

The Exiled Nation (585-535 BCE)

Ezekiel's Great Temple Vision

Readings: *Ezekiel 40:1-44:3*

Reflections:

- After twelve years Ezekiel now records another vision. These final chapters are treated by some scholars as a completely distinct work and possibly not by Ezekiel. Yet, the basic arguments are speculative as it is quite possible that the difference in writing styles may be attributed to the various scribes who could have helped Ezekiel. Both a prophet and priest, Ezekiel would have captured these visions within community.
- The most striking aspect of these final visions of the temple, a future temple of God, are all the things that are missing or significantly changed. The absence of ark of the covenant, the golden lampstand, the bread of the presence, and the veil. The absence of significant feasts like the Day of Atonement and Feast of Weeks. Also, the only priests are the sons of Zadok and the replacement of the high priest with a prince and his descendents. What can we conclude? The future temple is going to be radically different than what they have known to date. It will be simpler and many of the core elements of the previous way of relating to God will be radically changed. At the centre of this change is the prince, a new high priest that will change everything.
- When Ezekiel is told he is going to receive a vision he is told to look with his eyes, hear with his ears, and pay attention to everything God is going to show him. This reminds us that when God speaks he expects us to pay very close attention and at times he uses all of our senses, particularly in visions or dreams (See Joel 2).
- When those listening to the first part of the vision, they would have thought, "This place will be huge!" All the measurements reinforce over and over again how huge this place will be. In other words, God's future vision will be a lot bigger than what people have seen before or imagined.
- The priests are now just the sons of Zadok, not all of the Levites. In a time when the Levites had become corrupt, this is a picture of only those who are truly faithful to God who will be used as priests. In a sense, only a faith-filled remnant will be used by God in this new order. Again we see in Christ, that the new priesthood is not those who are of a particular genetic

descent but those who are true spiritual descendents, those who live by faith and walk in faithfulness.

- The most holy place is far simpler, filled with fewer icons, virtually none. The temple is bigger but simpler, less religious. Again, this would have struck the people that this new temple was a radically different than they would have expected.
- The priests were to change their garments after serving before God. This is a picture of still honoring the holiness and sacredness of intimacy with God and not treating our relationship as something common.
- The glory of the Lord fills this new temple. The existing temple that was under God's judgment did not mean that God would never again relate to his children. This new temple reminded them that God would again restore an intimate relationship with his people.
- Ezekiel is told to describe the temple so that people would be ashamed of their sin (Ezekiel 43:10-11). This makes sense. As Ezekiel described a non-religious temple of true devotion to God, it would have reminded the people that they were putting their emphasis on all the wrong things. They were too religious, too small-minded, too quick to assume that they were simply going to be accepted by God because of the past or because of being of a certain descent. This was a visual way to help them rethink their entire set of values and what is important to God. True holiness will be the law or the unchangeable reality of the new temple.
- Maybe the most striking change of this new spiritual order is that the high priest is replaced by a prince, the son of a king who will be a high priest. The gate through which God enters is set apart for him alone. Only this prince can sit within this gate. We see here a picture of unique status, a divine privilege of this prince. Again there are powerful images of the coming Messiah.
- God wanted the people to know that the new spiritual order would change everything. The images he used were ones that although unfamiliar to us today, would have spoken volumes to his hearers.