

WFN Lesson
April 29, 2020
Ezekiel 40-48

Outline of Ezekiel 40-48

- A. Vision of the New Temple (40-42); gives measurements for a rebuilt temple complex
- B. The Return of God's Glory (43:1-5)
- C. Regulations for Renewed Israel (43:6-46:24); gives a standard for the people to follow, regulations for priests, sacrifices, and holy feasts, and rules for a human leader called the "prince," who will function as religious leader doing priestly functions
- D. The River Flowing from the Temple (47:1-12)
- E. Re-Dividing up the Land of Israel (47:13-48:35)

-If you scan through chps. 40-48, you'll notice that a lot of it is somewhat dry and formulaic: lists of measurements, plots of land, prescriptions for ritual practices, etc. **Q:** Why do you think Ezekiel records all of this?

-**A:** "Since Ezekiel was a priest, it is not surprising that this vision centered on the temple. At times readers today may become exasperated with the attention that the prophet gives to matters that they may consider to be of little importance. In spite of this difficulty, it is easy to understand and appreciate the fundamental thrust of these final chapters. They assert that God will dwell in the midst of Israel again and Israel will find its fulfillment in the service of this God. These final chapters of the book represent the crowning achievement of the prophet. Here he directs his fellow exiles' attention toward what lay ahead for those whom the Lord will bring back to Zion. These visions had no effect on the actual rebuilding of the temple and the reordering of the liturgical life of Judah after the return from exile. Nonetheless, they show how deeply the prophet felt about his responsibility to his people at a desperate moment in their life" (Vawter & Hoppe, 187).

Read: Ezekiel 43:6-12 (about the temple and the people becoming pure)

-“The prophet believed that, with God at the center of Israel's life, this transformation was sure to happen. To insure this, Ezekiel here focuses his attention on the temple and its worship. He does not hesitate to concern himself with the smallest detail of that worship. He is certain that a people dedicated to serving God in the temple would place God at the center of its life. With God at the center of Israel's life, a transformation that is miraculous beyond telling will take place” (Vawter & Hoppe, 208).

-Ezekiel is depicted in these chapters as a new Moses: “The closest biblical parallel to this vision is that of Moses, to whom God revealed ‘the pattern of the tabernacle...on the mount’ (Exod. 25:9, 40). What happened to Moses on Sinai now happens to Ezekiel on ‘a very high mountain’ (i.e., Zion; 40:2). There is another Mosaic parallel here: Ezekiel can see the land that is the focus of his preaching, but only in a vision. He does not settle there himself. The prophet is to tell the exiles of his vision and give them the laws that God revealed to him while on the mountain. Similarly, Moses did not enter the land to which he was leading the Israelites. He received a glimpse of it just before his death as he gazed on it from Mt. Abarim/Nebo (cf. Num. 27:12-13; Deut. 32:48-52; 34:4)” (Vawter & Hoppe, 188).

Read: Ezekiel 47: 21-23

-In re-dividing up the land of Israel in Ezekiel's vision, something astounding happens: the foreigner is given the same treatment as natural-born Israelites. In the Torah, God continually tells Israel to provide for the needs of foreigners (cf. Exodus 22:21; 23:9; Leviticus 19:10, 33-34; 23:22; Deuteronomy 14:29; 24:14-15, 17-22). However, the right to the land of Canaan was reserved exclusively for God's people Israel. It was promised to Abraham's descendants (cf. Genesis 12). Ezekiel's vision goes beyond the Torah's legislation, integrating foreigners into Israelite society by allowing them to own land. "According to Deuteronomy, the holiness of Israel distinguishes it from all other peoples. Apparently, Ezekiel sees that holiness derives from the land. All those who live on the land—whether Israelite or not—are holy and are to enjoy the protection afforded by the covenant" (Vawter & Hoppe, 208-209).

Read: Revelation 21:1-4, 22-27; 22:1-5

-We see a lot of the same imagery as in Ezekiel's vision (river of life, trees bearing fruit, emphasis on God dwelling with humans).

-However, in John's vision, there is no temple complex proper; rather *God* is the temple.

Memory Verse

-Revelation 21:3—And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."

-Shorter version: Revelation 21:3b—God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.

Fun Activity

-Enjoy Summer! A couple summer activities to try:

1. Plant something! A tree, vegetables, flowers, etc. Witness God's creation grow (and remind yourselves of the trees of life from the Garden of Eden, Ezekiel's vision, and Revelation).
2. The next time you go to a pool (if the coronavirus restrictions get limited), reenact Ezekiel's vision of the river, starting from the pool's steps, into the shallow end, then headed towards the deep end.