

EZEKIEL

Hard to Heart

“Measuring with the Ruler”

40:6-49

A man with a measuring rod in his hand takes Ezekiel on a tour of the future Millennial Temple. It's none other than the Lord Himself.

John Gill writes of Him,

... there was a man; one in human form; not a created angel, but the Messiah, the builder and owner of the city and temple, whom it was proper the prophet should first have a view of; and by whom he was to be made acquainted with the several parts and dimensions of those buildings: he is called a "man," not that he was a mere man, but the eternal God; or otherwise he would not have been fit to be the architect or builder of such a [structure]; nor as yet was he really man, but is so called, because it was determined he should, and it was agreed by him that he would become man, and it was foretold as a certain thing; and besides, he often appeared in a human form before his incarnation, as he now did, being most suitable to the prophet, and making himself more familiar to him...

Hence our title, *“Measuring with the Ruler.”*

Our devotional theme for the remaining chapters of Ezekiel is that God is an amazing builder. Whether it's a structure on the earth, like the Millennial Temple described in these chapters, or your mansion in Heaven, no detail is overlooked and the craftsmanship is perfect.

If you are like me you might get lost in the long, drawn-out description of the Temple. If you do remind yourself that God is putting the same effort into your heavenly home and, in the mean time, into building you as the temple of His Spirit individually and us as His temple corporately.

Looking over these nine chapters they outline as follows:

- 40:1 - 43:2 describe the Millennial Temple.
- 43:3 - 46:24 describe the Millennial worship.
- 47:1 - 48:35 describe the new apportioning of land to the tribes of Israel.

We start with a detailed description of the east-facing gate.

Ezekiel 40:6 Then he went to the gateway which faced east; and he went up its stairs and measured the threshold of the gateway, which was one rod wide, and the other threshold was one rod wide.

Ezekiel 40:7 Each gate chamber was one rod long and one rod wide; between the gate chambers was a space of five cubits; and the threshold of the gateway by the vestibule of the inside gate was one rod.

Ezekiel 40:8 He also measured the vestibule of the inside gate, one rod.

Ezekiel 40:9 Then he measured the vestibule of the gateway, eight cubits; and the gateposts, two cubits. The vestibule of the gate was on the inside.

Ezekiel 40:10 In the eastern gateway were three gate chambers on one side and three on the other; the three were all the same size; also the gateposts were of the same size on this side and that side.

Ezekiel 40:11 He measured the width of the entrance to the gateway, ten cubits; and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits.

Ezekiel 40:12 There was a space in front of the gate chambers, one cubit on this side and one cubit on that side; the gate chambers were six cubits on this side and six cubits on that side.

Ezekiel 40:13 Then he measured the gateway from the roof of one gate chamber to the roof of the other; the width was twenty-five cubits, as door faces door.

Ezekiel 40:14 He measured the gateposts, sixty cubits high, and the court all around the gateway extended to the gatepost.

Ezekiel 40:15 From the front of the entrance gate to the front of the vestibule of the inner gate was fifty cubits.

Ezekiel 40:16 There were beveled window frames in the gate chambers and in their intervening archways on the inside of the gateway all around, and likewise in the vestibules. There were windows all around on the inside. And on each gatepost were palm trees.

A “cubit” is approximately eighteen inches. A “handbreadth” is approximately three and one-half inches. A “rod” is about twelve feet.

I find it odd, at first, that these measurements are not more precise. But I’ve been around enough master craftsmen to understand that measuring

can become more of an art. I was always amazed at my dad who, as a master mechanic, could look at a bolt and tell whether it was metric or SAE and what size it was. A lot of contractors, though they still 'measure twice and cut once,' can often eyeball something and get it right. How much more the Lord!

In chapter forty-four we will learn that this is the gate through which the Lord will enter the Temple. Afterwards it will remain shut; no man shall walk through it.

We read that "on each gatepost were palm trees." They were engraved.

Why palm trees? Let me read this entry from the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.

Branches of palms have been symbolically associated with several different ideas. A palm branch is used in Isaiah 9:14; 19:15 to signify the "head," the highest of the people... Palm branches appear from early times to have been associated with rejoicing. On the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles the Hebrews were commanded to take branches of palms, with other trees, and rejoice before God (Leviticus 23:40)... The palm branch still forms the chief feature of the *lulabh* carried daily by every pious Jew to the synagogue, during the feast. Later it was connected with the idea of triumph and victory. Simon Maccabeus entered the Akra at Jerusalem after its capture, "with thanksgiving, and branches of palm trees, and with harps, and cymbals, and with viols, and hymns, and songs: because there was destroyed a great enemy out of Israel" (1Maccabees 13:51 the King James Version)... The same idea comes out in the use of palm branches by the multitudes who escorted Jesus to Jerusalem (John 12:13) and also in the vision of the "great multitude, which no man could number.... standing before the.... Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands" (Revelation 7:9).

Whatever else the palm may symbolize, it's the engraving that catches our attention. This Temple is functional but also beautiful.

The church, throughout history, has had a hard time balancing function and beauty. We're in a pendulum swing right now in which it is popular for evangelicals to have plain, warehouse-style buildings that are mostly functional.

Since God is such an elaborate builder, why do we assume it is more spiritual to build things that lack beauty?

Both function *and* form are important. It's up to us to keep them in perspective.

Verses seventeen through thirty-seven describe the outer and inner courts of the Temple.

Ezekiel 40:17 Then he brought me into the outer court; and there were chambers and a pavement made all around the court; thirty chambers faced the pavement.

Ezekiel 40:18 The pavement was by the side of the gateways, corresponding to the length of the gateways; this was the lower pavement.

Ezekiel 40:19 Then he measured the width from the front of the lower gateway to the front of the inner court exterior, one hundred cubits toward the east and the north.

Ezekiel 40:20 On the outer court was also a gateway facing north, and he measured its length and its width.

Ezekiel 40:21 Its gate chambers, three on this side and three on that side, its gateposts and its archways, had the same measurements as the first gate; its length was fifty cubits and its width twenty-five cubits.

Ezekiel 40:22 Its windows and those of its archways, and also its palm trees, had the same measurements as the gateway facing east; it was ascended by seven steps, and its archway was in front of it.

Ezekiel 40:23 A gate of the inner court was opposite the northern gateway, just as the eastern gateway; and he measured from gateway to gateway, one hundred cubits.

Ezekiel 40:24 After that he brought me toward the south, and there a gateway was facing south; and he measured its gateposts and archways according to these same measurements.

Ezekiel 40:25 There were windows in it and in its archways all around like those windows; its length was fifty cubits and its width twenty-five cubits.

Ezekiel 40:26 Seven steps led up to it, and its archway was in front of them; and it had palm trees on its gateposts, one on this side and one on that side.

Ezekiel 40:27 There was also a gateway on the inner court, facing south; and he measured from gateway to gateway toward the south, one hundred cubits.

Ezekiel 40:28 Then he brought me to the inner court through the southern gateway; he measured the southern gateway according to these same measurements.

Ezekiel 40:29 Also its gate chambers, its gateposts, and its archways were according to these same measurements; there were windows in it and in its archways all around; it was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide.

Ezekiel 40:30 There were archways all around, twenty-five cubits long and five cubits wide.

Ezekiel 40:31 Its archways faced the outer court, palm trees were on its gateposts, and going up to it were eight steps.

Ezekiel 40:32 And he brought me into the inner court facing east; he measured the gateway according to these same measurements.

Ezekiel 40:33 Also its gate chambers, its gateposts, and its archways were according to these same measurements; and there were windows in it and in its archways all around; it was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide.

Ezekiel 40:34 Its archways faced the outer court, and palm trees were on its gateposts on this side and on that side; and going up to it were eight steps.

Ezekiel 40:35 Then he brought me to the north gateway and measured it according to these same measurements -

Ezekiel 40:36 also its gate chambers, its gateposts, and its archways. It had windows all around; its length was fifty cubits and its width twenty-five cubits.

Ezekiel 40:37 Its gateposts faced the outer court, palm trees were on its gateposts on this side and on that side, and going up to it were eight steps.

I don't really like palm trees! But I'm sure I will be a big 'fan' of them in the future.

If you are an architect you've calculated from all these measurements that the sanctuary will form a square of five hundred cubits.

The chapter next describes the chambers for the priests who will serve in the Millennial Temple.

Ezekiel 40:38 There was a chamber and its entrance by the gateposts of the gateway, where they washed the burnt offering.

Ezekiel 40:39 In the vestibule of the gateway were two tables on this side and two tables on that side, on which to slay the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering.

Ezekiel 40:40 At the outer side of the vestibule, as one goes up to the entrance of the northern gateway, were two tables; and on the other side of the vestibule of the gateway were two tables.

Ezekiel 40:41 Four tables were on this side and four tables on that side, by the side of the gateway, eight tables on which they slaughtered the sacrifices.

Ezekiel 40:42 There were also four tables of hewn stone for the burnt offering, one cubit and a half long, one cubit and a half wide, and one cubit high; on these they laid the instruments with which they slaughtered the burnt offering and the sacrifice.

Ezekiel 40:43 Inside were hooks, a handbreadth wide, fastened all around; and the flesh of the sacrifices was on the tables.

Ezekiel 40:44 Outside the inner gate were the chambers for the singers in the inner court, one facing south at the side of the northern gateway, and the other facing north at the side of the southern gateway.

Ezekiel 40:45 Then he said to me, "This chamber which faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple.

Ezekiel 40:46 The chamber which faces north is for the priests who have one hundred cubits wide, foursquare. The altar was in front of the temple.

Ezekiel 40:47 And he measured the court, one hundred cubits long and one hundred cubits wide, foursquare. The altar was in front of the temple.

We dealt, in our previous study, with the subject of animal sacrifices in the future Temple. There definitely will be animal sacrifices. They in no way take away from the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. The Old Testament sacrifices did not save you; they did not permanently atone for your sins. They showed you the need for a Savior Who would be the Lamb of God and take away your sins. People in the Millennial earth will have just as much need to be shown the horrors of sin and the need for a Savior. Only in their case they will be looking back to the Cross rather than forward to it.

Think, too, of the Jews in the Millennial Kingdom. Believing Jews of that era will have never celebrated a memorial of Jesus Christ's death on their behalf. We have one - communion. Though bloodless, it's nevertheless a memorial of shed blood. The Millennial animal sacrifices will serve as a memorial celebration for the saved Jews of what their Messiah did on Calvary for them.

The mention of the sons of Zadok is pretty important. In First Kings you learn that the Lord promised the sons of Zadok they would serve in the future Temple. Their mention here by Ezekiel tells us this is a real future Temple, not some symbolic or allegorical one. God will keep His promise, literally, to Zadok's descendants.

The chapter ends describing the "vestibule," or we would say, the *porch*.

Ezekiel 40:48 Then he brought me to the vestibule of the temple and measured the doorposts of the vestibule, five cubits on this side and five cubits on that side; and the width of the gateway was three cubits on this side and three cubits on that side.

Ezekiel 40:49 The length of the vestibule was twenty cubits, and the width eleven cubits; and by the steps which led up to it there were pillars by the doorposts, one on this side and another on that side.

Commentators like to point out that many of the details of this future Temple, and especially the porch, resemble Solomon's Temple. David is the one who planned that Temple, then turned the plans over to his son, Solomon, to build.

If the Millennial Temple resembles Solomon's Temple, we can be sure that God isn't the one copying the design! No, God is the one who gave the design to David who passed it on faithfully to his son to implement.

Christians like to copy a successful design. Here is what happens. God does a work in and through a certain local church or affiliation of churches. Other churches see it and want God to do the same work in their church. So they figure out what the other church was doing and they start doing it.

This happens all the time on a national and even global scale. Every few years the latest book is released touting a program and everyone gets on board.

It's not always bad or wrong. But if we want to copy a successful design we need look no further than the Book of Acts. What was the plan? What was the Program?

To receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and then be witnesses. That's it.

Whatever we may adopt, let us never lose sight of the early church and her dependence - her total dependence - on the leading, the empowering, of God the Holy Spirit.