the inner court of the Temple.

Verses 28-31 described the inner south gate; verses 32-34 the similar inner east gate; verses 35-37 the similar inner north gate. Verses 38-47 gave a detailed description of the inner court of the Temple, including the rooms and tables for preparing the sacrifices, and the rooms to be used as quarters for the priests and the singers.

Finally, verses 48-49 were a detailed description of the Temple vestibule or porch: *“Then he brought me to the vestibule of the temple and measured the doorposts of the vestibule, five cubits on this side and five cubits on that side; and the width of the gateway was three cubits on this side and three cubits on that side. <sup>49</sup> The length of the vestibule was twenty cubits, and the width eleven cubits; and by the steps which led up to it there were pillars by the doorposts, one on this side and another on that side.”*

If the Temple of Ezekiel's vision was not a literal Temple that existed in the past, some people believe the description of this Temple should be spiritualized, and transferred to become a description of the Church today. After all, 1 Corinthians 3 and Ephesians 2 teach that the Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This view may look good at first, and many Christians go with this interpretation, but there are several problems with this approach.

*a. The details.* If this description is to be spiritualized to the Church, why all the details? This chapter is loaded with very specific details about dates, and walls, and courts, and porches, and pillars, and guardrooms, and priest chambers, and pavements, and shuttered windows, and steps, and staircases, and tables - with numbers and dimensions given throughout this detailed description. Why all these details, if they are all just part of a spiritualized picture of the Church? And if these details were part of an extended allegory of the Church today, what do they possibly mean? There is no clue given in the text itself - or in the New Testament.

*b. The hermeneutic.* An even bigger problem with the idea that Ezekiel's temple represents the Church is the change in hermeneutics (interpretation principles) that is required to change Ezekiel's predicted Temple into the Church. Ezekiel's vision of the destruction of the first Jewish Temple was very literal (Ezekiel 7-12), and it literally came true, right down to the very last detail. So why should Ezekiel's vision of a future Temple not be fulfilled literally, right down to the very details? Just as God gave Moses the exact details and dimensions of the Tabernacle to be built in the wilderness in the past, so God gave Ezekiel the exact details and dimensions of the Temple to be built in the future.

*c. The New Testament.* In His Olivet Discourse, the Lord Jesus spoke of a literal Temple of the End Times. In Matthew 24:15-16, the Lord predicted that in the End Times, the “abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet will stand in the holy place.” Obviously there would have to be a literal Temple at that time for the desecration of the holy place to take place. In addition, the apostle Paul predicted a future literal Temple when he wrote that the future “man of lawlessness” will take his seat in the Temple of God, displaying himself as being God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

So it would certainly appear that the Temple of Ezekiel's vision is **not** the Christian Church now, but it is a literal Temple in Jerusalem that will be built in the future.

### **3. The temple of Ezekiel's vision was the future Temple of the Millennium.**

When all the prophetic passages in the Bible are put together in sequence, we believe the Bible teaches there will be a seven-year Tribulation period that will follow this present age of the Church. Following the Tribulation period, the Lord will return to this earth and set up His literal earthly kingdom. This kingdom is often known as the Millennium, because the Lord will reign for a literal one thousand years (Revelation 20:6).

So there will be a literal temple in Jerusalem during the Tribulation period that will be desecrated by the "man of lawlessness" and the "abomination of desecration." Then there will be a literal Temple in Jerusalem during the Millennium as well. The Messianic prophecy in Zechariah 6 indicates that the Lord Himself will direct the building of this millennial Temple. Zechariah 6:12-13: *"Then speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying: "Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the Lord. Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne.'"*

We believe the Temple of Ezekiel's vision is the Temple of the Messiah's literal future kingdom here on this earth. This description was given in the context of Ezekiel 40-48, which was all about that future millennial kingdom of Christ. That future Temple will be built following the details and dimensions that are given in Ezekiel's vision. The Temple of Ezekiel's vision is the future Temple of the Millennium.

### **Practical Application**

#### **Remember - our present eschatology will become our future experience!**

The term "eschatology" means the study of future things. As believers, our present studies of eschatology are not just academic. We will be vitally involved with these events in the future!

We will return with the Lord and be part of His millennial kingdom, and we will be able to walk through those literal Temple gates and walk in those literal Temple courts. Best of all, we will reign with Christ in His wonderful literal kingdom here on this earth.

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