

The Prophets

Lesson #48

Ezekiel 40:1-48:35

Outline

I. ***The Announcement Of Future Blessings (33:1-48:35)***

- A. God's glory returns (40:1-48:35).
 1. The new temple (40:1-42:20).
 - a) The setting of the vision (40:1-4).
 - b) The outer court (40:5-27).
 - c) The inner court (40:28-47).
 - d) The house of God (40:48-41:26).
 - e) The priests' buildings (42:1-14).
 - f) The measurement of the temple area (42:15-20).
 2. Return of the glory of the Lord (43:1-12).
 3. Temple ordinances (43:13-46:24).
 - a) The altar of sacrifice: description and dedication (43:13-27).
 - b) Regulations for the east gate (44:1-3).
 - c) The priests and the service of the temple (44:4-16).
 - d) Regulations for the Zadokian priesthood (44:17-31).
 - e) The sacred territory of the temple (45:1-8).
 - f) Duties of princes (45:9-46:18).
 - g) The priests' kitchens (46:19-24).
 4. The new land (47:1-48:29).
 - a) The river of life (47:1-12).
 - b) Allotment of the land (47:13-48:29).
 5. The new city (48:30-35).

Notes

Ezekiel 33:1-48:35

- God's glory returns (40:1-48:35).
- The new temple (40:1-42:20).
 - The setting of the vision (40:1-4).
 - The final date of the book corresponds to April 28, 573 B.C. and is the second latest date given in the book. In this vision, Ezekiel is transported to a "very high mountain" in the "land of Israel." This is the single longest vision in the book.
 - Although many opinions exist, the best way to look at this vision is one of spiritual realities being described in physical terms. God does not dwell in a house made with hands (Acts 17:24-25), therefore, the vision symbolizes the redeeming work of Jesus and His church (cf. Hebrews 10:1).

- There were no exact measurements given of the temple in Haggai and Zechariah's time, indicating that the "temple" was symbolic (cf. Haggai 2:9; Zechariah 4:10). Furthermore, when the foundation of that temple was laid, those who were older and had seen Solomon's temple wept (Ezra 3:12), demonstrating that it did not have the grandeur of Ezekiel's temple.
- One wonders why Ezekiel gives such exact details of the city and the temple. The details, however, underscore several truths. First, they underscore the reality and definiteness of the future city and temple. Second, they depict the order that prevails in God's kingdom (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:40). Third, they force the conclusion that in God's kingdom everything is arranged by divine directive (cf. Exodus 25:40). Fourth, they signal the inauguration of a New Covenant. The Old Covenant commenced with details of worship and structure; similar details signal the New Covenant as well.
- The outer court (40:5-27).
 - The Hebrew word for "wall" here always denotes a city fortification wall in the Old Testament. The wall suggests that it was built primarily to mark boundaries and control access rather than provide protection.
 - The decorations are reminiscent of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:29, 32, 35; 7:36) and symbolically represent blessing (cf. Psalm 92:12).
- The inner court (40:28-47).
 - The presence of a substantial entryway to the temple proper, and the greater height is meant to convey a sense that the temple holiness is to be revered and guarded carefully.
 - The burnt offering was made primarily as an act of contrite devotion and self-surrender. Sin offerings were offered primarily to decontaminate the temple and its furnishings from defilement and maintain its holiness. Guilt offerings were primarily designed to appease the consciences of worshipers who had sinned against God or their neighbors.
 - Inside the northern and eastern inner gates were rooms for the priests of the sons of Zadok. They were the only ones of the Levitical priesthood permitted to minister directly to the Lord.
- The house of God (40:48-41:26).
 - The measurements of the outer porch, then the outer sanctuary, then the inner sanctuary demonstrate an increasing measure of protection around each area because of their increasing degree of sanctity.

- The measurements of the outer and inner areas are identical to Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:2, 17). The measurements are precise, indicating that we too must build according to the pattern (43:10-11; cf. Hebrews 8:5).
- The priests' buildings (42:1-14).
 - There were two buildings in the outer court just outside the inner court, one on the north and one on the south.
 - The southern building was similar to the northern building in every facet, providing perfect symmetry, which was a hallmark of the overall design.
 - These two buildings provided a holy place where the ministering Zadokian priests could eat the holy offerings and change from their holy ministering garments to everyday clothes. The priests were to eat portions of the grain offerings, the sin offerings, and the guilt offerings.
- The measurement of the temple area (42:15-20).
 - The divine messenger brought Ezekiel outside the entire temple complex through the east gate. Ezekiel was shown the vast area that would be set aside for the sanctuary.
 - It measured 500 reeds (or rods) square, almost a square mile. This large area provided a separation space between the holy (the temple complex and its worship) and the common (or profane) terrain of everyday life. Israel had frequently forgotten to make this distinction in her past history.
- Return of the glory of the Lord (43:1-12).
 - As the Lord's glory had left in 11:23, so it now returns. The temple and its associated worship are emblematic of Christ's church, frequently represented in the New Testament under the metaphor of a temple. It was comparable to Solomon's temple in its symmetry, beauty and firmness; its orderly worship; and to the manifestation it had of divine presence.
 - As far as all the specifics of the temple are concerned, the promise is made to them in terms in which they could understand. The people would be blessed when they returned from captivity, but its ultimate fulfillment would be in the future. Isaiah issued his prophecies in the same manner.
 - Under the Mosaic covenant, God had been enthroned above the cherubim on the ark, but under the time of the New Covenant, the entire temple proper (the church) serves as God's dwelling place, not simply the ark of the covenant. Of course, there is no need for a temple in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-5, 22). The significance of this vision of God's glory was so important that the Lord Himself interpreted it to Ezekiel.

- Since Christ fulfilled the Old Testament types (sacrifices, priesthood, etc.), why should they be reinstated and practiced for a 1,000 years like Premillennialists claim?
- Temple ordinances (43:13-46:24).
 - The altar of sacrifice: description and dedication (43:13-27).
 - Although several matters change with the New Covenant of peace, atoning sacrifice is as much an essential part of this renewed relationship as it was under the Mosaic system.
 - The detailed description of the altar underscores again the high importance God attaches to His relationship with His people.
 - Cleansing was needed because everything associated with humankind partakes of sin and needs to be cleansed, especially if it is to be used in the worship of the Lord. A similar cleansing and dedication took place with the altar of sacrifice of the tabernacle (Exodus 29:36-37; Leviticus 8:14-17) and the altar of Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 7:9).
 - Zadok was put in the place of Abiathar, by Solomon (1 Kings 2:35), in whose family the priesthood had continued ever since.
 - Regulations for the east gate (44:1-3).
 - The outer east gate (cf. 40:6-16) was to remain closed permanently. This was done because of reverence for the gate's special sanctity (cf. 43:1-4).
 - The "prince" is mentioned 17 times in chapters 44-48. Although the nature of this last section is highly figurative, the "prince" seems to be the Messiah (cf. 34:24; 37:25), who has a special place in the church since He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). When evaluating passages such as 45:22, one must remember Ezekiel's use of figurative language. The physical territory cannot be literal, so neither can the animal sacrifices; they both refer to the Messianic period. The "prince" foretells the combination of the offices of king and priest.
- The priests and the service of the temple (44:4-16).
 - Ezekiel was brought again to see the Lord's glory filling the temple, and his immediate response was reverence and awe as he fell prostrate in worship.
 - There must be a change of heart toward the Lord and His ways, a true circumcising of the hardness of the heart's foreskin (cf. Romans 2:28-29). This was necessary for both Israelites and foreigners if they were to enter into a proper relationship with the Lord.
 - Limitations were placed on Levites' ministry. They would not be permitted to serve the Lord as priests nor would they be al-

lowed to come near any of the Lord's holy things, especially His most holy offerings.

- Regulations for the Zadokian priesthood (44:17-31).
 - The Zadokites alone had remained faithful to their duties in the Lord's temple when all the rest of Israel had gone away from the Lord. This emphasizes yet again the purity and holiness demanded by God.
 - Under the New Covenant, with everyone fulfilling his or her responsibility, harmony or peace would reign. Harmony before God only occurs when His people take their responsibilities before Him and one another seriously.
- The sacred territory of the temple (45:1-8).
 - The setting aside of a central sacred area or district ensured that God indeed would be their God and would dwell in their midst. He was its main inhabitant, not them, and He allowed them to live with Him.
 - Ezekiel concludes this section by declaring that Israel's leaders would no longer oppress God's people as leaders had done in the past (cf. 11:1-13; 14:1-11; 20:1-23:49; 34:1-10).
- Duties of princes (45:9-46:18).
 - The concluding verse of the preceding section implied that the leaders in Israel's past and in Ezekiel's day had seized property that was not theirs (cf. 46:18). Therefore, Ezekiel states that this kind of unrighteous conduct would not exist in the Messianic kingdom.
 - However, people living under the New Covenant would not be free of sin. Just as under Moses, God demonstrates His love for His people by providing instructions about what sacrifices to offer for what purposes in order to maintain a peaceable relationship between God and the people.
 - As is true of all the regulations, the primary point of the instructions for the feast days is the maintenance of holiness for the sanctuary and the people who worship there.
- The priests' kitchens (46:19-24).
 - Ezekiel was brought out of the inner court to the north side of the outer court. He was led to the entrance of the building that contained the rooms where the priests ate the most holy offerings and changed their garments. Here the divine messenger showed Ezekiel the place at the end of these sacred rooms where the priests would cook guilt offerings and sin offerings. Here they also baked the grain offerings and ate all the offerings.

- The sharing of sacrificial meals by all the worshipers and the temple attendants demonstrate not only harmony among themselves, but also fellowship with the God to whom they had offered the food.
- The new land (47:1-48:29).
 - The river of life (47:1-12).
 - Ezekiel was brought in his vision to the temple's entrance, where he saw water streaming eastward from under the south side of the temple-entrance threshold (41:2).
 - The divine life-giving waters would flow from the source of God's residence, the temple and heal the land. This is similar to statements made by Jesus about the gospel (John 4:10, 13-14; 7:38).
 - As one grows in their exposure to the gospel, they find themselves gradually "immersed" in the marvelous wisdom and mercy of God.
 - The "fishers," or preachers of the gospel, will spread forth their nets and all nations and all kindreds will be called by the gospel.
 - Allotment of the land (47:13-48:29).
 - The Lord reminds Israel that the reception of any portion of the land by a tribe was based on of God's promise. Under the New Covenant, we inherit heaven first and foremost by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9).
 - The nation is no longer divided. In the New Covenant, the territory is the heart and the boundary is the word. We cannot go beyond these boundaries (Proverbs 22:28).
 - The fact that strangers will have an inheritance (47:22) intimates the calling of the Gentiles into the church (Acts 26:16-18). Ezekiel's words reflect the same generous offer announced in Isaiah 56:3-8.
- The new city (48:30-35).
 - John, in Revelation, takes a portion of this prophecy and applies it to the New Jerusalem. It also had twelve gates, each named after one of Israel's tribes (cf. Revelation 21:12-13). In this context, however, it is a symbol of the "household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).
 - This city bears a greater name than "Jerusalem;" it bears the name of God. Its importance lies in the fact that here both God and His people dwell together in perfect harmony, symbolized by the symmetry of the city's walls and gates.