

EZEKIEL

Chapter 40

Vision of the New Temple

In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me to the city. 2 In visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south. 3 When he brought me there, behold, there was a man whose appearance was like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand. And he was standing in the gateway. 4 And the man said to me, “Son of man, look with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your heart upon all that I shall show you, for you were brought here in order that I might show it to you. Declare all that you see to the house of Israel.”

Chs 40–48 The Lord shows Ezekiel a vision of fulfillment regarding the things he had proclaimed in chs 33–39. The difficult Hbr text adds to the mysterious character of the prophecies. Because Ezekiel was to declare all he saw in the vision to his immediate audience, he describes the coming covenant of peace in terms of the old covenant (its worship, its ordinances governing the religious and civic life, its locale in the Promised Land). But Ezekiel did not see a mirage without body or substance, or a literal blueprint for an end-times temple. We rejoice to be the benefactors of his fulfilled prophetic vision: restoration to communion with God through “the offering of the body of Jesus Christ” (Heb 10:10), “worship in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:24) as a living sacrifice, and fellowship in the Holy Christian Church, which will endure forever. When St John had a vision of what awaits us on Judgment Day, he, too, described its perfect bliss in the same figures of the old covenant we find in Ezk (Rv 21:9–22:5). (TLSB)

40:1 *twenty-fifth year ... beginning ... tenth.* Apr. 28, 573 B.C. (CSB)

God showed the vision to Ezekiel when the Jerusalem temple, destroyed for 14 years, seemed destined to remain a heap of ruins. (TLSB)

of our exile. All the dates in the book of Ezekiel are reckoned from the 597 exile, but only here and in 33:21 is the exile specifically mentioned (see 1:2). (CSB)

the beginning of the year. Hebrew *Rosh Hashanah*, the well-known Jewish New Year festival. It has long occurred in the fall (in either September or October), but since throughout the book Ezekiel uses a different and older religious calendar, the spring date as given above is correct. (CSB)

40:2 *He brought me.* As in previous instances, the “hand of the LORD” made possible prophetic flight through time and space. (TLSB)

very high mountain. Mount Zion, also seen as extraordinarily high in other prophetic visions (17:22; Isa 2:2; Mic 4:1; Zec 14:10). Height here signifies importance, as the earthly seat of God’s reign. (CSB)

like a city. The structure that appeared was of such size and complexity as to resemble not a single unit but a series of buildings that make up an entire city. Ezekiel’s report would reverse what the exiles heard when, on a previous occasion, he told the exiles all that “the LORD had shown” him (Ezk

11:25)—the Lord’s departure from Jerusalem and the burning of the city and the temple (chs 8–11). (TLSB)

city to the south. With the city located on its southern slopes, the mountain is to the north. (CSB)

40:3 *a man.* An ethereal being, appearing in human form, was to be Ezekiel’s companion on a tour of the site and its structures. The services of the angelic guide are mentioned seven times in ch 40, twice in ch 41, once in ch 43, twice in both chs 44 and 46, and four times in ch 47. The repeated references to the man connect the diverse elements of the vision. (TLSB)

like bronze. Indicates the man was other than human. (CSB)

in the gateway. Presumably of the outer court (see vv. 17–19). (CSB)

linen cord. Used for longer measurements such as those in 47:3. (CSB)

measuring reed. Used for shorter measurements—about ten feet and four inches long. (CSB)

Measurements and numerical descriptions dominate the vision. Some interpreters may be tempted to construct elaborate systems of number symbolism. Avoid such methods. First, as stated earlier, the Hbr is very difficult, and the manuscripts include variant readings, which would naturally undermine interpretations based on calculations. Second, the measurements often serve simply as practical descriptions of how the temple was laid out, a matter of special interest to a priest such as Ezekiel. Third, many figures relate to or stem from regulations in the Law of Moses (e.g., amounts for sacrifices) or from the layouts of earlier temples (see diagrams, pp 541, 544). Such figures are not intended to introduce new symbolism. Given these cautions, three observations about equality, balance, and symmetry, illustrating the orderly and harmonious character of the new Israel God will establish (e.g., all the gates are exactly the same size). This would be esp comforting to a people who experienced the destruction of their homeland and were suffering in the chaos of exile in a foreign land. On God’s order, see p 1291. Second, multiples of 10, a number associated with order and completeness, dominate the figures. Third, at times the numbers illustrate distinctions in holiness, as can be seen in the seven steps for the outer gates, the eight steps for the priests at the inner gates, and the ten steps leading into the temple proper. (TLSB)

40:1–4 Symbolism forms the basis for the rest of Ezk. Already God has promised to deliver His people from captivity He now describes an even greater deliverance through His promised Messiah. We also rejoice in God’s deliverance! God makes us the beneficiaries of His abundant grace. Through Baptism, we belong to God’s heavenly kingdom. By His precious Word and Sacraments, God holds us close to Him for all eternity. • Lord, at times we become disheartened. Grant us eyes of faith to see the blessings and the future You prepare for us in Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

The East Gate to the Outer Court

5 And behold, there was a wall all around the outside of the temple area, and the length of the measuring reed in the man's hand was six long cubits, each being a cubit and a handbreadth in length. So he measured the thickness of the wall, one reed; and the height, one reed. **6** Then he went into the gateway facing east, going up its steps, and measured the threshold of the gate, one reed deep. **7** And the side rooms, one reed long and one reed broad; and the space between the side rooms, five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the vestibule of the gate at the inner end, one reed. **8** Then he measured the vestibule of the gateway, on the inside, one reed. **9** Then he measured the vestibule of the gateway, eight cubits; and its jambs, two cubits; and the vestibule of the gate was at the inner end. **10** And there were three side rooms on either side of the east gate. The three were of the same size, and the jambs on either side were of the same size. **11** Then he measured the

width of the opening of the gateway, ten cubits; and the length of the gateway, thirteen cubits. 12 There was a barrier before the side rooms, one cubit on either side. And the side rooms were six cubits on either side. 13 Then he measured the gate from the ceiling of the one side room to the ceiling of the other, a breadth of twenty-five cubits; the openings faced each other. 14 He measured also the vestibule, sixty cubits. And around the vestibule of the gateway was the court. 15 From the front of the gate at the entrance to the front of the inner vestibule of the gate was fifty cubits. 16 And the gateway had windows all around, narrowing inwards toward the side rooms and toward their jambs, and likewise the vestibule had windows all around inside, and on the jambs were palm trees.

40:5–16 The man with a measuring reed began to provide specific dimensions of the various structural elements. The profusion of figures may discourage some readers, but the specifications remind us that our worship dare never be slovenly, disorderly, or haphazard. Detailed as the measurements are, they are not complete enough to serve as an architect's blueprint. (E.g., such details as the height of the structure and the material to be used are not given.) Instead, Ezekiel sees an existing, complete temple. There is symmetry throughout, symbolizing the perfection required of a holy habitation of the Lord. (TLSB)

40:5 *wall all around the outside of the temple area.* Separating the sacred from the secular. (CSB)

The wall surrounding the temple was not designed to protect but to distinguish it from the profane world all around it. (TLSB)

temple area. Outer court. (TLSB)

six long cubits. In using the long cubit (seven handbreadths, or about 21 inches), which was older than the shorter cubit (six handbreadths, or about 18 inches), Ezekiel was returning to more ancient standards for the new community (see 2Ch 3:3). (CSB)

Israelites had different cubit measurements. Ezekiel's guide uses a cubit equal to seven handbreadths, rather than the typical six, possibly because of the numerical symbolism for seven. (TLSB)

40:6 *gateway facing east.* The gate of the outer court. The three gates (east, north, south) of the outer court were similar to the three in the inner court (v. 32), having six alcoves for the guards (three on each side) and a portico (vv. 8–9). Comparable gate plans have been discovered at Megiddo, Gezer and Hazor, all dating from the time of Solomon (see 1Ki 9:15). The guards kept out anyone who might profane the temple area (see Ezr 2:62). (CSB)

going up its steps. The first of three sets of stairs leading to the temple. This one had seven steps (v. 22); the next one (inner court), eight (v. 31); the last (temple), ten— possibly indicating increasing degrees of “holiness” (sacredness). (CSB)

Another device to impress the worshiper that he is approaching the transcendent Lord are the series of steps leading to ever higher levels (cf vv 31, 49). There were also steps rising to the top of the altar (43:17). (TLSB)

threshold of the gate, one reed deep. Going up the first of these stairways, Ezekiel was led through a huge gateway in the eastern wall. As he walked across the threshold, he saw rooms on either side of the massive entrance. In these rectangular niches, separated from the passageway by barriers (perhaps low walls), the temple guards stood watch. (TLSB)

40:7 *side rooms*. Guardrooms within the gates. Before emerging into the outer court, he passed through a vestibule with jambs or decorative pillars. (TLSB)

40:8 *vestibule of the gateway*. The main “room” that forms the gateway. (TLSB)

40:9 *vestibule of the gateway*. The reverse position of the porticoes of the inner court gates, which faced away from the temple (v. 34). (CSB)

jambs. Or, “gateposts.” (TLSB)

inner end. Standing within the city walls. (TLSB)

40:10 *three side rooms*. The alcoves for the guards, mentioned in v. 7. (CSB)

40:11 *width ... and the length of the gateway*. Exactly which proportions of the gateway are being measured is not clear. (TLSB)

40:12 *barrier*. Or, “boundary.” Perhaps a small wall. (TLSB)

40:13 Inside the gateway, rooms stood on either side. (TLSB)

40:14 *vestibule, twenty cubits*. Cf vv 8–9. *court*. Outer court (see point D, p 1379). He is measuring beside the inner portion of the east gate. (TLSB)

40:16 *windows all around, narrowing inwards*. A common design for military purposes, allowing the person inside maximum view of the outside with minimum exposure to those who might shoot at him. (TLSB)

palm trees. As in Solomon’s temple (see 1Ki 6:29, 32, 35). (CSB)

on the jambs were palm trees. A favored decorative element. (TLSB)

40:5–16 Ezekiel begins his temple tour and sees the exacting standards by which God measures man. Because God holds us to His standards, we find ourselves woefully inadequate. Yet, God graciously covers our inadequacies with Christ’s blood and makes us partakers of His holiness. • Lord, have mercy on us. We are sinful and unclean. Wash us in the blood of the Lamb; make us wholly Yours. Amen. (TLSB)

The Outer Court

17 Then he brought me into the outer court. And behold, there were chambers and a pavement, all around the court. Thirty chambers faced the pavement. 18 And the pavement ran along the side of the gates, corresponding to the length of the gates. This was the lower pavement. 19 Then he measured the distance from the inner front of the lower gate to the outer front of the inner court, a hundred cubits on the east side and on the north side.

40:17 *outer court*. The temple rooms faced a pavement that, while higher than the ground outside the gate, was lower than the surface of the inner court (vv 18–19). (TLSB)

thirty chambers. The exact location of these rooms is not given. They were probably intended for the people’s use (see Jer 35:2, 4). (CSB)

Probably designed for Gentile worshipers. (TLSB)

40:19 *hundred cubits.* Over 170 feet separated the outer wall from the inner wall and was the width of the outer court. (CSB)

40:17–19 Ezekiel’s tour guide meticulously measures the outer court of the new temple. Traditionally, Gentiles could pass no farther than the outer court, while Israelites could pass farther. By the blood of Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, all may enter God’s presence (Heb 9:11–14). • Lord, fill us with the marvel, the wonder, and the joy of an eternity spent in Your presence. Amen. (TLSB)

The North Gate

20 As for the gate that faced toward the north, belonging to the outer court, he measured its length and its breadth. **21** Its side rooms, three on either side, and its jambs and its vestibule were of the same size as those of the first gate. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. **22** And its windows, its vestibule, and its palm trees were of the same size as those of the gate that faced toward the east. And by seven steps people would go up to it, and find its vestibule before them. **23** And opposite the gate on the north, as on the east, was a gate to the inner court. And he measured from gate to gate, a hundred cubits.

40:20 *gate facing north.* Both it and the south gate (v. 24) were identical to the east gate. (CSB)

On the north and the south sides, access could be gained to the court through gateways similar to the east gate Ezekiel had entered. (TLSB)

40:21 *same size as those of the first gate.* Cf vv 5–16. (TLSB)

The South Gate

24 And he led me toward the south, and behold, there was a gate on the south. And he measured its jambs and its vestibule; they had the same size as the others. **25** Both it and its vestibule had windows all around, like the windows of the others. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. **26** And there were seven steps leading up to it, and its vestibule was before them, and it had palm trees on its jambs, one on either side. **27** And there was a gate on the south of the inner court. And he measured from gate to gate toward the south, a hundred cubits.

40:20–27 Ezekiel learns about two more gates. The measurements for them are exactly the same as for the east gate. People from every direction, tribe, and nation will flow into God’s presence. Thank God that He did not leave us in our sin, but provided the means of our perfection through Jesus Christ. • Lord, You are perfect. We are sinners. Grant that we may dwell with You because You covered our sin with Christ’s righteousness. Amen. (TLSB)

The Inner Court

28 Then he brought me to the inner court through the south gate, and he measured the south gate. It was of the same size as the others. **29** Its side rooms, its jambs, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others, and both it and its vestibule had windows all around. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. **30** And there were vestibules all around, twenty-five cubits long and five cubits broad. **31** Its vestibule faced the outer court, and palm trees were on its jambs, and its stairway had eight steps. **32** Then he brought me to the inner court on the east side, and he measured the gate. It was of the same size as the others. **33** Its side rooms, its jambs, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others, and both it and its vestibule had windows all around. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. **34** Its vestibule faced the outer court, and it had palm trees on its jambs, on either side, and its stairway had eight steps. **35** Then he brought me to the north gate, and he measured it. It had the same size as the others. **36** Its side rooms, its jambs, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others, and it had windows all

around. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. 37 Its vestibule faced the outer court, and it had palm trees on its jambs, on either side, and its stairway had eight steps. 38 There was a chamber with its door in the vestibule of the gate, where the burnt offering was to be washed. 39 And in the vestibule of the gate were two tables on either side, on which the burnt offering and the sin offering and the guilt offering were to be slaughtered. 40 And off to the side, on the outside as one goes up to the entrance of the north gate, were two tables; and off to the other side of the vestibule of the gate were two tables. 41 Four tables were on either side of the gate, eight tables, on which to slaughter. 42 And there were four tables of hewn stone for the burnt offering, a cubit and a half long, and a cubit and a half broad, and one cubit high, on which the instruments were to be laid with which the burnt offerings and the sacrifices were slaughtered. 43 And hooks, a handbreadth long, were fastened all around within. And on the tables the flesh of the offering was to be laid.

40:28 *south gate.* Of the inner wall, which is not described but must be assumed. (CSB)

Continuing up a flight of steps and through another gateway in a wall, Ezekiel stepped into an inner court. This entrance, directly opposite the one through the outer wall, was duplicated on the north and the south sides (vv 28–37). (TLSB)

it was of same size as the others. In both the outer walls. (CSB)

40:31 *vestibule faced the outer court.* The inner gates stand within the larger court rather than within the walls to which they provide access. (TLSB)

its stairway had eight steps. A new point of symbolism, eight representing a new beginning. (TLSB)

40:32 *same size.* Dimensions provided in vv 5–16. (TLSB)

40:38 *vestibule of the gate.* The porticoes of the inner gateways were on the side of the outer court, facing away from the temple. (CSB)

washed. The inner parts and the legs were washed (Lev 1:9). (CSB)

40:39 *burnt offerings.*† The entire animal was burned in consecration to God (see Lev 1). (CSB)

sin offerings and guilt offerings.† Discussed in Lev 4–7. The fellowship offerings are notable by their absence from this listing (see 43:27; 45:17; 46:2, 12). (CSB)

40:41 *eight tables, on which to slaughter.* For the inner court, 12 tables were needed for the preparation of the sacrifices (vv 38–43). (TLSB)

40:42 *tables ... instruments.* Needed for butchering. (TLSB)

40:43 *hooks.* Meat hooks. (TLSB)

40:28–43 In the inner courtyard, Ezekiel saw the 12 tables used for the preparation of the burnt offerings, sin offerings, and guilt offerings before the Lord (vv 38–43). These sacrifices proclaimed the atonement fulfilled when Jesus Christ “offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins” (Heb 10:12). • We praise You, Lord, that Your ancient sacrifices pointed to a great reversal—Christ’s sinless life in exchange for our sinful lives. Amen. (TLSB)

Chambers for the Priests

44 On the outside of the inner gateway there were two chambers in the inner court, one at the side of the north gate facing south, the other at the side of the south gate facing north. 45 And he said to me, “This chamber that faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple, 46 and the chamber that faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar. These are the sons of Zadok, who alone among the sons of Levi may come near to the LORD to minister to him.” 47 And he measured the court, a hundred cubits long and a hundred cubits broad, a square. And the altar was in front of the temple.

40:44 Along the north and the south walls, he observed rooms reserved for the officiating priests. In the very center of this court stood an altar described in 43:13–17. (TLSB)

40:45 *priests who have charge of the temple.* Descendants of Aaron, but not of Zadok, this group of priests served as guardians and managers. (TLSB)

40:46 *sons of Zadok.* † For the distinction between the sons of Zadok and the Levites see the fuller discussion in the notes on 44:15–31. Note that no high priest is mentioned because the worshipers are reconciled to God by that High Priest who “entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb 9:12). (CSB)

The most holy group of Aaron’s descendants. Cf 44:15–31. (TLSB)

40:47 *altar.* Described in 43:13–17. (CSB)

hundred cubits. Equal to the distance from an outer gate to an inner gate. (TLSB)

The Vestibule of the Temple

48 Then he brought me to the vestibule of the temple and measured the jambs of the vestibule, five cubits on either side. And the breadth of the gate was fourteen cubits, and the sidewalls of the gate were three cubits on either side. 49 The length of the vestibule was twenty cubits, and the breadth twelve cubits, and people would go up to it by ten steps. And there were pillars beside the jambs, one on either side.

40:48 *vestibule of the temple.* Climbing 10 more steps and passing between two pillars, Ezekiel arrived at an enclosure that served like a narthex to the temple proper. (TLSB)

40:49 *ten steps.* The number of steps has increased compared to those for the gates. (TLSB)

pillars. Called Jakin and Boaz in Solomon’s temple (see 1Ki 7:21). (CSB)

40:44–49 Ezekiel records the final figures that describe the chambers and the vestibule located in the inner court. He notes how holy the place is by mentioning that only the sons of Zadok could approach and minister there. How marvelous then is our salvation, which makes us a holy priesthood through Baptism and permits us to approach God’s throne of grace! • Hallow all our service, dear Savior, that we may minister with joy in Your presence. Amen. (TLSB)