

Week of September 19-25

Ezekiel 43 The Return of God's Glory to the Temple

Ezekiel's next vision was of the Lord's return to the future Temple. Again, he saw a vision and heard the voice of the Lord. The same glory he saw when the Lord came to destroy Jerusalem appeared and lit up the land as He returned to and filled the Temple. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters and declared that the Lord had returned to the Temple to remain with the Israelites forever and that no one would never defile His holy name again.

Ezekiel was charged to describe the Temple and its glory to the people of Israel so they might be ashamed of their sin. For those who were truly ashamed of their sin, he was to make known the details of the Temple and to declare its law, that the hill where the Temple was built is holy.

Lastly, the Lord specified how His people were to construct the new altar for sacrifices and how they were to dedicate it.

The fundamental idea of a theocracy is the literal dwelling of the Lord among His people. The Temple is to be the Lord's palace where He displays His glorious presence and receives gifts and reverence of His people. But their access to God depends on their obedience which had been regularly violated under the first Temple. The new Temple was to show the Lord's holiness.

Ezekiel 43:7-9

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 people of Israel forever. And the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoring and by the dead bodies of their kings at their high places, by setting their threshold by my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them. They have defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed, so I have consumed them in my anger. Now let them put away their whoring and the dead bodies of their kings far from me, and I will dwell in their midst forever.

Ezekiel 44 Pure Worship to be Restored in the Temple

Chapter 44 describes the restoration of the service of the new Temple. The east gate, through which the Lord entered, would be kept closed, and no man would be allowed to pass through it. The only exception was that the prince (unknown) could feast in the gate of the Lord's entrance.

Again, Ezekiel witnessed the glory of the Lord and was solemnly charged to pay special attention to the laws and rules of the Temple, which were about to be given to him. These laws provided that under no circumstances should foreigners or the uncircumcised in the heart or flesh serve in the Temple. This had been the sin of the past and must not be repeated.

The Levites who had previously sinned and who had been punished because of their sin were excluded from the office of the priest but could be caretakers of the Temple. The sons of Zadok who had remained faithful were appointed as priests before the Lord in the new Temple. They were instructed about their clothing, their duties of teaching the people the difference between what is holy and what is secular, their purification after defilement by contact with the dead, and, finally, that they were to have no inheritance or possessions among the people since the Lord would be their inheritance.

Ezekiel 45 The Sacred Allotment in the Promised Land

Since the priests were to have no inheritance or possessions, the next prophecy dealt with their support. After the distribution of the land, a section would be set aside as a portion for the Lord as a holy land. The priests and Levites would use it for their homes and ministries. On each side of this holy square, land would be set apart for the prince, who was never to oppress or rob the people.

Ezekiel immediately followed with the Lord's charge to the princes. Their duty was to end violence and oppression and execute justice and righteousness, no longer expelling Israelites from their homes. Weight standards and measurements were given as well as a provision for the offerings of the prince. These offerings were provided by the people to the prince to be used as burnt-offerings, meal offerings, and drink-offerings on their behalf and it was the prince's duty to provide these offerings to the priests.

The instructions dealt with the arrangements for the feasts and appointed times and seasons. Twice a year the sacred ceremony of cleansing the Temple was to be performed by offering a young bull without blemishes as an atonement "for anyone who has sinned through error or ignorance." Additionally, the Passover feast was still to be observed, as well as the feast of Tabernacles.

Ezekiel 46 Worship on the Sabbath and New Moon Days and during the Annual Feasts

Arrangements were made for the observance of sabbaths, and months, and the daily offerings. Instructions followed for the prince to donate land from his inheritance in the land. What the prince gave to his sons must be of his inheritance so that the people would not lose their own land. Ezekiel was then led by the angel through the boiling houses where the priests were to boil the sacrifices that the people brought to the temple.

Ezekiel 47

Again, Ezekiel was taken to the door of the Temple and saw a stream flowing beneath the Temple. Its source was the sanctuary. It continued under the entrance past the altar and became a steadily growing stream. Fifteen hundred feet beyond the place it left the Temple, it was ankle-deep, fifteen hundred feet farther it reached the knees, fifteen hundred feet farther his waist was covered, and fifteen hundred feet farther it became "a river that could not be passed through."

The prophet was taken back along the banks of the river where he saw trees growing on both banks. The angel told him that the river flowed through the desert and the Jordan Valley to the Dead Sea, where the salty waters become fresh and pure and that everything touching the waters would live.

Following the vision of the river, Ezekiel received instructions for dividing the land equally among the twelve tribes of Israel. Any foreigners living among them were to be considered citizens, given land, and have the same rights as the children of Israel.

Rev 22:1-3

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.