EZEKIEL

Chapter 43

*The Glory Returns to the Temple*

**Then the man brought me to the gate facing east,  2 and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory.  3 The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when he came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown.  4 The glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east.  5 Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. 6 While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me from inside the temple.  7 He said: “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. The house of Israel will never again defile my holy name—neither they nor their kings—by their prostitution and the lifeless idols of their kings at their high places.  8 When they placed their threshold next to my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them, they defiled my holy name by their detestable practices. So I destroyed them in my anger.  9 Now let them put away from me their prostitution and the lifeless idols of their kings, and I will live among them forever. 10 “Son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins. Let them consider the plan,  11 and if they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them the design of the temple—its arrangement, its exits and entrances—its whole design and all its regulations and laws. Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations. 12 “This is the law of the temple: All the surrounding area on top of the mountain will be most holy. Such is the law of the temple.**

Chapter 43 consists of two easily divisible sections: (1) the return of Yahweh’s “Glory” (כָּבוֹד), a hypostasis of Yahweh himself, to the temple (43:1–12); and (2) the description and measurements of the great altar, along with the rites to be used in its consecration (43:13–27). Earlier the measuring tour paid virtually no attention to any of the temple appurtenances, with the exception of a different “altar” that turned out to be a “table” (41:22, which see). Here in 43:13–17, the sacrificial altar is introduced and considered in detail (as will be the priestly kitchens, where the sacrifices are prepared, in 46:19–24). (CC)

In the eschatological temple in Ezekiel 40–48, there are no references to some of the other appointments, notably the ark (see on 43:7), and also the lampstand and the incense altar, which were central features of the tabernacle and Solomonic temple. Hence this vision is transitional from the OT to the eschatological vision in Revelation 21, where there is no temple besides God and the Lamb (Rev 21:22). (CC)

**43:1-12** No other part of chapters 40–48 has such close links to other parts of the book as this first unit of chapter 43. This is evident on the level of the vocabulary used. Connections can readily be seen between the return of the Glory and the vision of the Glory at Ezekiel’s call in chapter 1. The prophet’s reference to “the vision I saw when I came to destroy the city” (43:3) clearly is to the scene in 9:1–11 where Yahweh commissioned the destroying angel. But the closest connection is with 10:4, 18–19 and 11:22–23, when the Glory had forsaken the temple through the same east gate where this chapter begins (43:1). The return of the Glory here is a promise of a reversal of that departure. The return of the Glory is what makes the bare structures measured in chapters 40–48 become what they are intended to be: God’s “house, his incarnational dwelling among his redeemed people “forever” (43:9). As Block notes:

This vision proclaims the glorious mercy of God, who invites sinners into a relationship with himself and provides the means whereby that relationship can be expressed, though without contaminating his own holiness. … He comes to dwell among them, though without sacrificing any of his glory. … Christians recognize the ultimate expression of the divine desire in Jesus, who is not only the restored temple (John 2:19–22) but the physical manifestation of divine glory—full of grace and truth (John 1:14). (CC)

The pattern in Ezekiel 40–43, with the description of the sanctuary first (40:1–42:20) followed by the advent of the Glory (43:1–12), is the same pattern that God had followed for both the tabernacle (Exodus 25–40) and Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 6–8). A similar pattern can be said to pertain to God’s church as the body of Christ and the new temple, since we are nothing but abject sinners utterly lacking divine glory (Rom 3:23) until, through Holy Baptism and faith in Christ, God comes to dwell within us, so that we have the hope of everlasting glory. That Christ, the Lord of Glory, already dwells within us now may explain why this same pattern is not strictly followed in the final NT fulfillment, which depicts the dwelling of God with his redeemed people in the eternal state. When the apostle John sees the new Jerusalem descending from heaven, she is already endowed with “the Glory of God” (Rev 21:11), and a further description with measurements then follows (Rev 21:14–22). The Christological significance of the “Glory” is affirmed by the parallel statements that “the *Glory* of God illuminates her, and her lamp is the *Lamb*” (Rev 21:23), which echoes Ezek 43:2, “the earth shone with his Glory.” (CC)

Since this unit follows the grand temple tour of 40:1–42:20, it is appropriate to meditate a bit on what its “Torah” (43:12) means in the Christian era. The NT contains no comparable body of material about divine Glory inhabiting church buildings (nor does the NT describe church furnishings in a way comparable to 40:1–42:20 or 43:13–27). We Christians are perfectly free to worship in any kind of structure we wish—or, at the extreme, even in none at all (cf. Jn 4:23–24). However, from the earliest house churches to the grandest Gothic cathedrals, Christians have virtually always erected “houses” of worship. It is a reminder that, as creatures of space and time, our worship is enhanced by the observance of sacred spaces and times, and, as a familiar saying goes, “he who does not worship/pray at specific times and places probably does not worship/pray at all.” (CC)

Ezek 43:1–12 is a salutary reminder that it is the presence of the divine Glory—that is, Jesus Christ—that constitutes the Christian church and divine worship. He comes as God’s Word is rightly proclaimed and the Sacraments are rightly administered. Without that, there is no valid worship, no matter how ornate or simple the structure may be. To speak of God’s “presence” applies most easily to the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper, where he gives his body and blood for the forgiveness of sins and pledge of the resurrection to eternal life. But in a related sense, it applies no less to Trinitarian Baptism and the proclamation of the Word. We can never accent too often that the one holy Christian church

is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. (AC VII 1–2) (CC)

The Word and Sacraments are the means of grace, the sine qua non of the church, because through them God creates and sustains saving faith in Christ, and through such faith God grants life everlasting (see AC IV, V, IX, X, XIII). (CC)

Therefore we should view with due, evangelical caution any glib assertion that such things as the worship space, its furnishings, its art and music, its hymns and liturgies can be dismissed as of no concern because they are adiaphora. We may safely conclude from Ezekiel that God—the same triune God we worship—has great concern for the settings and forms in which he is worshiped. To be sure, we who live in the NT era know that the separation of sacred and secular no longer means exactly what it did before the incarnation of our Lord. Nevertheless, the external aspects of worship can either enhance or obscure (or even reverse) the message that God graciously comes to us in Christ, and that, secondarily, we then come to him. (CC)

**43:1** BROUGHT ME – The implied subject is Yahweh, although he is guiding his prophet by the agency of the supernatural guide. Ezekiel is brought to the same east (outer) gate where the tour began (40:6) and where the guide had already led him at the end of the temple tour (42:15). That it is the east gate that is featured, as before (40:6; 42:15) and again later (44:1; 47:2; cf. the east inner gate in 46:1, 12), probably indicates its special liturgical significance. It was in a direct line with the main entrance to the temple, so that those who entered by it would not have to turn their backs on the “face” (presence) of Yahweh, as pagans regularly did in their deification of the sun, and as Israelite apostates were seen doing in the vision of 8:16. (CC)

**43:2** *I saw the glory.* The high point of chs. 40–48. The temple had been prepared for this moment, and all that follows flows from this appearance. (CSB)

*coming from the east.* The direction Ezekiel had seen God leave (see 11:23). In the book of Ezekiel God’s glory is always active (see vv. 4–5; 3:23; 9:3; 10:4, 18; 44:4). (CSB)

*like the roar of rushing waters.* Ezekiel experienced an audition as well as a vision. For the comparison see 1:24; Rev 1:15; 14:2; 19:6. (CSB)

*the land was radiant with his glory.* God’s visible glory is always described as being very bright (see 10:4; Lk 2:9; Rev 21:11, 23). (CSB)

The verse begins with וְהִנֵּ֗ה, literally, “and behold,” to indicate a new or surprising sight, especially in a vision. It also began 40:5 and occurred near the start of, for example, 1:4, 15; 2:9. The long designation “the Glory of the God of Israel” highlights the significance of the event. In וְקוֹל֗וֹ כְּקוֹל֙ מַ֣יִם רַבִּ֔ים, “his voice was like the sound of many waters,” the repeated קוֹל, which can mean either “voice” or “sound,” must be translated in the first and then in the second way, according to the context. The comparison of his “voice” to “the sound of many waters” recalls 1:24 in the inaugural vision, where the rustling of the wings of the living creatures (identified as cherubim in 10:5, 20) is compared to the sound of “many waters” and then to “the voice of the Almighty.” The cherubim are not explicitly mentioned here. The optical theme of light and fire had been present in Ezekiel 1:4, 13 too, but here it is presented as cosmic and eschatological. Compare the song of the seraphim at Isaiah’s call: “the whole earth is full of his Glory” (Is 6:3). (CC)

“Glory” is capitalized in my translation, because we know it is Yahweh himself in visible manifestation, with what Ezekiel had described as “the likeness of the appearance of a man” (1:26), one of the three hypostases (persons) of the triune God, as confessed in the Athanasian Creed: *unum Deum in Trinitate et Trinitatem in unitate*, “one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity.” This is the preincarnate Christ, the *logos asarkos*, “the Word not yet made flesh,” who, in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4), would become flesh (Jn 1:14). The end of the verse declares, וְהָאָ֖רֶץ הֵאִ֥ירָה מִכְּבֹדֽוֹ, “and the earth shone from/with his Glory,” corresponding to Rev 21:23, which declares that the illuminating Glory is none other than “the Lamb.” The Hiphil of אוֹר can have the intransitive meaning “to shine, give light.” The third feminine singular perfect הֵאִ֥ירָה must have the feminine noun אֶרֶץ (“earth”) as its subject. The preposition מִן on מִכְּבֹדֽוֹ has a causal sense, as it often does with an impersonal thing (BDB, s.v. מִן, 2 e (b)), but it can also have such a sense with a personal agent, such as the divine Glory, so this might be paraphrased, “his Glory made the earth shine.” This is reminiscent of the Epiphany theme expressed in Is 60:1. (CC)

**43:3** *like the vision I had seen.* And yet it was different, for no creatures or wheels are mentioned here. (CSB)

Throughout the book Ezekiel rarely writes in the first person, but does so here (also in, e.g., 41:8; 44:4). This verse interrupts the account of the Glory’s entrance to describe Ezekiel’s reaction and his recollection of two previous encounters with the same theophany (chapter 1 and chapters 8–11). The noun מַרְאֶה, “appearance, vision, sight” is used four times in this verse to emphasize the correspondence of this theophany with the previous ones. Chapter 1 used מַרְאֶה often, especially in 1:26–28, to indicate the transcendent nature of the theophany, which could only be described as appearing somewhat like familiar sights. (CC)

*when he came to destroy the city.* See ch. 9. (CSB)

*by the Kebar River.* See ch. 1. (CSB)

*I fell facedown.* See 1:28; 3:23; 9:8; 11:13; 44:4.

Ezekiel’s reaction of prostration before the Glory (וָאֶפֹּ֖ל אֶל־פָּנָֽי, “and I fell on my face”) is repeated almost verbatim from 1:28 and 3:23. He shows the same awe and submission, even though almost twenty years have intervened since that first sight. (CC)

**43:4** *through the gate facing east.* See note on v. 2. (CSB)

**43:5** *Then the Spirit lifted me up.*† The function of the guiding angel was taken over by the Spirit of God. Ezekiel was transported into the inner court but not into the temple (cf. 3:14; 8:3; 11:1, 24). (CSB)

In 43:1 Ezekiel began at the east gate of the outer court. Here the Spirit brings him into the inner court, probably through its east gate, so he can observe that the Glory has filled the temple. At this location he can also study the altar, which is the subject of 43:13–27. Then in 44:1 he will be brought back to the east gate of the outer court. (CC)

*filled the temple.* As at the consecration of Solomon’s temple (1Ki 8:11; see Ex 40:34–35; Isa 6:4). (CSB)

**43:6** *someone.* God, but out of reverence not named here, preserving an air of awe and mystery. (CSB)

Ezekiel says he hears “someone speaking to me.” The Hebrew wording is almost identical to that in 2:2. In 2:2, Ezekiel heard Yahweh addressing him directly, with no intermediary present, but here he says that, literally, “a man was standing beside me” (וְאִ֕ישׁ הָיָ֥ה עֹמֵ֖ד אֶצְלִֽי). The syntax of the participle מִרַּבֵּ֥ר followed by הָיָה may have a circumstantial or temporal force: “I heard someone speaking to me from the temple *while* a man was standing beside me.” This indicates that the speech from God in the temple was mediated to Ezekiel through the “man.” (CC)

**43:7** *place of my throne.* See Isa 6:1; Jer 3:17. (CSB)

The omnipresent God is always present everywhere, both vertically and eternally in heaven and horizontally on earth in history. However, he chooses to manifest himself in wrath and grace especially in certain times and places. The correspondence between the tabernacle constructed under Moses and Yahweh’s heavenly home is first enunciated in Ex 25:9, where Moses is to build according to a heavenly תַּבְנִית, “pattern, model, miniature,” and the thought is repeated for the temple (1 Chr 28:19; cf. Acts 7:44; Heb 8:5; 9:23). Thus within the Holy of Holies, the ark (or the cherubim above it) is both Yahweh’s earthly throne room (e.g., 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; Ps 80:1) and his footstool (Is 60:13; Pss 99:5; 132:7; Lam 2:1; 1 Chr 28:2). Often the two perspectives are merged, as classically in Isaiah 6. Just as Yahweh’s heavenly throne can be said to encompass all the heavens, so on earth his seat on the ark is often extended to include all of Zion (e.g., Jer 14:21) (CC)

*place for the soles of my feet.* See 1Ch 28:2; Ps 99:5; 132:7; Isa 60:13; La 2:1. (CSB)

*I will live among the Israelites forever.* Renewing the promise of 37:26–28 (see v. 9; 1Ki 6:13; Zec 2:11). (CSB)

Yahweh, speaking to Ezekiel from the new temple, promises, “I will dwell [שָׁכַן] there [שָׁם] in the midst of the sons of Israel forever” (Ezek 43:7). This language recalls the first temple (and ark!) that had been the focal point of his “incarnational” presence, but anticipates something superior and permanent. This same promise was expressed in different terminology in 37:26–28, where Yahweh promised to set his sanctuary in the midst of his people for all time—a promise now fulfilled in Christ, but to be consummated in the eschaton (Revelation 21–22). When God reveals himself to Ezekiel, an OT priest (1:3), and expresses himself in familiar terms of the OT temple and its appointments, Christological exegesis naturally must connect that language with the NT counterpart, where Christ declares himself the fulfillment of the temple (e.g., Jn 2:18–23), and who, through his Spirit, makes us baptized believers in Christ the living stones in that temple of his body. And the “forever” of Ezekiel’s prophecy awaits the return of Christ and the new heavens and new earth, when there will be no temple in the new Jerusalem, “for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” (Rev 21:22). Yet even in the NT, the eternal state can be depicted in the same sort of temple imagery found in Ezekiel 40–48 (see, e.g., Rev 3:12; 7:15). (CC)

Four examples of how Israel had defiled God’s holy name in the past are specified in 43:7b–9. Each of the four begins with the preposition בְּ, thrice in the sense of means, “by,” and once, at the start of 43:8, temporally (“whenever”). (CC)

*prostitution.* As the NIV text note indicates, the word can stand either for the sacred prostitution in the Canaanite religion (Baalism) or for spiritual apostasy from true worship of the Lord (see note on 16:15). (CSB)

The first example, בִּזְנוּתָ֔ם, is the noun זְנוּת, “whoring” (with suffix), derived from the verb זָנָה, “to play the whore, be a prostitute” (43:7). This noun, which will recur in 43:9, was used previously in 23:27 in a context filled with the verb and other nouns derived from it. These nouns and this verb may be used of literal fornication, but here, as so often in the Bible, the word primarily refers to spiritual infidelity, to illicit affairs with other political powers and their gods, which often is accompanied by sexual immorality. This dual sense of promiscuity (spiritual as manifest by sexual) was developed at great length in chapters 16 and 23. (CC)

*lifeless idols.*† As the NIV text note indicates, the reference is either to idols or to monuments or graves of past kings. Fourteen kings of Judah were buried in Jerusalem, possibly near the temple area (see 2Ki 21:18, 26; 23:30). (CSB)

OF THE KINGS – means “their kings.” However, the use of מֶלֶךְ in 43:7, 9 is its only appearance in all of chapters 40–48. Except in the messianic context of 37:22, 24, where Ezekiel uses מֶלֶךְ, “King,” for the Son of David, elsewhere for him he uses נָשִׂיא, “Prince,” as will be evident shortly in 44:3 and at length in chapter 46. As the messianic references show, Ezekiel is not anti-royalist on principle, but Israel’s actual, historical kings from Solomon on had failed (with the possible exceptions of Hezekiah and Josiah) to respect and safeguard the true worship of Yahweh and the sanctity of the temple. The unusual reference here to מְלָכִים may be illuminated by the use of *mlkm* in Ugaritic texts, where it is sometimes parallel to or synonymous with *rpʾym* (cognate to the Hebrew רְפָאִים), a term for deceased and divinized kings. (Therefore the translation of פֶּגֶר as “offerings for the dead” could also be appropriate in this context, but “monuments,” in my judgment, can marshal the stronger evidence.) (CC)

HIGH PLACES – I have retained the most natural translation of בָּמוֹתָֽם (plural of בָּמָה with suffix) as “their high places.” This reading is confirmed by Vulgate, Syriac, and Targum in antiquity. “High places” seem to be associated with all sorts of cultic activities; see Ezekiel’s references to them in 6:3, 6; 16:16; 20:29. They certainly were not exclusively mortuary shrines, but there is no reason to exclude that element. The five monoliths excavated at Gezer are often referred to as a “high place” and would beautifully illustrate this verse, except that the once common interpretation of those monoliths as a “high place” is no longer widely accepted. (CC)

**43:8** *their threshold next to my threshold.* Solomon’s temple was surrounded by many of his own private structures (see 1Ki 7:1–12). The distinction between God’s holy temple and the rest of the world is a central idea in the book of Ezekiel (see v. 12; 44:23). (CSB)

*So I destroyed them.*† As elsewhere in Ezekiel, the practices of the people and their kings brought about their destruction (see 5:11; 18:10–12; and especially 22:1–15). (CSB)

When God’s patience was exhausted, inevitably he acted according to his warnings and “finished off, exterminated, destroyed” them (וָאֲכַ֥ל, Piel first common singular imperfect of כָּלָה) in his righteous wrath. (CC)

**43:9** This verse is a sequel to 43:7. As we have noted before, even when Ezekiel is prophesying eschatologically about what will be fulfilled in the eternal state (after Christ’s return, “forever”), some of the prophecy seems to retreat back to the present NT era, the “now, but not yet” interim between Christ’s first and second advents. So here, Yahweh in 43:7 had declared, “Never again will the house of Israel defile my holy name,” looking to the time when the sinful nature of believers will have been removed forever (after their death and resurrection; Revelation 21–22). But then Ezek 43:9 uses a jussive to exhort the audience not to repeat the prior sins of Israel—an exhortation appropriate for believers in this present life (*simul iustus et peccator*, “saint and sinner simultaneously”), similar to Paul’s exhortation in 1 Cor 10:1–13. (CC)

Moreover, the exhortation should not be misunderstood as implying that the people can remove their sinful nature through their own efforts (“let them remove,” Ezek 43:9), since it is only the gracious action of God that can accomplish their regeneration. Compare “get for yourselves a new heart and a new S/spirit” in 18:31 with “I will give you a new heart and put a new S/spirit within you. I will remove the heart of stone …” in 36:26. (CC)

“Now” (עַתָּ֞ה), here as often, introduces the main point of the speech. God’s Glory comes of itself, by sheer grace. As Luther explained the Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer: “The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.” But the people can forfeit it or cause its departure from themselves once more. The Piel jussive יְרַחֲק֧וּ, “let them make distant, put far away, remove,” is an antonym to the Hiphil הִקְרִיב, “bring near, offer” (e.g., 43:22–24; frequent in Leviticus), used of the OT sacrifices through which Yahweh’s indwelling was confirmed and strengthened. With the perfect sacrifice of Christ, and after the removal of the people’s sinful nature and sins, God can dwell among them “forever” (43:9, as in 43:7; cf. Rev 22:5). (CC)

**43:10** The account of the return of the Glory and its implications eventuates in a second charge to the prophet to explain the meaning of the temple structure as it had been shown to him by the heavenly guide. The Hiphil imperative הַגֵּ֤ד (from נָגַד, here with a double accusative) is used, as in the first charge, in 40:4 at the beginning of the vision. There its object was “everything you see,” but here it is “the temple.” That necessitates a periphrastic translation of the imperative as “describe,” but the basic meaning of the verb is “tell, narrate.” (CC)

How does one “narrate” or even “preach” a building? Part of the answer lies in connecting the sanctuary’s structure with the history of salvation of which it is a part. The connection is evident already in the structure of the Pentateuch: all its laws, including cultic ones, are subordinated to the narrative of creation and redemption. The technical architectural features are meaningful only as they contribute to the proclamation and sacramental distribution of the Gospel, which is essentially the same, whether in its OT or NT form: justification, the forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting, all furnished as God’s free gifts because of the atonement of Jesus Christ. Hence, one is tempted to translate הַגֵּ֤ד here as “proclaim” (as בִּשֵּׂר and κηρύσσω usually mean). (CC)

The purpose clause, “so that they may be ashamed of their sins,” is rather surprising initially, but it will be reinforced in 43:11. When the people understand the proclamation of salvation encoded in the temple structure, their eyes will be opened to the extent to which their idolatrous “spirituality” had really been sacrilege. In fact, this accent is characteristic of Ezekiel, who had similar purpose clauses with the Niphal of כָּלַם, “be ashamed,” in salvation oracles in 16:54, 61 and 36:32. In 16:54 the shame results from the salvation Israel receives together with the converted Gentile peoples of Sodom and Samaria. In 16:61 it is from the establishment of the everlasting covenant with Israel. In 36:32 it is from the realization of the free act of grace by Yahweh for his own sake. (CC)

A Lutheran will be sure to detect a Law-Gospel theme in these verses. We often describe evangelization in terms of first preaching the Law and later the Gospel. That sequence is so that the sinner is first convicted of his own guilt, then is ready to receive the Good News that God in Christ has won pardon for all sin. But functionally, Law and Gospel are more often intertwined and alternate with each other—in the course of the pastor’s ministry and even in the liturgy and readings of the worship service. There is no valid Gospel except Law-Gospel! As we Christians grow in faith and appreciation of the Gospel of God’s plenary forgiveness in Christ, we also grow in appreciation of the enormity of our sin, from which Christ saves us. (CC)

**43:11** This verse both emphasizes and expands on 43:10, with repetitious vocabulary. There may still be some who are so self-satisfied and hard-hearted that no proclamation, not even Ezekiel 40–48 or Revelation 21–22, will arouse repentance and faith (cf. Rev 22:11, 18–19). (CC)

The imperative to “teach” in this context reminds us that what we might characterize as catechetical instruction was part of the priests’ regular duties, although the OT gives far fewer details about it than about their liturgical obligations. Even if their instruction centered on ceremonial matters, if done properly, it would not have been simply teaching the rites, but also the attendant theology about worship that encompasses all of life. (CC)

The concern with “its exits and its entrances” (וּמוֹצָאָ֡יו וּמוֹבָאָ֣יו) has to do with control of access to the sacred precincts, assuring that only authorized personnel may enter. The same kind of concern is reflected in Rev 22:14: “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that their right of access may be to the tree of life, and through the gates they may enter the city” (cf. Rev 21:7–8, 27). “Its entrances” (וּמוֹבָאָ֣יו) is the plural of מָבוֹא with suffix, but written with *holem* in the first syllable (וּמוֹ- instead of וּמְבוֹאָיו) by phonetic assimilation to the preceding וּמוֹצָאָ֡יו. (CC)

“Write in their sight” shows that not only is the proclamation to be oral but it is also to be accompanied by the written text, which we now have in Ezekiel’s book. We might like a drawing or sketch, as commentators have seen fit to provide. As the rest of the verse shows, everything about the temple is a “sermon illustration” that unites for God’s people what he has done (and continues to do) for them—their justification—with what they will do in grateful response and become by his grace—their sanctification. (CC)

**43:12** *This is the law.* Refers to the contents of chs. 40–42. (CSB)

“The Torah of the temple” is not a new covenant to be implemented by Israel, but a renewal of the Torah revealed first to Moses and developed in this revelation to Ezekiel—the Torah to be fulfilled in Christ (Rom 10:4; cf. Rom 8:2; 1 Cor 9:21; Gal 5:4; 6:2). Because of the difficulty in translating תּוֹרָה, I have simply transliterated it here. Its all-too-common rendition as “Law” is, at best very misleading. I have argued that “Gospel” in its broad sense, doctrinally comprising both Law and Gospel, would be closer to the word’s basic sense of “teaching,” both because of its historical context and salvific intent, as expressed in the preceding verses. (CC)

This verse specifies one aspect of that Torah, which had been a major concern from chapter 40 on, namely, the separation of sacred and secular. גְּבוּל normally means “border, boundary,” but here is used in a slightly broader sense of the “territory” within the wall around the temple complex, which formed the boundary (40:5; cf. Rev 21:12–19). What is within the wall is to be regarded as “most holy.” The expression קֹ֣דֶשׁ קָדָשִׁ֔ים is similar to that for the “Holy of Holies,” the focal point of the entire sacrosanct area (see on 41:4). (CC)

There is some debate whether 43:12 should be considered a conclusion to the preceding material in the book or a heading for the following material, which is especially concerned with the worship regulations governing access to and activities within that sacred space. “This is the Torah of” (זֹאת תֹּורַת־) occurs frequently in Leviticus, both before (e.g., Lev 6:9, 14, 25) and after (e.g., Lev 7:37; 11:46) prescriptive legislation, so it is hard to make a case on formal precedents. My instinct is that it is more conclusion than introduction, but it does serve perfectly as a transition. (CC)

*The Altar*

**13 “These are the measurements of the altar in long cubits, that cubit being a cubit and a handbreadth: Its gutter is a cubit deep and a cubit wide, with a rim of one span around the edge. And this is the height of the altar:  14 From the gutter on the ground up to the lower ledge it is two cubits high and a cubit wide, and from the smaller ledge up to the larger ledge it is four cubits high and a cubit wide.  15 The altar hearth is four cubits high, and four horns project upward from the hearth.  16 The altar hearth is square, twelve cubits long and twelve cubits wide.  17 The upper ledge also is square, fourteen cubits long and fourteen cubits wide, with a rim of half a cubit and a gutter of a cubit all around. The steps of the altar face east.” 18 Then he said to me, “Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: These will be the regulations for sacrificing burnt offerings and sprinkling blood upon the altar when it is built:  19 You are to give a young bull as a sin offering to the priests, who are Levites, of the family of Zadok, who come near to minister before me, declares the Sovereign LORD.  20 You are to take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar and on the four corners of the upper ledge and all around the rim, and so purify the altar and make atonement for it.  21 You are to take the bull for the sin offering and burn it in the designated part of the temple area outside the sanctuary. 22 “On the second day you are to offer a male goat without defect for a sin offering, and the altar is to be purified as it was purified with the bull.  23 When you have finished purifying it, you are to offer a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without defect.  24 You are to offer them before the LORD, and the priests are to sprinkle salt on them and sacrifice them as a burnt offering to the LORD. 25 “For seven days you are to provide a male goat daily for a sin offering; you are also to provide a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without defect.  26 For seven days they are to make atonement for the altar and cleanse it; thus they will dedicate it.  27 At the end of these days, from the eighth day on, the priests are to present your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar. Then I will accept you, declares the Sovereign LORD.”**

**43:13-27** We noted earlier that on the measuring tour of the temple, virtually no attention had been paid to any of the temple appurtenances, with exception of passing mention of tables used for preparing the sacrifices (40:39–43); the sacrificial altar in front of the temple (40:47); and what at first appeared to be an “altar” but what the guide identified as “the table that is before Yahweh,” corresponding to the table of shewbread in the tabernacle and Solomonic temple, and anticipating the Lord’s Table—the Sacrament of Holy Communion (see on 41:22). Now in 43:13–27 the sacrificial altar is considered at length, as the priestly kitchens will be in 46:19–24. Other furniture that we might have expected based on the tabernacle and Solomonic temple, such as the lampstand and incense altar, are not mentioned in chapters 40–48. Yet most conspicuous by its absence is the ark (see on 43:7). (CC)

The rest of chapter 43 describes the new altar of burnt offering (43:13–17) and the rites attending its consecration (43:18–27). Legislation for other subjects is given in chapters 44–46. This pattern in 43:13–46:24, beginning a legal code with the altar, follows the pattern in the Torah of Moses, where legal codes are introduced by the following passages: Ex 20:24–26; Lev 17:1–9; Deut 12:1–27. (CC)

This shows that God’s primary concern is to provide his people with sacrificial atonement for the forgiveness of sins (the altar). His will for them in all other aspects of life (the subsequent legislation) depends on this forgiveness. Therefore this pattern can be compared to that in the Pauline epistles, and indeed, the pattern of the typical Lutheran sermon. First comes Law (condemnation of human sin), then Gospel (the sacrificial atonement of Christ for the forgiveness of sins), and only on the basis of that Gospel does God (or the pastor) address the shape of the believer’s life of faith (as in the OT legislation). See, for example, Law in Rom 1:18–3:23 and Galatians 1–2; Gospel in Romans 4–11 and Galatians 3–4; and the sanctified life in Romans 12–16 and Galatians 5–6. (CC)

In Ezek 43:13–27, as in the Mosaic legislation concerning the tabernacle altar, Law and Gospel are intertwined because the sacrifices (e.g., “sin offering”) presuppose the human sin for which they are offered to procure forgiveness. God did indeed bestow the forgiveness of sins upon his OT people through the sacrifices he prescribed for atonement, as affirmed by, for example, his declaration in 43:27: “I will accept/favor you.” But ultimately this forgiveness was *propter Christum*, “for Christ’s sake,” since the animals “without blemish” (תָּמִים, 43:22–23, 25; 45:18, 23; 46:4, 6, 13) were but types of Christ, the sinless Son of God, whose perfect, once-for-all sacrifice on the altar of the cross merited forgiveness for the sins of the whole world (e.g., Jn 1:29; 2 Cor 5:21; the theme of Hebrews 3–10). (CC)

**43:13** *altar.* Alluded to in 40:47 and here described in detail. Although the material is not mentioned, dressed stones were probably to be used. Ex 20:24–26 allowed an altar to be made of earth, but use of dressed stones for those altars was strictly forbidden (see notes on Ex 20:24–25). Solomon’s altar was bronze (1Ki 8:64). Ezekiel’s altar, much larger than Solomon’s, was over 20 feet tall, made up of three slabs of decreasing size, like a pyramid or Babylonian ziggurat: the “lower ledge” (v. 14), two cubits high; the “larger ledge” (v. 14), four cubits high; and the “altar hearth” (v. 15), four cubits high. (CSB)

**43:14** It is clear that the altar is built up in steps, but precise details are debated. Much of the difficulty here arises from עֲזָרָה (43:14, 17, 20; 45:19), another architectural term of unknown meaning. Besides its use in Ezekiel, it occurs elsewhere only in 2 Chr 4:9 and 6:13, where it appears to refer to the “court” of the temple (more or less synonymous with חָצֵר). Is the term in 2 Chr 4:9 and 6:13 the same word used here, or is it a homograph? Block concludes that the words are the same and translates it here as “wall” (because the temple courtyard was walled). He thinks of a row of uncut stones supporting the altar’s superstructure to keep it from collapsing outward from the weight of the fill inside. To the observer, this might appear as a “ledge.” But we are not informed of how the altar was constructed, and if we think of more solid blocks we might envision a plinth. In either case, the translation “ledge” seems applicable, and so it is usually translated. (CC)

**43:15** *altar hearth.*† The Hebrew for this term appears only here in the OT and may also mean “mountain of God” or “lion of God”; it is a variant of a form that appears as “Ariel” in Isa 29:1–2. (CSB)

*four horns.* Stone projections from each of the four corners of the altar hearth. On earlier altars they afforded a refuge of last resort for an accused person (see Ex 21:12–14; 1Ki 1:50–51; 2:28–29). (CSB)

These projections at the four corners were apparently an intrinsic part of an altar (see, e.g., Ex 27:1–2; 30:1–3; Rev 9:13), as can be amply demonstrated from altars found by archaeologists. But neither Scripture nor archaeology has explained their significance. Several places in the Pentateuch, Yahweh commands the (high) priest to smear the blood of a sacrifice on the horns of both the incense altar (e.g., Lev 4:7, 18) and the altar of burnt offering (e.g., Ex 29:12; Lev 4:25; 16:18), but that does not suffice as a basis for any comprehensive statement of the significance of the horns. The NT does connect “horn(s)” with Jesus Christ and salvation, perhaps as a symbol of strength and victory. Zechariah, in his Benedictus, praises God for raising up in the coming Messiah “a horn of salvation” (Lk 1:69, alluding to 2 Sam 22:3 || Ps 18:2), and the apostle John sees the exalted Christ as a lamb with seven horns (Rev 5:6). (CC)

**43:16** With this verse, the description reverses direction and moves from top to bottom, beginning with the hearth that was discussed in 43:15. Instead joining the measurement of its length to that of its width with a *waw* or asyndetically, the preposition בְּ is used (here on בִּשְׁתֵּ֥ים) in the sense of “(length) by (width),” as again in 43:17. The last phrase, אֶ֖ל אַרְבַּ֥עַת רְבָעָֽיורָב֕וּעַ, is, literally, “a square to four of its four sides.” רָב֕וּעַ is the masculine Qal passive participle of רָבַע, also used of both the “square” altar of burnt offering (Ex 27:1) and altar of incense (Ex 30:2) connected with the tabernacle. A feminine form of the word was in 41:21. In Ezekiel the cognate noun רֶבַע is always plural, referring to “four sides,” and always is preceded by אַרְבַּעַת (1:8, 17; 10:11; 43:16–17). If one looked down on the top of the altar from above, one would see a square twelve cubits by twelve cubits. (CC)

**43:17** *steps of the altar.* Forbidden in Ex 20:26 but here required because of the size (see note on v. 13). (CSB)

The measurements of the altar indicate that it was relatively large, as also does the necessity for an ascent or stairs to reach its hearth. The total height of Ezekiel’s altar from the bottom of the gutter to the top of its hearth was eleven and a half cubits: a cubit and a half for the gutter and its ridge (43:13); two cubits for the lower ledge (43:14); four cubits for the upper ledge (43:14); and four cubits for the hearth (43:15), that is, about nineteen and a half feet or almost six meters. The tabernacle altar was three cubits high (Ex 27:1), and the height of the Solomonic altar was ten cubits (2 Chr 4:1); however, those measurements were probably by the ordinary cubit rather than the long cubit being used in Ezekiel. If Josephus is correct (and he generally is, wherever he can be checked) the Herodian altar was higher still at fifteen cubits. (CC)

FACE EAST – The concern that the ascent faced east was obviously intended to make sure that when the priest offered sacrifice, he faced west, toward Yahweh “incarnate” in the temple. If the ascent were on the west, then the priest would have faced east, in the direction of pagan worship of the sun god, with his back toward Yahweh—the posture of the apostate worshipers in 8:16. ((CC)

**43:18** *burnt offerings.* See note on 40:39. (CSB)

*sprinkling blood.* See Ex 29:16; Lev 4:6; 5:9. (CSB)

Only two main activities that would be performed at the altar after its consecration are mentioned as representative of all of them: (1) the offering on it of עוֹלָה, “burnt offering” (as in, e.g., Leviticus 1), and “sprinkling blood on it,” which was done, using זָרַק (the same verb used here), in connection with the burnt offerings (e.g., Lev 1:3–5), and (2) the communion offerings (e.g., Lev 3:1–2), and using the synonym נָזָה, in connection with the sin offering (Lev 5:9). Ezekiel could assume that his audience was familiar enough with the rituals from the Torah for the kinds of sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood (Leviticus 1–7) that there was no need to detail them here. (CC)

“Sprinkling blood” as an expression for sacrificial atonement finds its fulfillment in the NT, which speaks of the “sprinkling” of Christ’s atoning blood on believers (1 Pet 1:2). See further the commentary on Ezek 36:25, which has the same verb, זָרַק, “sprinkle.” (CC)

**43:19** YOUNG BULL – פַּ֥ר by itself means “young bull.” The appositional construct phrase בֶּן־בָּקָ֖ר, literally, “a son of a herd,” is added here (also in 43:23, 25; 45:18; 46:6) and commonly in the Pentateuch. The phrase is redundant and hence commonly not translated, but it adds specificity, making it harder to misunderstand exactly what animals are to be used for sacrifice. בָּקָר distinguishes a “herd” of (large) cattle from צֹאן, a “flock” of (smaller) sheep or goats, which were used in other sacrifices. (CC)

*sin offering.* To cleanse the altar from the pollution of human sin (see note on 40:39). (CSB)

This initial offering should be a חַטָּאת, a “sin offering.” The noun is derived from the Piel form of the common verb for “to sin,” חָטָא. A privative Piel (וְחִטֵּאתָ֥ in 43:20) means to “de-sin, take away sin, free from the effects of sin.” Precisely how an inanimate object like an altar could “sin” and thus have need for priests to “absolve it and make atonement for it” (43:20; see the following note) probably defies rational explanation. (CC)

In fact, at no point does the OT give us any detailed theological explanation of how any animal sacrifice “worked” except in the general sense of substitutionary atonement—an animal “without blemish” (43:22–23, 25) dying in the place of the blemished sinner—and also transfer of sin to the animal, as by the laying on of hands. The NT expounds the sacrificial death of Jesus as the substitutionary atonement by the sinless Son, to whom our sins were transferred, and whose righteousness is imputed to us through faith (e.g., Jn 1:29; Rom 3:25–5:21; 2 Cor 5:21). It is in light of the NT fulfillment in Christ that we can understand how forgiveness, righteousness, and everlasting life were mediated to OT believers through the OT sacrifices instituted by God as types of Christ’s perfect, all-availing sacrifice. By God’s Word and provision in the OT era, animal sacrifice simply was the divinely appointed “sacrament” for the forgiveness of sins. In that respect it can be compared with the Christian Sacraments, where God employs inanimate means—water, bread, and wine—to bestow forgiveness and salvation according to his Word and institution. (CC)

The Bible presents a comprehensive picture of the results of the fall into sin, by which death and decay spread throughout “the whole creation” (Rom 8:22), affecting even the inanimate parts of creation. Likewise, the psalmic language of trees and mountains rejoicing at the Lord (Ps 96:12; 148:9) is not to be dismissed as simply pretty poetry. The well-known Christmas hymn “Joy to the World” well develops the theme with its refrain, “heav’n and *nature* sing.” With regard to the altar and other appointments of the Mosaic tabernacle and Solomonic temple that needed consecration, perhaps the most we can say is that they became impure or unclean by human contact. While the temple and altar in Ezekiel 40–48 are not made by any human hands, the language and indeed the necessity of consecration seems nevertheless to be drawn from those predecessors that were constructed by people. (CC)

The Bible, of course, specifies certain human acts that defile or are sinful, but the basic problem is the sin manifested in such discrete sins. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, man is a sinn*er*; by his fallen nature, he “cannot not sin” (*non posse non peccare*). Redemption comes only through the sinless Son of God, true man and true God, who, by virtue of his divine nature, “was not able to sin” (*non posse peccare*). He lived a life of perfect obedience, culminating in his death on the cross to atone for the sins of all humanity and in his glorious resurrection, thus leading the way for our salvation (Col 1:18). (CC)

*of the family of Zadok.* See note on 44:15. (CSB)

“The Levitical priests” translates הַכֹּהֲנִ֣ים הַלְוִיִּ֡ם, literally, “the priests, the Levites.” All of the legitimate priests were sons of Aaron, within the tribe of Levi. However, as in 40:46, here again Yahweh further limits the rolls of eligibility by specifying that the priests must be Zadokites, descendants of Aaron’s son Eleazar, and not descendants of the other son, Ithamar. This concern will be elaborated upon in 44:9–16. (CC)

The adjective קָרוֹב in 42:13 and 43:19 describes the sons of Zadok as those “who draw near, approach God for liturgical service,” the same meaning that the participle קָרֵב has in 40:46 and 45:4, and that the Qal finite verb has in 44:15–16. Here the adjective is defined more specifically by the later purpose clause לְשָֽׁרְתֵ֑נִי, the Piel infinitive construct of שָׁרַת with suffix, “to serve me.” (In 20:40 and often elsewhere in the OT, the more general verb עָבַד, “serve,” can be used for divine service.) Inserted between the adjective and the infinitive is the signatory formula, נְאֻ֛ם אֲדֹנָ֥י יְהוִ֖ה, “says Lord Yahweh,” apparently to underscore the gravity of drawing “near” to Yahweh in this ceremony, and to remind the officiants of the importance of performing it properly. (CC)

**43:20** The importance of blood in virtually all the Israelite sacrifices (except the grain offering) is in full display in this verse. Again, the OT gives no theoretical explanation of how the actions accomplished the desired result. The closest we ever come is in the pivotal Lev 17:11, which associates blood with life. In any event, the revelation of the fulfillment in Christ again is the basis for understanding the OT preparation. The NT expounds the supreme value of the shed blood of Jesus Christ in earning for us the forgiveness of sins and everlasting salvation (e.g., Mt 26:28; Jn 6:53–56; 1 Pet 1:18–19; 1 Jn 1:7). (CC)

Ordinary objects in the fallen world can be deemed unclean by contact with unclean people (e.g., Lev 14:33–15:26). “Uncleanness” is a near synonym to “sin,” and unclean objects need restoration to the unpolluted, undefiled state in which God had originally created the world. (CC)

Two Piel verbs (both second masculine singular perfect with *waw* consecutive) commonly used in contexts of forgiveness are used here, translated “absolve” and “make atonement for.” They differ only in nuance. (CC)

The first, וְחִטֵּאתָ֥, is the privative Piel חִטֵּא, literally, “to remove sin.” For the same reasons we rejected “purification offering” as an adequate rendering of חַטָּאת in 43:19 in favor of the traditional “sin offering,” “purify” is not the appropriate translation for the removal of sin. Some verb like “absolve” seems necessary. חִטֵּא was used for the consecration of the tabernacle altar already in Ex 29:36 and Lev 8:15. (In Lev 14:49, 52 it was used in conjunction with the removal of “leprosy” from a house.) In 45:18 Ezekiel will use it for consecration of the sanctuary. (CC)

The second is וְכִפַּרְתָּֽהוּ (for the form of its third masculine singular suffix. כִּפֵּר was used in 16:63 in God’s promise that he would “make atonement” for all the sins of the woman representing Jerusalem (see the textual note and commentary there). In the OT it appears overwhelmingly in liturgical contexts. There has been much debate about its etymological sense (never a definitive argument), but it now seems fairly certain that it is related to the Akkadian *kapāru*, “to wipe/rub off,” that is, “to purify liturgically.” Its association with טִהַר, “cleanse,” in 43:26 indicates that a purgative sense is present here too. כִּפֵּר can refer to paying a ransom to atone for a crime or avert death, and that implication of a ransom payment remains prominent in theological contexts. The “ransom” here is obviously the blood or life of the bull. This verb too was used for the consecration of the tabernacle altar (Ex 29:36–37; Lev 8:15). How important the root is in the total theological expression of the meaning of temple and sacrifice is seen in the noun כַּפֹּרֶת, “mercy seat,” referring to the lid of the ark (Ex 25:17), the throne of the “incarnate” Yahweh (e.g., 1 Sam 4:4), who finally effected the plenary atonement for all in the person of his incarnate Son. The root’s importance can also be seen in “the Day of *Atonement* [כִּפֻּרִים]” (Lev 23:27–28; 25:9; see also Leviticus 16), the climax and summation of all OT atonement rituals. (CC)

The importance of כִּפֵּר and its cognates in the OT is continued and Christologized in the NT. It is Jesus Christ who offers his life as “the ransom [the noun λύτρον] for many” (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45). See also the verb λυτρόω, “to ransom,” in its contexts in Lk 24:21; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 1:18. The LXX of Ezek 43:20 renders וְכִפַּרְתָּֽהוּ by the compound verb (and object pronoun) ἐξιλάσονταιαὑτό. The cognate noun ἱλαστήριον (used elsewhere in the LXX for כַּפֹּרֶת, the “mercy seat” or lid of the ark) is used in this verse (as in 43:14, 17) for עֲזָרָה, a “ledge” on the altar. The NT uses ἱλαστήριον for both the “mercy seat” (Heb 9:5) and for Christ himself, who is our source of “*propitiation/expiation* through faith in his blood” (Rom 3:25). The shedding of Christ’s blood is expressly that which pays for the sins of the world. See also the NT’s use of the cognate noun ἱλασμός, which involves “propitiation” (appeasing God’s wrath) and “expiation” (making satisfaction for guilt and offenses), both of which are included in “atonement”: Christ himself is “the ἱλασμός for our sins” (1 Jn 2:2; 4:10). Throughout the NT and the church’s kerugma, the vicarious atonement of Christ remains the core of the Gospel. (CC)

**43:21** BURN IT – The singular verb וּשְׂרָפוֹ֨ (“and he is to burn it”) has no express subject. In Lev 4:10–12, 20–21, the task of burning the animal is assigned to the priest who offers the sacrifice, but in the corresponding rite on the Day of Atonement, Lev 16:27–28 assigns that role to an unidentified person, rather than to a priest. In the complete ritual for a sin offering, a detailed blood ceremony would be performed (beyond what is mentioned in Ezek 43:20), and the inner fat or suet of the animal would first be burned on the altar (see, e.g., Ex 29:10–14; Lev 4:3–12), but it is not Ezekiel’s purpose to give a detailed account. Whether the sin offering was for the priest himself or for the entire congregation, the carcass of the animal would be burned “outside the camp” (Lev 4:12, 21; see also Ex 29:14; Lev 8:17; 9:11; 16:27). The Christological application is made in Heb 13:12 to the atoning death of Christ just outside Jerusalem: “Therefore also Jesus, so that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered outside the gate.” (CC)

*outside the sanctuary.* As prescribed in Ex 29:14; Lev 4:12, 21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27. This action foreshadows one aspect of Christ’s sacrifice (see Heb 13:11–13). (CSB)

In Ezekiel’s vision, the burning is to take place בְּמִפְקַ֣ד הַבַּ֔יִת מִח֖וּץ לַמִּקְרָּֽשׁ, “in the appointed place of the temple area, outside the sanctuary.” Usually מִפְקָד is translated as “appointed/designated place” based on its verbal root, פָּקַד, “appoint, designate.” The word is attested in Phoenician and used four other times in the OT, but none of them help us here. We have no way of determining exactly where it would be. בַּיִת must be used in its extended sense of the entire “temple area,” not just the temple itself (as בַּיִת often means in chapters 40–48), since the following phrase is “outside the sanctuary,” that is, outside the temple itself. (CC)

**43:22** MALE GOAT – This ritual of using a male goat as another sin offering on the second day is unparalleled, unless one adduces the ritual for the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), when Aaron (or the later high priest) first sacrifices a bull for himself (Lev 16:11) and then (on the same day) a goat for the people (Lev 16:15). Ezek 43:22 specifies that this goat must be תָּמִים, “unblemished, without defect,” as also are the animals in 43:23, 25. This is a general requirement for all sacrificial animals (e.g., Ex 29:1; Lev 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6, 9), although it was not mentioned for the bull in Ezek 43:19. (CC)

Somewhat similar to פַּ֥ר בֶּן־בָּקָ֖ר in 43:19 (literally, “a bull, a son of a herd”) is שְׂעִיר־עִזִּ֥ים, literally, “a he-goat of the goats,” translated “a male goat.” שָׂעִיר alone means “male goat,” and עֵז alone can mean “goat,” but very often one meets the idiomatic construct phraseשְׂעִיר־עִזִּים found here, with the redundant עִזִּים, the plural of עֵז. The noun שָׂעִיר specifies maleness more clearly than עֵז because there is a feminine counterpart, שְׂעִירָה, “female goat” (Lev 4:28; 5:6). In absence of directions to the contrary, we may assume that the same ceremony was used with the goat as with the bull in Ezek 43:19–21. (CC)

*purified.* By the sprinkling of the blood (see v. 20). (CSB)

The repeated privative Piel perfect verb חִטְּא֖וּ …וְחִטְּאוּ֨ in 43:22b is the third person plural, literally, “they shall absolve the altar just as they absolved with the bull,” whereas its second person singular (וְחִטֵּאתָ֥) was used in 43:20. Since 43:22 does not state the subject of these verbs, I have followed others in paraphrasing the impersonal plurals as passives, the altar is “absolved.” Person and number fluctuate throughout this section. Probably the inconsistency is the result of a plurality of agents involving both the prophet and priests, but we cannot achieve further clarity, except in 43:24b and 43:27b, which specify priests. (CC)

**43:23-26** After the two sin offerings required in 43:19–22 are “finished” (43:23), another young bull and also a different animal, a ram, are to be offered as a different type of sacrifice—a burnt offering. Ezek 43:25–26 is as explicit as can be in describing a full week (seven days, with daily sacrifices) as basically a unitary consecration ceremony. All the sacrifices (the bull and goat for sin offerings in 43:19–22 and the bull and ram for a burnt offering in 43:23–24) are to be offered on each of the seven days. While 43:19–22 had specified that a bull was to be sacrificed on the first day and then a ram on the second day, that apparently was merely a sequential description of the order of those two sin offerings, which are to be offered on each of the seven days. (CC)

**43:23** The first two finite verbs in these verses are second masculine singular, followed by two third common plural perfect verbs. The Piel infinitive constructs of כָּלָה “finish,” and חָטָא, “absolve” (see on 43:20, 22), בְּכַלּוֹתְךָ֖ מֵֽחַטֵּ֑א, are, literally, “when you finish from absolving.” The same kind of redundancy used for the bull in 43:19, 23 and the male goat in 43:22 is used in 43:23 in describing the ram. וְאַ֥יִל מִן־הַצֹּ֖אן is, literally, “a ram from the flock,” but is translated simply as “a ram.” אַיִל, “ram, male sheep,” needs no further description, but is often followed, as here, by צֹאן, “flock,” the counterpart to בָּקָר (“herd”) after פַּר in 43:19, 23, 25. (CC)

**43:24** SPRINKLE SALT – The new element in this verse is the mention of “salt” (מֶלַח), which the priests are to “throw” (וְהִשְׁלִ֨יכוּ) on the burnt offering. Here “the priests” (הַכֹּהֲנִ֤ים) are specified as the subjects. The plural verbs earlier in 43:22b imply that the priests would have done some of the previous actions, even though most of 43:18–27 is spoken to Ezekiel (“you”) as if he were to perform the actions himself. Leviticus says nothing about the addition of salt to burnt offerings, although Lev 2:13 does command the addition of salt to the grain offerings and to every קָרְבָּן (a very general word for “sacrifice”), which makes it likely that salt was added to many, if not all, types of sacrifice. Lev 2:13 describes it as “the salt of the covenant of your God,” anticipating the phrase “covenant of salt” in Num 18:19 and 2 Chr 13:5, which emphasize the perpetuity of the covenant relationship. The purifying and preservative qualities of salt made it an appropriate symbol of the covenant and hence an addition to covenant sacrifices. The Hiphil verb וְהִשְׁלִ֨יכוּ, “they are to throw,” in Ezek 43:24 (versus, e.g., זָרַק, “sprinkle,” in 43:18) suggests copious amounts of salt, apparently to intensify that symbolism. (CC)

**43:25** As noted about 43:22–24, the verbs in this section frequently change in person and number, although these changes are usually ignored by commentators and in translations. The first verb, תַּעֲשֶׂ֥ה, is the second masculine singular imperfect of עָשָׂה, “do, make,” which is often used of making sacrifice and so is translated, “you are to offer.” The same verb’s third person plural, יַעֲשֽׂוּ, is used at the end of the verse. Probably this does not mean that the prophet is to sacrifice the goat, while the priests are to sacrifice the bull and ram. Instead, the priests would offer all the sacrifices. (CC)

**43:26** Only here in the OT is the idiom for ordination applied to an inanimate object, the altar. For priests, the phrase seems to have arisen from the literal sense of “filling their hand” with the portions of the sacrifices that were regularly allotted to them as food, thus providing them with a “salary.” Occasionally, by extension, the phrase is used for installing other people besides priests into an office, for example, for the Levites in Ex 32:29 (with the Qal instead of the Piel) and for the whole assembly of Israel in 1 Chr 29:5 and 2 Chr 29:31. Possibly a token initial “payment” was given to priests when they assumed their office, as evidenced by the use of the phrase אֵיל־הַמִּלֻּאִים, “the ram of/for ordination,” in Ex 29:26–27, 31; Lev 8:22, 29 (and without the article in Ex 29:22). Applied to the altar, we apparently must think of a rather bold figure of speech, virtually personifying the altar and saying, in effect, that it would be sufficiently provided with sacrificial gifts that it could accomplish its divinely intended purpose. The idiom “fill the hand” (metaphorical here, since an altar has no hand) cannot be reproduced literally in English, and so, with others, I have simply used “consecrate.” This verse signals that the initiatory ceremonies are now complete. (CC)

**43:27** EIGHTH DAY – The beginning of the regular sacrificial ritual “on the eighth day and onward” (בַיּ֨וֹם הַשְּׂמִינִ֝י וָהָ֗לְאָה) is one day earlier than in the case of the tabernacle altar, where the eighth day was devoted to a detailed ceremony related to the priests’ ordination (Leviticus 9). The reason for the difference could be that Ezekiel envisions the priests as already consecrated. (cc)

“The eighth day” would be the first day of a new week. In biblical usage, this day can indicate a new creation, the start of a new era in God’s work of redemption. Thus circumcision took place on “the eighth day” (counted inclusively; Lev 12:3; see also Gen 17:12), that is, the same day as the birth, but in the next week, and circumcision marked the entrance of the infant into God’s gracious covenant and kingdom (Gen 17:9–14). The corresponding NT Sacrament is Baptism, through which one is buried and raised with Christ, so that anyone in Christ is a new creation (Rom 6:1–4; 2 Cor 5:17; Col 2:11–13). Of course, Christ’s resurrection took place on the first day of the new week (e.g., Mt 28:1), thus indicating the new era of salvation through faith in his accomplished work, and this “eighth” day, our Sunday, became the traditional “Sabbath” for Christian worship (Jn 20:19; Acts 20:7; cf. “the Lord’s day,” Rev 1:10). (cc)

*fellowship offerings.* After the seven-day consecration by burnt offerings and sin offerings, the altar was ready for the celebration of the more festive fellowship offerings where the people partook of some of the meat (see Lev 3). (CSB)

שְׁלָמִים is traditionally rendered “peace offerings,” but I prefer “communion offerings.” That seems especially appropriate here. The “burnt offering” (עוֹלָה) accented the vertical dimension, since the entire animal was burned and sent up, as it were, to God as a visible prayer (e.g., Leviticus 1). The שְׁלָמִים were the only sacrifice where a part of the meat was returned to the worshippers for them to eat as a “communion meal,” presumably on the temple precincts (e.g., Lev 7:15–16), and so it stresses the horizontal perspective of God’s people communing together with each other as well as with their Lord (cf. 1 Cor 10:16–17; 11:27, 33–34). (CC)

ACCEPT YOU – It is an elementary matter of the distinction between Law and Gospel that רָצָה must be heard as a verb of grace, not of works. God definitively showed his favor and acceptance (Mt 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Lk 2:40, 52) toward his only Son, Jesus Christ, who offered himself as the one perfect sacrifice that made atonement for all of humanity’s sins—a theme applied in this entire section to the altar by means of the verbs חִטֵּא, “absolve” (43:20, 22–23) and כִּפֵּר, “make atonement” (43:20, 26). On the basis of that sacrifice, and because of the merits of Christ himself, God accepts (Rom 15:7) and looks with favor (Lk 4:19; 2 Cor 6:2; cf. Gal 1:10; 1 Pet 2:19–20) upon all believers in Christ, who are justified through faith alone, and who, like Abraham (Gen 15:6), do not simply follow laws or customs, but offer to him the “obedience of *faith*” (Rom 1:5; 16:26; see also Romans 4). (cc)