

**October 20**

**Scriptures:** Read Ezekiel 43, 44 & 45

**Key Verse:** "... this is the place of My throne... where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall [they] defile My holy name..." (Ezekiel 43:7)

## **Overview**

Now that the new temple had been shown to Ezekiel as being all finished and ready, it still remained to be accepted by the Lord with a manifestation of His glory, inhabiting His new dwelling place, as He did in the case of the Tabernacle and the former temple of Solomon (Ex. 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron. 5:13-14; 7:1-3). Ezekiel once again sees a vision of God's glory, just as he had seen at the time of his calling (1:28; 3:12, 23) and when he was told to prophesy the destruction of the apostate city (chs. 8-11). During his earlier vision (about eighteen years prior), Ezekiel had seen the glory of the Lord depart from the temple by way of the eastern gate (10:19; 11:22-23). Now he sees the Lord's glory returning through the eastern gate, which was thereafter to be closed up, lest any man desecrate it (43:2-4; 44:2). Its closing might also signify that the Lord's presence would never again leave the sanctuary, for as the Lord had declared to Ezekiel after His glory filled the temple (43:5; 44:4): "I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever" (43:7; cf. 37:27-28). In Ezekiel's description of the Lord (43:2), he tells us that the radiance of His glory gave light to the earth (cf. 10:4; Rev. 21:11, 23) and His voice resounded like the roar of rushing waters (cf. Rev. 1:15; cf. 14:2; 19:6).

This temple in Jerusalem is said to be the Lord's "throne" (43:7a). In many other scripture references, heaven is described as being the place of God's throne (Isa. 66:1; Ps. 2:4; 11:4; Matt. 5:34; 23:22; Rev. 4:2). Therefore, it appears that Ezekiel is describing heaven that has come down to a new earth (cf. Rev. 21:1-2, 5, 10). The Lord stresses to Ezekiel that in this place His people would no longer bring any defilement, as they had in the past when their idols and the kings' graves were right beside the walls of the old temple, on that very same mount (43:7b-8; 2 Kings 23:7). The new temple that Ezekiel envisioned would have extra safeguards to keep the sanctity on the Holy Mount (Cf. Rev. 21:27).

In the time of the old temple, the priests occupied certain sections of Jerusalem close to the temple, but Ezekiel's temple would be totally surrounded with a large area of sacred land, and it would be in the midst of the portion of land reserved solely for the priests' habitations. Just to the north, a parallel strip of equal size, also in the holy area, was for the Levites. The southernmost strip of land, outside of the sacred district, was for the common land for the whole congregation of Israel, thus making a perfect square (45:1-6). The prince's land was to be located only to the west and the east of the sacred district. Ezekiel comments that unlike the former corrupted kings who would confiscate any land they desired, this would not happen in the new kingdom. There was to be no oppression or violence of any sort and the prince was to ensure justice (45:7-10) and provide the necessary sacrifices required at the temple (45:16-17). Notice, the prince is not the king, for in a true theocracy, the Lord Himself is King.

The temple itself and all the furnishings were to be repeatedly purified and consecrated to the Lord, for the Lord will accept only those who are consecrated to Him, and only those who are

pure can draw near to Him (43:26-27). Nothing was to bring defilement in the sacred district. In the former temple, the uncircumcized non-Israelite servants had evidently been employed to perform some of the more subordinate tasks that the Levites should have done, and thus they brought defilement to the sacred temple precincts (44:7-9; cf. 1 Sam. 2:13; Josh. 9:23, 27; Zech. 14:21; Ezra 8:20). In the new temple, however, only those whose hearts have been circumcized, being consecrated to God, will be eligible to serve. Those now repentant Levites who had led the congregation astray will replace the foreign servants in doing the more demeaning tasks. Those priests and Levites, however, who remained faithful to God will be rewarded with more honourable positions (44:10-16; Rev. 22:12). In the New Covenant, it is only those Jews or Gentiles who are uncircumcised in their hearts that are to be excluded from God's Kingdom, for Jesus Christ "has broken down the middle wall of division" (Eph. 2:11-14; cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11; Eph. 3:6; Rom. 2:28-29).

Ezekiel's directions concerning the various feasts and sacrifices are very different from those prescribed in the Law of Moses (some of them are omitted, and others drastically changed), and for this reason the book of Ezekiel was almost thrown out of the Canon of Scripture. The fact that it was so very different, however, was likely understood by the prophet and his original audience as being an ideal picture, not an actual realization, at least not during this age. When the Babylonian exiles did return to the land and rebuild the temple under Zerubbabel, their rituals and economy were nothing like Ezekiel's description in chapter 45. When his audience heard about Ezekiel's vision, they were to be made to realize the goodness and faithfulness of God, and they were to have in their hearts the hope of its realization in some future age under the Messiah. The express purpose of relaying this vision to the people was that they might be convicted of their sins and idolatry, repent of their evil ways, and live in obedience to God (43:10-12).

## **Prayer**

Lord, we repent of our sinful ways and present ourselves to You as living sacrifices. Consecrate us today and set us apart to be used of You.