

TEN LINES OF EVIDENCE FOR INTERPRETING EZEKIEL 40-48 AS DEPICTING A LITERAL TEMPLE

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[This article was adapted from a Blog article.¹]

Some amillennialists think that the original hearers of Ezekiel couldn't comprehend a future glorious kingdom where Israel is regenerate, and Messiah reigns in justice and righteousness from Jerusalem. That they couldn't see a time where priests serve God in a new temple.

I think they could in fact do this from attending to the following passages: Num. 25:10-13; Deut. 30:6f., or Psa. 2, 89, 105, 106, Isa. 2, 11, 26-27, 35, 43, 44, 45, 51, 62; Jer. 23, 30, 31, 33, or Hos. 2:16f. or Mic. 4, or Zeph. 3, or indeed from Ezek. 34, 36-37.

It seems that Ezekiel's near contemporary Zechariah (Zech. 6:12-13, 8:1-3; 14:16f.), and Malachi (Mal. 3:2-3) believed these things too. Zechariah, for example, predicts a future temple built after Jerusalem has been changed topographically where the King is worshiped at the temple (Zech. 14).

No premillennialist, or Dispensationalist (or Biblical Covenantalist) would say that Ezekiel's audience could know the *time* when the temple would be built. They could only know that it *would* be built. They could know this because

Ezekiel's temple could only be constructed...

a). once Israel were no longer under the Mosaic covenant – because the service etc. of Ezekiel's temple does not agree with Moses

b). after topographical changes occurred which would make the huge project possible

c). once the glory of the Lord was ready to return to bless Israel and dwell with them forever. That didn't happen in Nehemiah's day, and it hasn't happened yet, so logically it must either be the future (or else these chapters form one of the greatest circumlocutions in all of literature!)

Again, Ezekiel didn't know that the Messianic Kingdom would last a thousand years. He didn't have John's Revelation (some who *have* the Book of Revelation still don't know that Christ will reign a thousand years!). We don't have to demonstrate anything that wasn't revealed *after* Ezekiel's time to realize that his original audience knew he was referring to a future temple.

But here are ten evidences that Ezekiel meant us to understand him as referring to a literal temple building complex that will be erected in future Israel.

¹ <https://drreluctant.wordpress.com/2017/12/15/ten-lines-of-evidence-for-interpreting-ezekiel-40-48-as-depicting-a-literal-temple/>

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1. Ezekiel *calls* it a temple over and over. E.g. In Ezekiel 40:5, 45 – where the priestly function is mentioned; in Eze. 41:6-10 – where its chambers are described in pedantic detail; in Eze. 42:8 – where the length of the chambers depends on their position relative to the sanctuary; in Eze. 43:11 – where God declares: “make known to them the design of the house, its structure, its exits, its entrances, all its designs, all its statutes, and all its laws. And write *it* in their sight, so that they may observe its whole design and all its statutes, and do them.” How can any reader take these details seriously and find their fulfillment in the NT church?

Moving forward in the passage, in Ezekiel 43:21 a bull is to be offered as a sin-offering outside the house; in Eze. 45:20 – an atonement is made for the simple on the seventh day of the month; in Eze. 46:24 – sacrifices are boiled at designated places; and in Eze. 48:21 – the huge allotment for the sanctuary is measured (it is very different to New Jerusalem in Rev. 21!).

2. There are laws to perform in the temple (Ezek. 43:11-12). Quite how one can perform these commands in the church is a mystery beyond the mystery of the church itself.
3. Ezekiel stipulates two divisions of priests, only one of whom (Zadokites)

can approach the Lord (Eze. 44:15). These Zadokites are given land separate from other Levites (Eze. 48:11).

4. Ezekiel refers to New Moons and sacrifices (Eze. 46:1, 6). New Jerusalem has no need of moonlight (Rev. 21:23).
5. The tribes of Israel are given specific allotments of land all around the temple (Ezek. 48)
6. The two temples at the beginning and the end of the Book of Ezekiel form a structural arc. The first temple is literal. Nothing is said about the more detailed temple at the end of Ezekiel being a mere symbol. In fact, in Ezekiel 8:3ff. “the visions of God” recorded what really did occur (cf. Eze. 40:2), not what would symbolically happen.
7. In Ezekiel 10 the Shekinah leaves the actual temple in Jerusalem by the East Gate. In chapter 43 it returns via the East Gate and remains.
8. A sanctuary is mentioned in the new covenant chapters (Ezekiel 36 & 37). For example, after Israel has been cleansed, God declares: “I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever.” (Ezek. 37:26. cf. 43:7).

This indicates something about the *timing* of the fulfillment of the

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temple prophecy. This agrees with the timing indicated in the last verse of Ezekiel: "the name of the city from *that day shall be*, 'The LORD is there" (Ezek. 48:35)

9. At least three times Ezekiel is commanded to pay close attention to specifics: Eze. 40:4; 43:10-11; 44:5. The symbolic interpretation ignores these details when seeking to explain the meaning of the vision. If an interpretation passes over what God has told us to pay close attention to, that interpretation must be suspect.
10. A future temple is necessary in light of God's everlasting covenant with the Zadokites' ancestor Phinehas (Num. 25:10-13; Psa. 106:30-31. Cf. Jer. 33:14f., Mal. 3:1-4). Zechariah 6:12-13; 14:8-9, 16f., describes temple conditions in Israel which have never yet existed, but which match Ezekiel 36-48.

Please *look up the references above and see if I have distorted what the verses say*. I have simply allowed the Bible to speak. If someone doesn't believe these evidences and instead wants to interpret a portion of the Bible that is longer than First Corinthians as a "word-picture" or "type", then let them explain their interpretation from the text. I think that is a reasonable position.



Source: SpiritAndTruth.org