

EZEKIEL

Cry Me a River

*By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down,
yea, we wept When we remembered Zion
Psalm 137:1*

Text

Ezekiel 40:1-43:12

Topic

The Lord stuns everyone when He tells Ezekiel that the priests will perform animal sacrifices in the Millennial Temple.

Title

"There Will Be Blood"

Have you ever told someone you love, *"I need my space?"*

It means you want time and distance away from the relationship, both physically and emotionally. It sounds reasonable enough. But what if we consider that advice with regard to our relationship with Jesus? Can you imagine Him saying to you, *"Gene, I need My space?"*

From Eden to Eternity, from Genesis to Revelation, *the Lord wants you in His space.*

Let's call His space "sacred space." It is anywhere that God has made a way for a sinner to enjoy fellowship with Him.

Eden was the first sacred space where humans walked with God. When they disobeyed God, they lost that fellowship. God immediately began working to restore it.

The penalty for Adam and Eve's sin was death. God's remedy was to become a man and substitute Himself as the once-for-all sacrifice for all who believe. He draws all people to the Cross, the Savior of all - especially those who believe.

This incredible incarnation would take a while. After Eden you see a string of sacrificial altars that were sacred meeting spaces.

Something extraordinary followed. God led Israel out of Egypt and gave Moses plans for a portable Tabernacle. It was a Tent of Meeting between God and man. When it was set up, the cloud representing the glory of the Lord filled it.

Almost 500yrs later, Solomon's magnificent Temple replaced the portable Tabernacle. At its dedication the Temple was filled with the glory of the Lord, making it impossible for the priests to enter.¹

Around 400 years later something exceedingly *awful* happened. On account of Israel's centuries of unrepentant insubordination, idolatry, and immorality, Ezekiel watched as "the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the Temple" (10:18).

Ezekiel omits much Temple history:

1. Since 70AD, the Jews have been without a Temple, dispersed all over the Earth.
2. The next Temple they build will be the Tribulation Temple. They're ready to build it right now. The glory of the Lord will not be in that Temple. It is the place where the antichrist declares deity and demands everyone worship him.
3. We are discussing the Millennial Temple.
4. After the thousand years God will create new Heavens and a new Earth where we will dwell with him for eternity. An angel told the apostle John, "There will be no Temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple."²

The Tabernacle, the OG Temple, and the Millennial Temple were & will be the Houses of the Holy on Earth.

Ezk 40:1 In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured,

¹ Second Chronicles 7:1-3

² Revelation 21:22

on the very same day the hand of the LORD was upon me; and He took me there.

Ezk 40:2 In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it toward the south was something like the structure of a city.

Ezk 40:3 He took me there, and behold, *there was* a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze. He had a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand, and he stood in the gateway.

Ezk 40:4 And the man said to me, “Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you; for you were brought here so that I might show *them* to you. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see.

We call these ‘plans’ because the Temple has not been built. Ezekiel sees the completed Temple. This is a case of the prophetic perfect: A future reality described as already complete.

We could veer off here & discuss *ourselves*! When the Bible promises God has begun a good work in you,³ the Lord is letting you know that He sees you as you will be in the future. You will be perfect.

The bronze man is most likely an angel. His super-power is accurate measuring. I’m going to summarize the Temple one section at a time.

Ezekiel 40:5-16 Describes the East Gate, sometimes called the Golden Gate. It is prominent throughout this description:

- Ezekiel recorded the glory of the Lord *leaving* the Temple and the city through the East Gate.
- When the Messiah returns to Jerusalem, He is expected to enter the city through the East Gate.

Ezekiel 40:17-19 describes the outer court of the Temple.

Ezekiel 40:20-23 describes the northern gateway of the outer court.

Ezekiel 40:24-27 describes the south gate.

Ezekiel 40:28-43 describes the inner court.

³ Philippians 1:6

Listen carefully: Inside the inner court, Ezekiel sees chambers and tables used for preparing *animal sacrifices*. In **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*."

But wait... *Isn't Jesus' death on the Cross the once-for-all sacrifice for sin?* It is, but there most definitely will be animal sacrifices in the Millennium.

The first step in getting a handle on this is to remember that animal sacrifices were *never* for salvation. People in every dispensation are saved exactly the same way: "For what does the Scripture say? 'ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.' "

One commentator wrote, "Animal sacrifices and Christ's sacrifice were **functionally** different and therefore compatible." Another wrote, "The **function** of sacrifices in the future will have nothing to do with eternal salvation."

What *is* their function? They restore fellowship with God and the people of God when it is broken by sin.

The Great Tribulation ends with the Second Coming of Jesus. One of His first actions will be to separate survivors into two camps: The *sheep* & the *goats*.

- The goats "will go away into everlasting punishment."⁴
- The sheep are the saved mortals we call Tribulation Saints. They "inherit the kingdom prepared for [them] from the foundation of the world."⁵
- All the believing mortal Tribulation survivors will be in the Millennium. All their children born, for one-thousand years, will possess a sin nature.
- Also in the Millennium will be the Church, having been resurrected or raptured prior to the Great Tribulation.
- Also in the Millennium will be resurrected OT saints.
- And, of course, a vast number of other supernatural beings & creatures.

In that list, who will have a continual problem having fellowship with God & others?

⁴ Matthew 25:41

⁵ Matthew 25:34

That's right; the mortals with their sin nature. See if this makes sense to you. Mortals will need to be saved. We will urge them to trust Jesus (whom they can see). When a human believes, it is accounted to them as righteousness. They receive the in-dwelling of God the Holy Spirit.

But something is still amiss. They remain in a perishing body of flesh with a propensity to sin. Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice on the Cross at Calvary saves them - but they're going to need something to restore fellowship with God until their eventual resurrection.⁶

The mortals in the millennium will be like we are today. Saved by grace through faith, in-dwelt by God the Holy Spirit, but still prone to sin.

Why do we, today, get a pass on blood sacrifices?

We are uniquely the church. We are a mystery throughout all the Old Testament, only revealed after the leadership of the nation of Israel rejected Jesus. We are the bride of Christ. The church is described as being *in* Christ Jesus. If we have a break in fellowship on account of sin, the Bible tells us to confess our sin directly to Him because "He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."⁷

We "present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God."⁸

Let's make a direct comparison between priests. The apostle Peter twice calls the Church a "priesthood" of believers.⁹

Touching or being near a dead body, on purpose or in ignorance, renders a mortal priest ceremonially unclean.¹⁰ He cannot serve in the Temple or enjoy fellowship with God or the people of God. The remedy was to wait 7 days, perform a ritual washing, and offer a sin offering the day he returned to the Temple. He would then be declared clean.

⁶ The Bible doesn't tell us when Millennial mortals who believe will be resurrected. Probably in the time between the Millennium & Eternity.

⁷ First John 1:9

⁸ Romans 12:1

⁹ First Peter 2:5&9

¹⁰ Ezekiel 44:25-27

By contrast, We are resurrected and in our perfect glorified bodies in the Millennium. We cannot be rendered unholy. We are holy just as God is holy.

I see no difficulty with a mortal individual having to make a sacrifice in order to have sacred space restored.

The Millennial sacrificial system should be expected: It is necessary to provide sacred space for mortals. To put it another way - It would be weird for there *not* to be sacrifices.

Ezekiel 40:43-47 highlight God's assignment of specific priestly chambers in the inner court.

Ezekiel 40:48-49 Describe a vestibule.

Ezekiel 41:1-26 describes the inner structure of the future Temple, focusing on the sanctuary and the Most Holy Place. The main hall and inner sanctuary, which is 20 cubits square, is reserved for God's presence.

The inner sanctuary, or Most Holy Place, is described with great care. No furniture is mentioned, because the focus is on God's presence in it.

Ezekiel 42:1-20 The man measures the 500-cubit-square Temple complex, walled off to separate the holy from the common.

A Messianic Jewish website describes the Temple: "The size of the structure to be built during the Millennium almost defies imagination. It will tower above the skyline of the city in the rising sun, golden in splendor, glistening in beauty. At dawn or sunset, noon or night, the Temple will be the focal point of Jerusalem. It will be the place where God dwells among His people. It will be the largest and most magnificent structure ever erected, and it will all be for the glory of God."

The Millennial Temple will be approximately one mile square. That's almost 28mil sq.ft. By way of comparison, the Pentagon grounds, and Central Park, are approximately that size.

Massive geological changes make room for it. Zechariah says the Mount of Olives will split, valleys will rise or fall, and Jerusalem will be elevated and reshaped.¹¹

Now we come to it. Ezekiel gives us in *words* what he saw in *wonder*.

Ezk 43:1 Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east.

Ezk 43:2 And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the Earth shone with His glory.

Ezk 43:3 It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw - like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions were like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face.

Ezk 43:4 And the glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east.

Ezk 43:5 The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

I find it hard to *define* the glory of God. David Guzik calls it “the radiant outshining of His character and presence.” It is the visible, tangible representation of God - the *shekinah*. It is found in many OT passages, described as “a cloud.” In the NT, the cloud is visible at key moments in the life of Jesus:

- The cloud was present at the transfiguration of Jesus.¹²
- The cloud received Jesus into Heaven at His ascension.¹³
- The cloud will display the glory of Jesus Christ when He returns in triumph to Earth.¹⁴

Footnote: Jesus will not be able to enter the Temple immediately. *It won't have been built yet.*

Before our next comments, let's review the Doctrine of the Trinity. Here is a summary used by Dallas Theological Seminary:

¹¹ Chapter 14

¹² Luke 9:34-35

¹³ Acts 1:9

¹⁴ Revelation 1:7

"We believe that God is the all-powerful Creator and Sustainer of all things visible and invisible, who eternally exists in three Persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and that these three are one God, having precisely the same nature, attributes, and perfections, and are worthy of precisely the same homage, confidence, and obedience."

When Jesus comes through the East Gate, the cloud of glory accompanies Him (or He accompanies the cloud!). The cloud goes into the Temple, filling it with glory. **The cloud represents God the Father.**

Here are two reasons why this is probable:

1. The glory of the LORD will dwell in the inner court during the Millennium. It's hard to imagine Jesus spending 1000 years in a small cubicle
2. In verse 7 the LORD says, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne." In the meticulous plans for the Temple, *there is no mention of a throne!* God the Father dwells in the Temple, as He had before, while Jesus rules from a throne set up elsewhere.

Ezk 43:6 Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me.

Ezk 43:7 And He said to me, "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.

Ezk 43:8 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.

Ezk 43:9 Now let them put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever.

Ezk 43:10 "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.

Ezk 43:11 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.

Ezk 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.

This is a conditional promise. God will dwell with them forever so long as they “put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me.” Sadly, they won’t. We read in chapter 20 of the Revelation:

Rev 20:7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison

Rev 20:8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the Earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

Rev 20:9 They went up on the breadth of the Earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of Heaven and devoured them.

Rev 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

There’s one more Temple: God the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer in the Church, making us *individually* and *corporately* the Temple of God.

God’s emphasis throughout the Bible & its stories is relationship. Rather than being deterministic, He is loving, responsive, and deeply engaged with His creation.

Personal exhortation: Choose a Systematic Theology that is by far more *relational* than *deterministic*.

If we are comparing ourselves to the previous Temples, we should be more *portable* than *stationary*.

Are you ready to be led by God in the wilderness of the world?