

EZEKIEL'S TROUBLESOME TEMPLE

A study of Chapter 7

INTRODUCTION

Malachi 3:1—"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

Which temple? Only two possibilities: The Tribulation temple, or a temple built after the Tribulation.

It is my view that Christ will occupy a newly-built temple, and that this temple is described in Chapters 40-48 of the Book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 40:1-4—In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city—on that very day the hand of the LORD was upon me and he took me there. ²In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city. ³He took me there, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand. ⁴The man said to me, "Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears and pay attention to everything I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here. Tell the house of Israel everything you see."

Fact: Ezekiel's temple has never been built, and it differs from prior Jewish temples in its design, its size, and in the laws and rituals Ezekiel describes in association with it.

Review: What is premillennialism?

It is the view that Christ will return _____ to the Millennium.

Features of premillennialism:

- Scripture is to be understood _____, unless a biblical text gives evidence that it is meant figuratively.

The Common Sense Rule of Interpretation: "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, lest it result in nonsense."

David L. Cooper—When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages . . . , indicate clearly otherwise.

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- There will be a **literal** one-thousand-year reign of Christ on Earth, following the Tribulation.

1000 Years—Some of premillennialism's most disputed teachings pertain to a mysterious temple described in the Book of Ezekiel that proponents of a literal earthly kingdom believe will literally be built and that Jesus will occupy during the Millennium. Most of what the Bible reveals . . . about this temple is found in a vision described by the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 40-48, so those chapters are a frequent sparring ground for premillennialists and those who deny there will be a literal one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. Is Ezekiel's Temple to be understood literally or figurately? Do religious laws and rituals connected with that temple fit better with Judaism or with Christianity? These and other questions often put premillennialists on the defensive, so we must examine them carefully. (p. 97)

JEWISH TEMPLES IN HISTORY

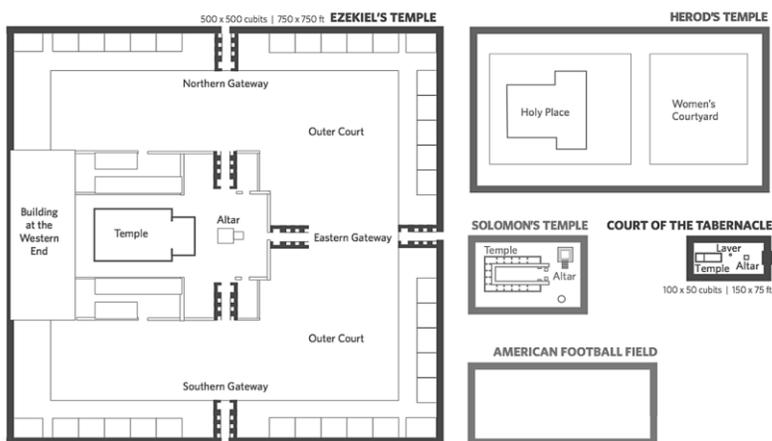
Past temples:

1. The Tabernacle (1445-1000 B.C.) Exodus 40
2. Solomon's temple (1000 – 586 B.C.) 1 Kings 5-8
3. Zerubbabel's temple (516 B.C – 18 A.D.) Ezra 6
4. Herod's temple (Begun in 18 B.C., completed in 65 A.D., destroyed in 70 A.D.) Mark 13:1-2

Future temples:

5. The Tribulation temple (The 7-year Tribulation) Daniel 9:27; Revelation 11
This temple will probably be _____ in the latter days of the Tribulation.
6. The Millennial Temple (The Millennium) Ezekiel 40-48; Joel 3:18; Isaiah 2:3, 60:13; Daniel 2:24; Haggai 2:7-9

Temple Size Comparisons



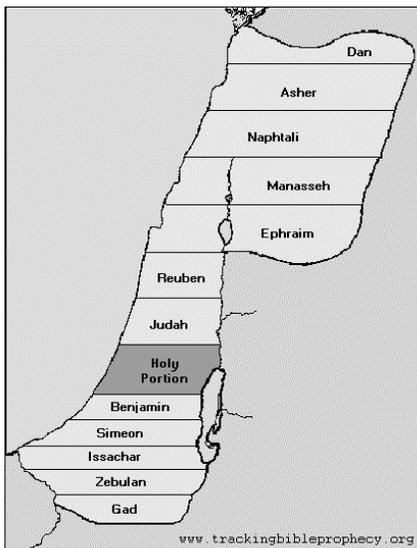
Features Unique to Ezekiel's Temple:

- No wall of partition to exclude Gentiles
- No Court of Women
- No Laver
- No Table of Shewbread
- No Lampstand or Menorah
- No Golden Altar of Incense
- No Veil
- No Ark of the Covenant

Temple size: 875 square feet
Temple Grounds = 560 acres

LAND ALLOTMENTS IN THE MILLENNIUM

Millennial Land Allotment - Ezekiel 47:15-21



Ezekiel reveals that the Messiah will allot belts of _____ to the tribes of Israel as their inheritance.

A sacred tract of land will be set aside for the _____ area, and for the Prince.

IDENTITY OF THE "PRINCE"

More than a dozen times Ezekiel mentions a person whom he calls "the prince," who will play a major leadership role in Israel during the Millennium.

Ezekiel 44:3—"The prince himself is the only one who may sit inside the gateway to eat in the presence of the LORD. He is to enter by way of the portico of the gateway and go out the same way."

Is the Prince David?

Ezekiel 34:24—"I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken."

It is unlikely that the Prince is David, because Ezekiel indicates he will be capable of committing **sin** and producing _____, and resurrected believers can do neither.

Is he the Messiah? _____, for the same reasons given for David.

1000 Years—Who then is this person? Eliminating Christ and David as possibilities, and finding no further clues to his identity, we are left to conclude that he will be a Jewish believer, possibly a descendant of David, and a survivor of the Tribulation period, whom the Lord will appoint as His representative and administrator. (p. 107)

ANSWERING OBJECTIONS TO A LITERAL UNDERSTANDING OF EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE

Objection #1: Ezekiel's Temple should be understood as an allegory designed to illustrate spiritual truths, rather than as an actual physical structure.

1000 Years—(According to the allegorical view) Ezekiel's description of a temple was intended to convey various spiritual truths in concrete terms that readers could grasp, and it does not describe an actual physical structure that did exist or ever will. (p. 98)

Problems with this objection:

- 1) It fails to account for the _____-sounding language of the vision, including the extensive architectural and ceremonial details given in Ezekiel.
- 2) If it is true, Scripture gives us no _____ that reveals what spiritual realities it is intended to convey, therefore, it is meaningless.

Paul Benware—When such spiritualizing or allegorizing takes place, the interpretation is no longer grounded in fact, and the text becomes putty in the hand of the interpreter.

Objection #2: Ezekiel's description of the topography around the temple does not match that of Jerusalem today.

- No "very high mountain" (Ezekiel 40:2) near Jerusalem.
- The temple's dimensions do not fit the current Temple Mount.
- The size of the temple complex and land allotments overextend Israel's current boundaries.
- No river flowing from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean.

Resolution: The land in and around Jerusalem will undergo major topographical _____ at the Second Coming.

1000 Years—All these apparent inconsistencies can be resolved easily when one considers the future geologic upheavals, including the creation of a valley running east to west, that Zachariah 14:3-4 says will occur at Christ's Second Coming. . . . These occurrences will no doubt create the valley river mentioned by all the prophets and will clear the way for construction of the millennial temple by altering the landscape and demolishing many existing structures that would otherwise stand in its way. (pp. 99-100)

Zechariah 14:4—On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.

Isaiah 2:2—In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

Objection #3: Ezekiel's mention of animal sacrifices offered in the temple conflicts with the New Testament's teaching that Christ was the ultimate and final sacrifice for sin.

Ezekiel's vision of a temple repeatedly states that animal sacrifices and other offerings will be made in it by an active priesthood.

1000 Years—If Ezekiel is in fact describing a literal future temple to be employed in the Millennium, his vision raises enormously consequential and challenging theological conundrums for premillennialists. Among these, how could animal sacrifices provide atonement for sins, when the

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New Testament emphatically teaches that atonement was provided exclusively by Christ once for all through His death and resurrection? How could a future resumption of animal sacrifices not signal a reversal from New Testament Christianity to Old Testament Judaism? (p. 101)

Resolution:

1. We may assume that Israel's temple ministry, including animal sacrifices and offerings made in it, will demonstrate to the world the _____ of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.
2. Although animal sacrifices are prohibited during the present Church Age, they will apparently be ordained by God as part of Israel's _____ ministry during the Millennium.
3. The millennial sacrifices will probably serve as memorials or object lessons of Christ's finished work on the Cross, much as the Lord's Supper does in our own time.

1000 Years—Then why, we might wonder, would the Lord's Supper not suffice as a reminder of Christ's death for citizens of the millennial kingdom? One possible answer is that the very blessedness of millennial life itself may dull the sensitivities of those who live in it to the evil of sin and to the dreadful price paid by Christ on the Cross, thus making the brutality of animal sacrifices all the more instructive. (pp. 103-104)



But Ezekiel clearly says the sacrifices will somehow atone for the sins of those who offer them (Ezekiel 43:20, 26; 45:15, 17, 20).

Resolution: One possible explanation is that the sacrifices will atone for sin in the same sense that they did in the _____:

1000 Years—Each time an Israelite brought an animal to the priests for sacrifice, payment for his sins was essentially made on credit, and the pardon he received at that moment accrued as a debt to God, which Jesus later came and paid in full with His blood. . . . When we apply that insight to the future atonement presumptively provided through the millennial sacrifices, we realize that there is essentially no difference. Just as the sacrifices made under the Mosaic Law delivered provisional atonement that was ultimately secured by Jesus on the cross, so also will the sacrifices made in the future millennial temple. (pp. 104, 105)

Objection #4: The requirement of circumcision as a condition of entrance into the temple belongs to the Old Covenant rather than to the New.

Resolution: The temple laws and rituals foreseen by Ezekiel do not imply a reinstatement of Mosaic Judaism but rather the introduction of a _____ of Judaism suited to the millennial age.

1000 Years—Using a normal, grammatical-historical method of interpretation, there is simply no getting around it: a grand and glorious temple will exist in Jerusalem, astir with religious activity, throughout the coming Millennium. (p. 108)