

# Fourth Temple?

## Ezekiel 40-48

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### Introduction

- The next prophetic event is the rapture of the church
  - 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17-- *“the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”*
- Following the rapture will be seven years of tribulation with the Antichrist and judgments culminating in the second phase of Christ’s second coming and the establishment of His kingdom here on earth.
  - The Kingdom Age will be a magnificent time to be alive
  - Jerusalem will become the center for world commerce and trade.
  - Israel and Jerusalem will also become the center for the worship of God.
    - The “mountain of the Lord’s house” will be the highest mountain plateau.
    - From here, the proclamation of God’s Word and Kingdom law will be taught by Christ Himself
    - People will come to not only hear, but to “walk in His paths”.
- **Controversy:** The last eight chapters of Ezekiel which teaches the building of a fourth Temple with blood and other sacrifices as part of the worship during the Kingdom. Why will it be necessary for animal sacrifices for sin, if the death of the Messiah provided the final atonement for sin? This has led some to conclude that...
  - Ezekiel 40-48 are to be understood figuratively, rather than literally.
  - Ezekiel 40-48 has already been fulfilled historically, and thus no need for a fourth Temple.
  - Ezekiel 40-48 is describing the eternal state, and not the millennium

## Fourth Temple?

### A. Literal or Figurative?

1. Many believe that the events described in Ezekiel 40-48 are meant to be understood figuratively, and not taken a literal truth.
  - a. The temple and the sacrificial system is being fulfilled today either by the church and its earthly blessings, or by Jesus Christ today in a heavenly temple.
  - b. Much of Ezekiel is apocalyptic literature which lends itself to figurative, non-literal interpretation.
  - c. Ezekiel has experienced dreams, visions, time-travel, virtual visits to Jerusalem.
  - d. But the only thing they agree on is that Ezekiel 40-48 is not to be taken literally. Different aspects mean whatever the interpreter determines.
2. **Support for interpreting Ezekiel 40-48 literally.**
  - a. The Scriptures do not give us a “key” for how to understand this passage if not literally.
  - b. Ezekiel is not the only prophet to mention a Fourth Temple and sacrificial system
    - 1) **Others predicted a fourth temple**
      - a) The Prophet Isaiah
        - Isaiah 2:3-- *“Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”*
      - b) The Prophet Haggai
        - (1) Promised that a future temple will outshine the first.
          - Haggai 2:6-9-- *“For thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,’ says the LORD*

of hosts. 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts. 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts."

(2) This future temple will be built when the LORD of hosts "shakes the heaven and earth"

- Haggai 2:21-22-- "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying: 'I will shake heaven and earth. I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them; The horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.'"

2) **Others predicted the offering of sacrifices in the Kingdom age.**

- Isaiah 56:6-7-- "Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants— Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant— even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."
- Malachi 3:3-4-- "He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the LORD, as in the days of old, as in former years."

- c. The millennial temple is not the only temple in Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 8-11, he describes the departure of the Shechinah glory from the first temple. Everyone agrees that the first temple with its measurements, and the sacrifices offered there were literal, not figurative. Why then must the second temple be figurative?
- d. Ezekiel is commanded to share all the details of this temple and its regulations so that the Jews might consider carefully and follow every aspect.
- Ezekiel 43:10-11-- "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. 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."

## **B. Historically Fulfilled, No Future Fulfillment Needed?**

1. Two other temples have been or will be built in Israel's history. Perhaps one or both of them will fulfill the particulars of Ezekiel 40-48.
  - a. Zerubbabel's Temple (also known as Herod's Temple)-- built in 508 BC; destroyed in 70 AD
  - b. The Tribulation Temple-- to be built in the future

### **2. Support for Future Fulfillment**

#### **a. General support**

- 1) The temples of Zerubbabel and the tribulation do not share the design nor dimensions of the Ezekiel temple.
- 2) The worship procedures similar to the Mosaic law has never been followed.
- 3) Ezekiel 47 describes a river flowing from the temple to the east-- this has never happened.
- 4) The geographical dimensions of the land, plus the allotment to the various tribes has not occurred.
- 5) The topographical changes to produce the "mountain of the Lord's house" has not happened.

#### **b. Specific, Definitive Evidence for Future Fulfillment**

##### **1) The return of the "Glory of the Lord"**

- a) Solomon's temple was filled with the "glory of the Lord"

- 2 Chronicles 5:13-14-- *"indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever," that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God."*

b) Ezekiel witnesses the departure of the "glory" from the temple.

- Ezekiel 10:18-- *"then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim."*
- Ezekiel 11:22-23-- *"the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was high above them. And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain, which is on the east side of the city."*

c) In the temple Ezekiel envisions, the "glory" returns.

- Ezekiel 44:4-- *"He brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; so I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD; and I fell on my face."*

d) *Did the "glory of the Lord" fill Zerubbabel's temple?*

- (1) We might assume that it did, but no mention in Scripture that it actually filled the temple.
- (2) Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple by setting up his image without death?
- (3) The Roman army under Titus destroyed the temple in AD 70. No mention of the "glory of the Lord" departing before the destruction.

e) When Jesus walked here on earth, the "glory" was not in the temple, but rather embodied in the person of Jesus Christ.

- John 1:1-5-- *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."*
- John 1:14-- *"the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*
- Luke 9:29-- *"As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening."*
- Matthew 17:2-- *"His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light."*

f) God's glory certainly will not be filling the Tribulation Temple.

g) So there must be a Fourth Literal Temple built by Jesus Christ and filled with His glory.

- Zechariah 6:12-13-- *"Thus says the LORD of hosts, saying: 'Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, And He shall build the temple of the LORD; Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.' "*

## 2) **The presence of Absolute Holiness**

- Ezekiel 43:12-- *"This is the law of the temple: The whole area surrounding the mountaintop is most holy. Behold, this is the law of the temple."*

a) Everything and everyone will be set apart for holy use.

- Zechariah 14:20-21-- *"In that day "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the LORD'S house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yes,*

*every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts."*

- b) This has never been true in Israel's history
- 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 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. 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. Now let them put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever."*
- 1) During the Solomon Temple years, Israel was given to idolatry.
  - 2) During Herod Temple years, Israel became rigid, legalistic, secular, and materialistic.
    - Mark 11:15-17-- *"He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"*
    - Mark 11:18-- *"the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching."*
- c) But one day God will regather Jews scattered throughout the world and will cleanse them so that they will be a holy people.
- Ezekiel 37:21-24-- *"Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again. They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God."*
- d) At that time Jesus Christ will establish His kingdom here on earth and His sanctuary or tabernacle will be in their midst forever.
- Ezekiel 37:24-28-- *"David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore." ' ' "*

### **C. Millennium or Eternal State?**

1. Those who believe that Ezekiel 40-48 describes the eternal state and not the millennium point to the similarities between Ezekiel and Revelation 21-22.
  - a. Both writers received apocalyptic visions on high mountain from a messenger with a measuring rod to measure various structures. (Ezekiel 40:2-5; Revelation 21:2, 10, 15)

- b. Both visions portray water flowing from the east, with trees and leaves for healing along the banks (Ezekiel 47:1-7, 12; Revelation 22:1-2)
  - c. The names of the twelve tribes are written on the city gates in both visions. (Ezekiel 48:31-34; Revelation 21:12)
  - d. Three gates are found on the east, south, north, and west of the cities (Ezekiel 48:30-34; Revelation 21:13)
2. However the dissimilarities prove that they are not the same.
- a. The city of Jerusalem's dimensions are different in each vision (Ezekiel 48; Revelation 21)
  - b. The allotment of land in Ezekiel includes the sea as the western boundary, but Revelation 21:1 states that in the eternal kingdom, there is no sea!
  - c. Biggest difference: NO TEMPLE
    - Revelation 21:22-- *"But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple."*
3. In light of whole of Scripture, it appears that the Millennium will be like the "first fruit" of the eternal state, a taste of what the eternal messianic kingdom will be like when it is fully revealed in eternity.
- 1 Corinthians 15:24-28-- *"Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."*

#### APPLICATION

- The need for us to "search the Scriptures to see if these things are so."
  - Acts 17:11-- *"received the word with all readiness and search the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things are so."*