

### God's Glory in the Millennial Temple

#### Ezekiel 43

Ezekiel 43:1-12 – “Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw—like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions were like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. <sup>4</sup> And the glory of the Lord came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. <sup>5</sup> The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

<sup>6</sup> Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> Now let them put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever.

<sup>10</sup> “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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> This is the law of the temple: The whole area surrounding the mountaintop is most holy. Behold, this is the law of the temple.”

#### Background Notes

Ezekiel 40-48 formed the final division of the book of Ezekiel, which looked forward to the future when the Lord will return to this earth. He will then establish His kingdom, often called the “millennial kingdom” because it will last for 1000 years (Revelation 20).

Chapters 40-42 gave a detailed description of the future Temple that will be built for the millennial kingdom of Christ. It's important to emphasize that we don't believe this detailed description should be interpreted as a symbolic description of the present day Christian Church. If it's only symbolic, then why were so many specific and minute details given, including exact dimensions? Furthermore, if this detailed description of a Temple was only symbolic, then to be consistent in our hermeneutics (principles of interpretation), we'd have to say that the predicted millennial kingdom of Christ was meant to be merely symbolic of the Church today. And furthermore we'd have to say that the predicted restoration of Israel was meant to be only symbolic as well.

However, we believe these chapters described a *literal* Temple that will be built in the future. The literal millennial kingdom of Christ and the spiritual restoration of literal Israel is not only predicted in the Old Testament, it is also predicted in the New Testament - after the Church had already been formed. (Read Romans 11 and Revelation 22 in this connection.) So, to be consistent in our interpretation, we believe that the Temple of Ezekiel's vision will be a *literal* Temple that will be constructed on the new *literal* Temple Mount in Jerusalem when the Lord returns.

Ezekiel was told to share all the details of this glorious future Temple with his fellow captives in Babylon. As a result, the captives would be ashamed of how they had sinned, and how they had desecrated and defiled the Temple that Solomon built. That was why they were captives in Babylon, and that was why God had allowed that beautiful Temple to be destroyed by the Babylonians.

Verses 7-9 described the ways in which the Jewish people had defiled the House of the Lord. They had allowed temple prostitution. They had practiced idolatry, even in the Temple area. They had not treated the House of the Lord as separate and holy. They defiled the whole Temple complex by having the royal cemetery too close to the Temple precincts. However, the new Temple of the Lord's future millennial kingdom will not be defiled, and the Lord will dwell in the midst of the restored house of Israel.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The glory of the Lord will return to the millennial Temple.

In Ezekiel 10-11, Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord departing from the Temple. The glory moved first from the Holy of Holies to the threshold of the Temple, then from the threshold of the Temple to God's throne chariot, then hovered over Mount of Olives to the east of Jerusalem. Finally, reluctantly, the glory of the Lord departed from the nation.

The "glory of the Lord" signified God's presence. It was called the *Shekinah glory* because *Shekinah* means God's dwelling or presence. Notice that the glory of the Lord will return from the east, the same direction from which it had departed when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed.

When the glory of the Lord departed from Israel it did not return when the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon, even though the Temple was rebuilt under Zerubbabel. The glory of the Lord did not return to the expanded and rebuilt Temple built by Herod the Great. The glory of the Lord still has not returned to Israel - and it will not return to any Temple that will be built before or during the future Tribulation period. But the glory of the Lord *will* return to the millennial Temple!

In the vision, Ezekiel heard the Lord speaking to him from the Temple: "*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" (v7).*

Jerusalem and the Temple will be the headquarters for the Lord's millennial kingdom. The glory of the Lord will return to the millennial Temple.

## **2. The sacrifice of the Lamb will be remembered at the millennial Temple.**

Ezekiel 43:13-27 - *"These are the measurements of the altar in cubits (the cubit is one cubit and a handbreadth): the base one cubit high and one cubit wide, with a rim all around its edge of one span. This is the height of the altar: <sup>14</sup> from the base on the ground to the lower ledge, two cubits; the width of the ledge, one cubit; from the smaller ledge to the larger ledge, four cubits; and the width of the ledge, one cubit. <sup>15</sup> The altar hearth is four cubits high, with four horns extending upward from the hearth. <sup>16</sup> The altar hearth is twelve cubits long, twelve wide, square at its four corners; <sup>17</sup> the ledge, fourteen cubits long and fourteen wide on its four sides, with a rim of half a cubit around it; its base, one cubit all around; and its steps face toward the east."*

*<sup>18</sup> And He said to me, "Son of man, thus says the Lord God: 'These are the ordinances for the altar on the day when it is made, for sacrificing burnt offerings on it, and for sprinkling blood on it. <sup>19</sup> You shall give a young bull for a sin offering to the priests, the Levites, who are of the seed of Zadok, who approach Me to minister to Me,' says the Lord God. <sup>20</sup> 'You shall take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar, on the four corners of the ledge, and on the rim around it; thus you shall cleanse it and make atonement for it. <sup>21</sup> Then you shall also take the bull of the sin offering, and burn it in the appointed place of the temple, outside the sanctuary. <sup>22</sup> On the second day you shall offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they cleansed it with the bull. <sup>23</sup> When you have finished cleansing it, you shall offer a young bull without blemish, and a ram from the flock without blemish. <sup>24</sup> When you offer them before the Lord, the priests shall throw salt on them, and they will offer them up as a burnt offering to the Lord. <sup>25</sup> Every day for seven days you shall prepare a goat for a sin offering; they shall also prepare a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without blemish. <sup>26</sup> Seven days they shall make atonement for the altar and purify it, and so consecrate it. <sup>27</sup> When these days are over it shall be, on the eighth day and thereafter, that the priests shall offer your burnt offerings and your peace offerings on the altar; and I will accept you,' says the Lord God."*

In the description of the Temple courts in Ezekiel 40, verse 47 says, *"And the altar was in front of the temple."* There is a detailed description of that altar in the second half of Ezekiel 43. This altar will be consecrated with sacrifices. It will be used for sacrificial offerings, and Levitical priests from the line of Zadok will minister before the Lord.

A logical question that should come to mind when we read these verses is: "What about these sacrifices? How are we to explain these literal sacrifices? After all, Hebrews 10:12-14 says, *"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God."* So how do we deal with literal sacrifices offered on the altar of the future millennial Temple when the Lord returns. At first this may appear to be an insurmountable problem, and we will certainly discuss it more than once in our Talks on the concluding chapters of Ezekiel.

A few important points to help us in our understanding of these future sacrifices:

- a. The passage in Hebrews doesn't say that there can't be - or won't be - a literal Temple in the future, or a literal altar in the future, or literal sacrifices in the future.
  
- b. The point that the author of Hebrews was making is that the Old Testament sacrifices never took away a single sin. The purpose of those sacrifices was to point forward to the one great Sacrifice, for all times – the sacrifice of the Lamb of God (John 1:29).
  
- c. As the Old Testament sacrifices *looked forward in anticipation* to the cross, so the sacrifices during the Millennium will *look back in remembrance* of the work of Christ on the cross. They will be *memorial* in character - not efficacious. They will not take away sin any more than did the Old Testament sacrifices.
  
- d. Many people will be born during the 1000-year peaceful reign of Christ on this earth - but some of these people will not become believers (see Revelation 20). Even though the Lord will be here on this earth in His glory, people will need to be reminded and taught that salvation is necessary. They will need to be taught that salvation is only possible because the Lord Jesus went to the cross and died as the Lamb of God for the sins of this world. The literal sacrifices during the Millennium will be that constant reminder.

These points will be discussed further in our Talks on the next few chapters. The sacrifice of the Lamb will be remembered at the millennial temple.

## Practical Application

### You can't have it both ways!

We use that expression a lot about various things in life, but here we're using it in reference to Biblical interpretation. To be consistent in our hermeneutics (principles of interpretation), we can't take prophecies as being both literal and symbolic *at the same time*. If the Messianic prophecies dealing with the first coming of Christ were fulfilled literally, then we will be on safe hermeneutical grounds for believing that prophecies dealing with the second coming of Christ will be fulfilled in a literal way.

If there will be a literal return of Christ, and a literal millennial kingdom, and a literal restored Israel, and a literal millennial Temple, and a literal altar, then it's logical that literal sacrifices will be presented on that literal altar.

You can't interpret everything else as literal, but spiritualize the sacrifices. And if you try to spiritualize everything, then your hermeneutic is inconsistent. You can't have it both ways!