

EZEKIEL

Chapter 43

The Glory of the LORD Fills the Temple

Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. 2 And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. 3 And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. 4 As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, 5 the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. 6 While the man was standing beside me, I heard one speaking to me out of the temple, 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 people of Israel forever. And the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoring and by the dead bodies of their kings at their high places, 8 by setting their threshold by my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them. They have defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed, so I have consumed them in my anger. 9 Now let them put away their whoring and the dead bodies of their kings far from me, and I will dwell in their midst forever. 10 “As for you, son of man, describe to the house of Israel the temple, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and they shall measure the plan. 11 And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the temple, its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, that is, its whole design; and make known to them as well all its statutes and its whole design and all its laws, and write it down in their sight, so that they may observe all its laws and all its statutes and carry them out. 12 This is the law of the temple: the whole territory on the top of the mountain all around shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the temple.

43:1–12 Sanctuary described in chs 40–42 is deemed worthy of God’s presence. Through the gate facing east, through which Ezekiel was guided into the temple complex (40:5–19), he now would see “the glory of the God of Israel” enter and fill the temple. (TLSB)

43:2 *behold 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)

sound of many 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 earth shone with its glory. God’s visible glory is always described as being very bright (see 10:4; Lk 2:9; Rev 21:11, 23). (CSB)

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

43:5 *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)

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 *the man was standing.* God, but out of reverence not named here, preserving an air of awe and mystery. (CSB)

God had returned and would dwell in it forever. However, it must remain undefiled (vv 7–9; cf 1Ki 6:13; 8:10–13, 27; Ps 99:5; 132:7; Jer 3:17; 17:12). (TLSB)

43:7 *whoring.* The word can stand either for the sacred prostitution in the Canaanite religion (Baalism) or for spiritual apostasy from true worship of the Lord. (CSB)

dead bodies.† Fourteen kings of Judah were buried in Jerusalem, possibly near the temple area (see 2Ki 21:18, 26; 23:30). (CSB)

Two ways are cited in which the temple, now lying in ruins, had forfeited God's presence and protection: (1) The people were guilty of idolatry, often described as marital unfaithfulness (Is 54:5–6; Jer 3:6; Hos 2:2; cf 2Ki 23:6–7). (2) Kings contaminated the temple when they were buried too near to the holy precincts and when they erected secular structures with only a wall separating the profane from the holy. Cf Lv 21:1; 22:4; Nu 5:2; 6:6; 9:10; 19:16 for ceremonial uncleanness resulting from contact with the dead. (TLSB)

43:8 *their threshold by 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 have I consumed 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)

Ezekiel protests and warns against placing the palace, royal tombs, or unclean activities near the temple or even its outer wall. In the kingdom period, the palace and temple were quite close (cf 1Ki 6–7; 2Ki 11; 21:4–5). (TLSB)

43:10 *be ashamed.* No desecration was to touch any part of the entire temple area on the top of the mountain, for the whole territory was to be as inviolate as the Most Holy Place. This was the law of the temple Ezekiel was to proclaim to the house of Israel (vv 11–12). (TLSB)

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

Not a new covenant but a renewal of the covenant, which expands its holy boundaries and extends into the lives of the people (vv 10–11). (TLSB)

43:1–12 Ezekiel watched the glory of the God of Israel (v 2) enter the restored temple from the east, whence it had departed (11:22–24). God will protect His holy name and the sanctity of His dwelling place among men. One of the names for Jesus is Immanuel, "God with us"; through His Word and precious Sacraments, He continually dwells with us. Through the cross, we hear God's words, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb 13:5), a promise sealed in Christ's blood. • Almighty God, because of Christ's atoning sacrifice, we are Your dwelling place (2Co 6:16). Sanctify us, we pray. Amen. (TLSB)

The Altar

13 “These are the measurements of the altar by cubits (the cubit being a cubit and a handbreadth): its base shall be one cubit high and one cubit broad, with a rim of one span around its edge. And this shall be the height of the altar: 14 from the base on the ground to the lower ledge, two cubits, with a breadth of one cubit; and from the smaller ledge to the larger ledge, four cubits, with a breadth of one cubit; 15 and the altar hearth, four cubits; and from the altar hearth projecting upward, four horns. 16 The altar hearth shall be square, twelve cubits long by twelve broad. 17 The ledge also shall be square, fourteen cubits long by fourteen broad, with a rim around it half a cubit broad, and its base one cubit all around. The steps of the altar shall face east.” 18 And he said to me, “Son of man, thus says the Lord GOD: These are the ordinances for the altar: On the day when it is erected for offering burnt offerings upon it and for throwing blood against it, 19 you shall give to the Levitical priests of the family of Zadok, who draw near to me to minister to me, declares the Lord GOD, a bull from the herd for a sin offering. 20 And you shall take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar and on the four corners of the ledge and upon the rim all around. Thus you shall purify the altar and make atonement for it. 21 You shall also take the bull of the sin offering, and it shall be burned in the appointed place belonging to the temple, outside the sacred area. 22 And on the second day you shall offer a male goat without blemish for a sin offering; and the altar shall be purified, as it was purified with the bull. 23 When you have finished purifying it, you shall offer a bull from the herd without blemish and a ram from the flock without blemish. 24 You shall present them before the LORD, and the priests shall sprinkle salt on them and offer them up as a burnt offering to the LORD. 25 For seven days you shall provide daily a male goat for a sin offering; also, a bull from the herd and a ram from the flock, without blemish, shall be provided. 26 Seven days shall they make atonement for the altar and cleanse it, and so consecrate it. 27 And when they have completed these days, then from the eighth day onward the priests shall offer on the altar your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, and I will accept you, declares the Lord GOD.”

43:13–46:24 Ezekiel’s temple had some features in common with Solomon’s building, and the services to be rendered in it resembled the ritual prescribed in Mosaic legislation. Yet there were significant differences. These differences were not accidental, for they fit into an overall pattern Ezekiel saw like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. E.g., there is no mention of the ark of the covenant, which earlier played an indispensable part in Israel’s worship. Furthermore, as will become evident, the function of a high priest, who alone was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place and to bring the mediating offering, will no longer be necessary. For the same reason, there will no longer be a need to observe the Day of Atonement, the annual high festival when this sacrificial act was performed. (TLSB)

43:13–17 Under the old covenant, an altar was an absolute necessity. Mentioned in passing in 40:47, the altar is now described in characteristic detail. (TLSB)

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. 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)

43:15 *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)

Hbr word transliterated as “Ariel” in Is 29:1. (TLSB)

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)

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

The altar's overall structural features gave it the appearance of a symmetrical step-pyramid. The topmost level, where the sacrifice burned, rose above the base by means of squares or blocks of graduated size. The officiating priests needed steps to reach a height far enough removed from the profane earth below. Only descendants of the high priest Zadok (v 19) were to minister at the altar. (TLSB)

43:18–27 If an altar built of earthly material by sinful hands was to serve its sacred purpose, the priest was to “purify ... and make atonement for it” (v 20) by dedication rites similar to those carried out in former days (cf Lv 8; 1Ki 8:62–66). (TLSB)

43:19 *sin offering.* To cleanse the altar from the pollution of human sin. (CSB)

Levitical priests. All priests were Levites, but as ch 44 makes clear, not all Levites were priests. (TLSB)

a bull from the herd. A young, domesticated bull. (TLSB)

43:21 *outside the sacred area.* 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)

sin 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)

43:27 *burnt offerings ... peace offerings.* They symbolize the worshipers' unreserved gifts of gratitude to God and sacramental communion with Him who restored them to His favor. (TLSB)

accept you. Outward rituals, carefully and minutely prescribed for Israel's sanctuary, foreshadowed what even now constitutes service pleasing to God: a heart totally dedicated in holy obedience to Him who rescued the worshiper from death and restored him to fellowship with his Creator. (TLSB)

43:13–27 God instructs Ezekiel on the rebuilding of the altar and the sacrifices necessary to sanctify it so that God can again dwell with His people. Today, Christ's cross is your altar by which the Lord has consecrated you as His child. • Lord, keep me mindful of the sacrifice of Your dear Son for my salvation. Amen. (TLSB)