

# The Presence of God in Ezekiel

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## **Introduction:**

- I. The purpose of this paper is to examine the instances of the presence of God in the book of Ezekiel. To some, such a study may seem esoteric and impractical. Nothing could be further from the truth. Everyday decisions occur at the nexus of theology (how we view God) and philosophy (how we view the world).
- II. When the heavens were opened and Ezekiel saw visions of God, he saw the most practical and real thing anyone could see. (Ezekiel 1:1) We must attempt to see those visions after him and to aid others in doing so. This is not just an important aspect of what we do, it is the whole of what we do. It is the purpose of our existence, not as preachers, but as creatures made in the image of God!
- III. Because of the constraints of time and format we are going to focus on three passages in Ezekiel. Ezekiel 1-3, 8-11 and 40-48. There are a number of reasons for this:
  - A. These three passages form the broad strokes of the narrative development of Ezekiel's prophesy: God's presence arrives among the captives in Babylon. (1-3) God leaves the temple and calls down judgment in Jerusalem. (8-11) God restores His presence in the eschatological temple. (40-48)
  - B. Ezekiel himself links these three passages in the following ways:
    1. All three passages are dated. (Ezekiel 1:1; 8:1; 40:1)
    2. All three passages include the statement, "the hand of the Lord was on me" or some very similar formulation. (Ezekiel 1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:1; 40:1)
      - a. While the Lord's hand is seen in other capacities it is only said to be on the prophet two times outside of these passages. (Ezekiel 33:22; 37:1) Interestingly both of these passages also revolve around divine visitation.
    3. At the beginning of each of these passages a statement is made about visions of God. (Ezekiel 1:1; 8:3; 40:2) This exact formulation is unique to these three passages.
    4. All three passages focus on the glory of the Lord and the latter two visions refer back to the first. (Ezekiel 1:3; 10:15, 20-22; 43:3)
- IV. The realities expressed in 1-3 and 8-11 explain all of the judgments in Ezekiel 1-32. The restoration of God's presence is the end both chronologically and teleologically of all the prophesies of restoration in Ezekiel 33-48.

## **Body:**

### **I. Presuppositions: The Holy Spirit and the Temple**

#### **A. The Holy Spirit:**

1. There are a number of presuppositions regarding the Holy Spirit that I believe we share and that I will not attempt to defend here.
  - a. The Holy Spirit is divine.
  - b. The Holy Spirit is, along with God, the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ a member of the Godhead.
  - c. While there is much that could and probably should be said about this it is beyond the scope of this study.

2. There is another presupposition that may or may not be universally shared. The Holy Spirit is the agent of God's presence in the temple:
  - a. In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled And grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them. Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses. Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them, Who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, Who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name, Who led them through the depths? Like the horse in the wilderness, they did not stumble; As the cattle which go down into the valley, The Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So You led Your people, To make for Yourself a glorious name. (Isaiah 63:9-14)
  - b. You, in Your great compassion, Did not forsake them in the wilderness; The pillar of cloud did not leave them by day, To guide them on their way, Nor the pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they were to go. You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth, And You gave them water for their thirst. (Nehemiah 9:19-20)

B. The Temple is...

1. The means of God's presence.
  - a. This was true of the tabernacle:
    - 1) "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. (Exodus 25:8)
    - 2) Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle... (Exodus 40:34-38)
  - b. It was true of the temple.
    - 1) "Concerning this house which you are building, if you will walk in My statutes and execute My ordinances and keep all My commandments by walking in them, then I will carry out My word with you which I spoke to David your father. "I will dwell among the sons of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel." (1 Kings 6:12-13)
    - 2) It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. (1 Kings 8:10-11)
  - c. I will argue that it is true in Ezekiel and in the New Testament as well!
2. A microcosm of heaven.
  - a. Moses was shown a divine pattern. (Exodus 25:8-9, 40)
  - b. The Hebrew writer makes it clear that there is correspondence between the earthly temple and the actual heavenly one, although, the latter is clearly superior. (Hebrews 9:11-12)
3. A microcosm of creation.
  - a. The garden is a temple...

- 1) Like the temple it has an eastward orientation. (Genesis 2:8; 3:24; Numbers 3:38; Ezekiel 41:14; 42:9)
  - 2) It is the place of the presence of God. (Genesis 3:8)
  - 3) Ezekiel refers to the garden as a sanctuary. (Ezekiel 28:13, 18) This term is used in Ezekiel almost exclusively of the temple.
- b. And He built His sanctuary like the heights, Like the earth which He has founded forever. (Psalms 78:69) This comparison, by itself may not convince. However, this idea features prominently elsewhere.
- 1) In Ezekiel 43, when the Glory of the Lord comes into the temple it is the entire earth that shines with His glory.
  - 2) The whole of creation is a temple in Revelation 21:1-22:5.
- c. Why does it matter? It speaks to God's eternal purpose!
- 1) God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:27-28)
  - 2) This is realized in the new creation! (Revelation 21:1-22:5)
4. A declaration of the reality of the present and hope for the future.
- a. The temple reflects God's desire to dwell among His people. (Exodus 25:8; 1 Kings 6:12-13)
  - b. The temple also reflects the sin that separates men from God.
    - 1) Cherubim guard the way into the garden. (Genesis 3:24)
    - 2) Cherubim are woven into the veil before the Holy of Holies. (Exodus 26:31-33)
    - 3) This veil conveys a message. "...the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing." (Hebrews 9:8)
  - c. The temple anticipates the solution.
    - 1) This is true in myriad ways.
    - 2) However, if we follow our present line of thinking, the Hebrew writer points again to the structure of the temple. (Hebrews 10:19-20; cf. Matthew 27:50-51)
- C. Certain convictions about theme and structure also shaped my conclusions. For more details on this, see the Excursus on the overview and outline of Ezekiel at the end of these notes.
- D. Whether or not you agree with all of these presuppositions, please understand that they shape the argument that follows. It will be your task to test them against the scriptures and evaluate them on the merits.

## II. Instances of the Presence of God in the Book of Ezekiel:

### A. The Opening Vision (Ezekiel 1-3)

1. This vision, as difficult as it may be, is not completely new. A very similar image of God is presented in Psalm 18:9-14. There are a number of other places where aspects of this image are seen.

- a. Of course 2 Samuel 22:1-12 says, “And He rode on a cherub and flew; And He appeared on the wings of the wind. And He made darkness canopies around Him, A mass of waters, thick clouds of the sky.” (cf. Exodus 13:21-22; Leviticus 16:2; Psalm 97:2)
  - b. Psalm 80:1 describes God as “enthroned above the cherubim.”
  2. The overall impression is one of movement. God is on the move.
    - a. The imagery is suggestive of a chariot. This portrays God as a warrior. (cf. Exodus 15:3)
    - b. The four living creatures will be identified as cherubim in 10:1 and we are explicitly told in 10:15 that these are the same creatures Ezekiel saw here. Cherubim seem to act as vindicators of God’s holiness.
      - 1) They are first seen guarding the way into the presence of God in Genesis 3:24 where they prevent sinful man from entering in.
      - 2) As we have already noted they appear again on the veil. (Exodus 26:31-33)
      - 3) It has ominous implications.
  3. Another important implication of this vision is that God is with the captives and not with the people in Jerusalem. This is suggested in a number of ways.
    - a. This is not directly stated until the next theophany in Ezekiel 8-11.
      - 1) The people in Jerusalem are doomed. (Ezekiel 9:8-10)
      - 2) The remnant is with Ezekiel. (Ezekiel 11:13-21)
    - b. As Iain M. Duguid notes, “God had chosen the temple in Jerusalem as his dwelling place. But now, amazingly, this same glory of God is seen by Ezekiel, by the Kebar River, that is in the midst of the exiles! The glorious and majestic sovereign God has gone into exile with his people. (Ezek. 11:16)” (Duguid, p. 56)
  4. God has come for the purpose of vindicating His name.
    - a. This is suggested directly in a number of passages. (Ezekiel 20:41-42; 28:22, 25; 36:16-32; 38:16, 22-23; 39:7, 27)
    - b. It is inferred in the myriad of passages that indicate that God’s purpose is that “they will know that I am the Lord.” (Ezekiel 6:7, 10, 13, 14; 7:4, 27; 11:10, 12; 12:15, 16, 20; 13:9, 14, 21, 23; 14:8; 15:7; 16:62; 17:24; 20:12, 20, 26, 38, 42, 44; 22:16; 23:49; 24:24, 27; 25:5, 7, 11, 17; 26:6; 28:22, 23, 24, 26; 29:6, 9, 16, 21; 30:8, 19, 25, 26; 32:15; 33:29; 34:27; 35:4, 9, 15; 36:11, 23, 38; 37:6, 13, 28; 38:23; 39:6, 7, 22, 28)
  5. These last two points come together to form a conclusion that anticipates the gospel.
    - a. God shows up in unexpected places and does so in unexpected ways.
    - b. He does so for two fundamental purposes:
      - 1) He does it in order to vindicate His name.
      - 2) He does it for the good of His people.
- B. God’s Departure From and Judgment on the Temple (Ezekiel 8-11)
1. Ezekiel 8:6 sets forth the reason for what happens: “Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations which the house of Israel are committing here, so that I would be far from My sanctuary?”

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- a. It should be noted that Ezekiel anticipates the New Testament idea of God's people as the temple.
  - b. In Ezekiel 8 God shows Ezekiel that there are idols in the temple.
  - c. In Ezekiel 14:1-6 He makes the same point about the hearts of the people around Ezekiel!
2. God's glory departs from the temple in three or four stages:
    - a. Then the glory of the God of Israel went up from the cherub on which it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed in linen at whose loins was the writing case. The LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst." (Ezekiel 9:3-4)
      - 1) This initial stage of departure is concurrent with the identification of those who are faithful to the Lord. ("...the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst.")
      - 2) After this is complete, judgment begins with the house of the Lord!
    - b. Now the cherubim were standing on the right side of the temple when the man entered, and the cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub to the threshold of the temple, and the temple was filled with the cloud and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD. (Ezekiel 10:3-4)
      - 1) These verses are not without difficulty. It may, as Block and Taylor suggest, reflect back to 9:3. That is to say the judgment of the first part of 9 may be concurrent with the judgment in the first part of 10.
      - 2) In any case God is not in the Holy of holies and it constitutes the first stage of a reversal of passages like 1 Kings 8:10-11.
      - 3) It also entails judgment as verses 5-8 make clear.
    - c. Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. When the cherubim departed, they lifted their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight with the wheels beside them; and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the LORD'S house, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them. (Ezekiel 10:18-19)
      - 1) This statement is anticipated by the renewed description of the throne chariot. God is on the move and He is moving out of the temple!
      - 2) This is a reversal of passages like Psalm 24:7-10.
    - d. Then the cherubim lifted up their wings with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them. The glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood over the mountain which is east of the city. (Ezekiel 11:22-23)
      - 1) This statement is anticipated by the judgment pronounced on the religious leadership in Jerusalem.
        - a) This judgment provokes a question by Ezekiel: "Alas, Lord GOD! Will You bring the remnant of Israel to a complete end?" (Ezekiel 11:13)
        - b) God responds by saying that Jerusalem is corrupt. Concerning the exiles he says, "Though I had removed them far away among the

nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet **I was a sanctuary for them** a little while in the countries where they had gone.”

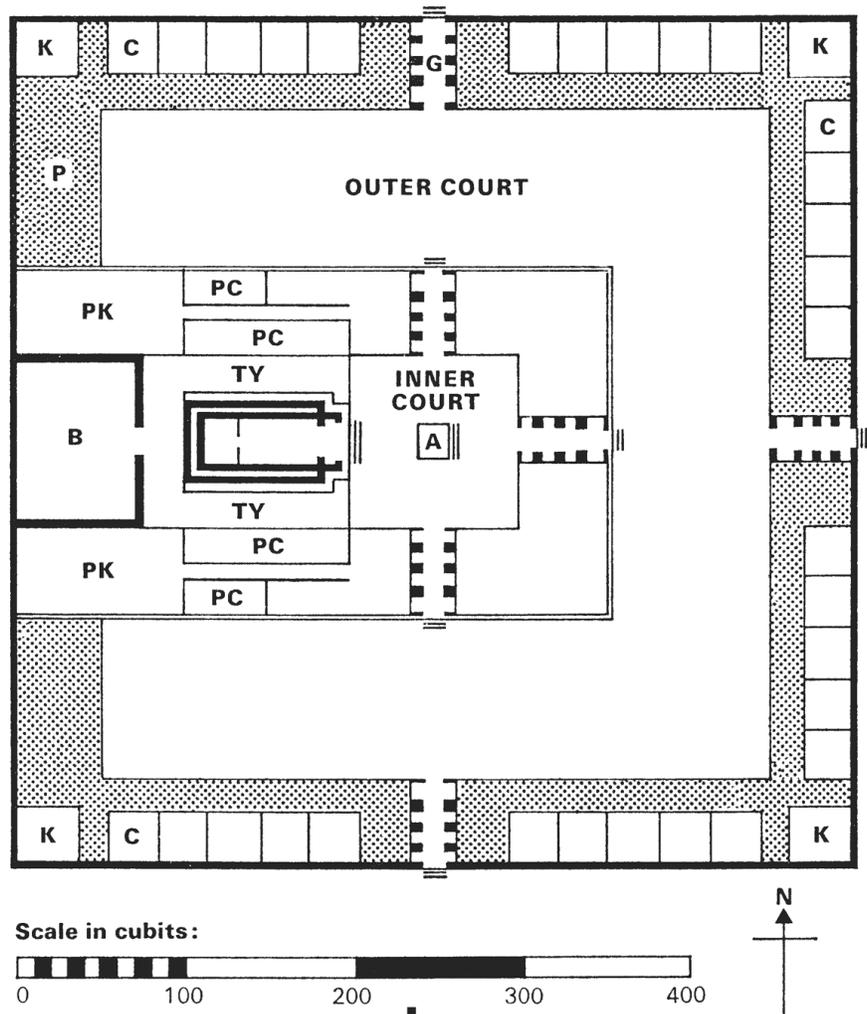
- 2) Two related truths emerge:
  - a) God is with His people wherever they may be.
  - b) The temple is not where we find God. God is where we find the temple!
3. Some concluding thoughts about this vision:
  - a. God is holy.
    - 1) He will not dwell in the midst of corruption.
    - 2) He will not tolerate rivals. This reality forms the basis for the shocking language of Ezekiel 16 and 23.
  - b. God remembers mercy in the midst of judgment! (cf. Habakkuk 3:2)
    - 1) God leaves the temple slowly almost reluctantly.
    - 2) Even as He is leaving He speaks of renewal, restoration and reconciliation: “Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.”’ “When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. “And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. (Ezekiel 11:17-20)
    - 3) God’s redemptive purpose never waivers!

#### C. The Great Temple Vision (Ezekiel 40-48)

1. The temple vision is the thing to which everything in the book points.
  - a. This is certainly true of everything from 34 forward.
    - 1) Their shepherds have failed them; God will be their shepherd. (Ezekiel 34)
    - 2) God will lay waste to Mount Seir (Ezekiel 35) and restore the mountains of Israel. (Ezekiel 36)
      - a) Most importantly for our purposes: “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26)
      - b) “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. (Ezekiel 36:27)
    - 3) He will give them new life and reunify them. (Ezekiel 37)
    - 4) No enemy will be able to stand before them! (Ezekiel 38-39)
  - b. A couple of initial observations can be made:
    - 1) All of these promises culminate in the vision in 40-48.
    - 2) All of these themes find ready and obvious expression in the New Testament.
2. The end of Ezekiel tracks perfectly with the end of Revelation.

- a. Resurrection: Ezekiel 37 / Revelation 20:4-6
- b. Gog & Magog: Ezekiel 38-39 / Revelation 20:7-15
- c. Temple Vision: Ezekiel 40-48 / Revelation 21:1-22:5
  - 1) There are a number of linguistic parallels between this passage and Revelation 21:1-22:5.
    - a) A temple like a city (Ezekiel 40:2, 5 / Revelation 21:2-3)
    - b) A very high mountain (Ezekiel 40:2 / Revelation 21:10)
    - c) A river flowing from the temple / throne. (Ezekiel 47:1-12 / Revelation 22:1-2)
    - d) The climactic characteristic in both visions is the pervasive presence of God! (Ezekiel 48:35; Revelation 21:22; 22:3-5)
  - d. Their end and our end are both an expression of God's eternal purpose realized. This is true even though the two passages have somewhat different points of emphasis.

3. Lets look at the vision itself: (The figure below is from *TOTC*, Taylor, pg. 251)



A: Altar B: Building C: Chamber G: Gateway K: Kitchen P: Pavement PC: Priests' Chambers PK: Priests' Kitchens TY: Temple Yard

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- a. The measurements of the temple. (40:1-42:20) A few things are obvious.
- 1) As you move toward the temple you are always going up.
  - 2) As you move in the entrances become narrower.
    - a) The width of the outer gates is 14 cubits. (Ezekiel 40:11 ESV, LXX)
    - b) The width of the gate into the nave is 10 cubits. (41:1-2)
    - c) The width of the gate into the most holy place is either 6 or 7 cubits. (41:3-4)
    - d) All of this serves to emphasize the following.
  - 3) The purpose of all of these walls and guardhouses is made clear by Ezekiel himself: “Now when he had finished measuring the inner house, he brought me out by the way of the gate which faced toward the east and measured it all around. He measured on the east side with the measuring reed five hundred reeds by the measuring reed. He measured on the north side five hundred reeds by the measuring reed. On the south side he measured five hundred reeds with the measuring reed. He turned to the west side and measured five hundred reeds with the measuring reed. He measured it on the four sides; it had a wall all around, the length five hundred and the width five hundred, to divide between the holy and the profane.” (Ezekiel 42:15-20)
  - 4) If the vision in Ezekiel 8-11 tells us anything, it tells us that Israel had forgotten that God was HOLY. Much of this vision is intended to restore their understanding of God’s absolute holiness: “By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.” (Leviticus 10:3)
  - 5) All of this measuring was intended to have an impact on God’s people: “As for you, son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the plan.” (Ezekiel 43:10)
- b. The arrival of the glory of the Lord from the east. (43:1-12)
- 1) This passage is rich in Old Testament background. (Exodus 40:33-38; Leviticus 9:22-24; 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 7:1-2) In view of this a few things are of interest...
    - a) There is no record of this in the second temple. (Ezra 6:13-18)
    - b) Malachi 3:1 seems to indicate that in Malachi’s time they are still looking for the presence of the Lord in the temple.
    - c) This is true in spite of Haggai 2:4-5.
      1. God is clearly with those who have returned to Jerusalem.
      2. However, he has not yet poured out His Spirit on the eschatological temple. (cf. Joel 2:28ff; Acts 2:1-21)
  - 2) Two things emerge powerfully in this restoration of God’s presence:
    - a) 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 among the sons of Israel forever.” (Ezekiel 43:7a) God will dwell among His people forever!
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b) “And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry and by the corpses of their kings when they die, by setting their threshold by My threshold and their door post beside My door post, with only the wall between Me and them. And they have defiled My holy name by their abominations which they have committed. So I have consumed them in My anger. Now let them put away their harlotry and the corpses of their kings far from Me; and I will dwell among them forever.” (Ezekiel 43:7b-9) God’s people will be holy in consequence.

1. This emphasis is interesting given the kind of arguments Paul will make regarding the church being a temple. (See below.)
2. This has much to say about the already *and* the not yet of the kingdom!

c. Temple regulations. (43:13-44:31)

- 1) One fascinating aspect of this is that this vision has its roots in two worlds.
  - a) It is full of indications of a restoration of Old Covenant realities: Levitical priests, animal sacrifices, sabbath observances etc.
  - b) It also looks to new realities. They may not be new in the sense that they have not been said before. However, they are new in the sense that they have never been realized in any ongoing way.
    1. “Thus says the Lord GOD, “No foreigner uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the sons of Israel, shall enter My sanctuary.” (Ezekiel 44:9)
    2. The priests “shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.” (Ezekiel 44:23) Discuss what this means for Christians!
- 2) This reality has a number of implications for our approach to this vision and our broader understanding of scripture.
  - a) Any insistence on a literal approach to the temple visions as whole would require a literal return to animal sacrifices, a Levitical priesthood and the rest. We know that is not the case. (Hebrews 8:1-10:18)
  - b) If this is figurative, then the Old Testament regulations regarding priests, sacrifices and temple ordinances *must* anticipate a new testament reality. This is also manifestly true. (Hebrews 9:11-14; 13:10-12; 1 Peter 2:4-9)
    1. When we neglect passages like Exodus 25-31, 35-40, Leviticus and Ezekiel 40-48, we are neglecting a critical part of God’s plan for us!
    2. Because of the pervasive nature of Old Testament imagery in the New Testament, we are also crippling our ability to understand the New Testament.

d. Measurements of the holy portion of the land. (45:1-12)

- 1) Once again the measurements are meant to set apart as holy the place where God causes His name to dwell.

- 2) The assertion that “It shall be holy within all its boundary round about” anticipates the final temple that is holy throughout. (Ezekiel 45:1; Revelation 21:2)
  - 3) The prince is charged with doing justice and righteousness. (Ezekiel 45:9) This is both Davidic and divine in character. (1 Samuel 8:15; Psalm 33:5; 89:14) It therefore is also messianic. (Isaiah 9:7)
- e. Temple regulations. (45:13-46:24)
- 1) The Prince’s duty is to lead the people in worshiping God. When God is present, no one else can be important. The only role of a leader is to point men toward God and to reflect His attributes.
  - 2) Again we are confronted with a number of very Old Testament regulations. What does this tell us about the presence of God?
    - a) It reminds us that we must learn what true obedience means if we are to dwell in the presence of God. They had never done this right! Now they will.
    - b) It reminds us that God does not change...
- f. The river that flows toward the east. (47:1-12)
- 1) This is a familiar image in the Old Testament. (Genesis 2:10; Psalm 46:1-4; Joel 3:17-18; Zechariah 14:8-11)
  - 2) This river flows out and becomes deeper the further it goes. It brings life and healing to all it touches. (Ezekiel 47:6-12)
    - a) There has been a great and necessary emphasis on holiness up to this point. Holiness is necessary if we are to be in the presence of God!
    - b) Blessing is a consequence of God’s presence. His blessings spring forth from His throne and flow out to all who dwell around Him!
  - 3) This finds expression in John 7:37-39. In John the river is equated with the life giving Spirit of God!
- g. Measurements of the land. (47:13-48:35)
- 1) Ezekiel 47:13-23 provides the extent of the borders of the land. However, the land is much larger that it appears here. Practically and potentially it encompasses all the faithful of the earth.
    - a) “You shall divide it by lot for an inheritance among yourselves and among the aliens who stay in your midst, who bring forth sons in your midst. And they shall be to you as the native-born among the sons of Israel; they shall be allotted an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. (Ezekiel 47:22)
    - b) By giving aliens the full right of inheritance, Ezekiel anticipates the end new creation of Revelation that encompasses men of every tongue, tribe, people and nation.
  - 2) A few more observations...
    - a) God is in the midst of the land. This has always been the greatest promise of the land! (cf. Exodus 33:13-15) It still is. (John 14:1-3)
    - b) As in Revelation 21:12 there are twelve gates indicating access to the presence of God!

- c) This is validated by the closing statement in the book: "...the name of the city from *that day shall be*, 'The LORD is there.'"

### III. Reflections on the meaning of God's Presence for God's People:

#### A. The Presence of God and the Holy Spirit in Ezekiel and the New Testament.

1. Without doubt, the presence of God is central to the Bible.
  - a. Man first appears in the dwelling place of God. (Genesis 3:8)
  - b. Man ends up in the dwelling place of God. (Revelation 22:3-4)
  - c. The presence of God is certainly the central theme of Ezekiel.
2. Consider just how often temple language is used in the New Testament.
  - a. John 2:19-22
  - b. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17
  - c. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20
  - d. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
  - e. Ephesians 2:19-22
  - f. 1 Peter 2:4-9
  - g. Everyone of the above passages were written to churches that were primarily, but not exclusively, composed of Gentiles. This suggests a number of pertinent questions.
    - 1) Why does Paul expect Christians to know that they are a temple? (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19)
      - a) An understanding of Matthew 16:18 in light of 2 Samuel 7:12-16.
      - b) The church is the body of Christ. Christ's body is the temple. (John 2:19-22)
      - c) Acts 2 as an inaugural temple scene.
    - 2) What does seeing ourselves as a temple do for us? Consider the arguments that are made above...
      - a) If we understood that we were a temple we would treat one another better. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)
      - b) If we understood that we were a temple we would flee from every immoral thing. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)
      - c) If we understood what it means to be a temple, we would never associate with unbelievers in such a way that it brought shame on the name of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)
      - d) If we knew what it meant to be a temple of God, we would know what it really means to edify or build one another up. (Ephesians 2:19-21; 4:11ff)
      - e) If we understood what it means to be a temple we would understand our purpose in every relationship and every situation is to "proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

#### B. Ezekiel's Temple in the New Testament:

1. Hebrews 12:22-24 seems to be pointing to something very much like Ezekiel's temple.
    - a. While this is set forth to a Jewish audience, it is set forth as a given. He seems to be telling them something they already recognize as true.
    - b. Did they see this as a fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision?
  2. We have already noted the numerous parallels between Ezekiel's temple vision and John's temple vision in Revelation.
- C. Reflections on the Impact of God's Presence on Ezekiel and Us:
1. Ezekiel's book begins, "...the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God." (Ezekiel 1:1) This clearly had a revolutionary impact on Ezekiel.
  2. This is seen in his response to the presence of God.
    - a. "As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking." (Ezekiel 1:28)
    - b. "So I got up and went out to the plain; and behold, the glory of the LORD was standing there, like the glory which I saw by the river Chebar, and I fell on my face." (Ezekiel 3:23)
    - c. "And it was like the appearance of the vision which I saw, like the vision which I saw when He came to destroy the city. And the visions were like the vision which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face." (Ezekiel 43:3)
  3. It is evident in his profound obedience.
    - a. Ezekiel like many of the prophets is reluctant. (Exodus 4:10, 13; Isaiah 6:11; Jeremiah 1:6; Ezekiel 2:8; 3:14-15)
    - b. When God told him to get up, he got up! (Ezekiel 3:22-23)
    - c. Ezekiel 24:18 is certainly one of the most powerful examples of obedience in the Old Testament: "So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died. And in the morning I did as I was commanded."
    - d. This is certainly a direct result of having seen God for who He really is. May we all see God in this way!

**Conclusion:**

- I. The final statement in the book, "...the name of the city from that day shall be, 'The LORD is there.'", (Ezekiel 48:35) It is the same as the climax of Exodus (40:34-38). It is the climax of Matthew (28:20). It is the same as the climax of Revelation (22:3-4). It is climax of every great salvation story. "Heaven is not where we find God; God is where we find heaven!" – Dodd. (John 14:1-3)

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### Excursus: An Outline and Overview of Ezekiel

The following is both an outline and overview of the book of Ezekiel. The book is typically divided into three major sections. Ezekiel 1-24 consists of judgments against Judah. Ezekiel 25-32 is a message of judgment against the nations. Ezekiel 33-48 is a message of restoration. The following outline divides the book into seven major sections. (Dorsey, pp. 253-258)

Note that each of the first four units (a-d) are introduced in a similar way. Three of the four begin with a date. (Ezekiel 1:1; 8:1; 20:1) All except the first, which is the commission mention the elders coming to Ezekiel. (8:1; 14:1; 20:1)

1. Ezekiel 1:1 - 7:27 – Ezekiel’s commission consists of three visions. Each begins with the statement: “The hand of the Lord was upon me.” (1:3; 3:14; 3:22) All three of the visions consist of three parts: (1) A manifestation of the glory of God. (1:4ff; 3:12-13; 3:23); (2) Ezekiel’s response – either falling on his face (1:28; 3:23) or being overwhelmed (3:14-15); and (3) Divine instruction regarding the prophets work. This is followed by four messages of judgment.
  - The siege of Jerusalem is portrayed in chapter 4. [Both begin with the phrase “son of man take a...” (4:1; 5:1)]
  - The exile and judgment is portrayed in chapter 5.
  - Chapter 6 is a message of judgment against the mountains. [Both begin with “the word of the Lord came to me saying...” and end with “Then they shall know that I am the Lord.” (6:1, 14; 7:1, 27)]
  - Chapter 7 is a message of judgment against Israel.
2. **Ezekiel 8:1 - 13:23** The first seven messages began on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiachin’s captivity. (1:2) This set of seven messages begins on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> month in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiachin’s captivity. (8:1)
  - The vision of God’s glory in the temple and the abominations being committed there. (8:1-18)
  - The vision of God’s glory on the threshold and the slaying of Jerusalem’s wicked citizens. (9:1-11)
  - The vision of the glory of God rising above the threshold and the burning of Jerusalem. (10:1-22)
  - The vision of the glory of the Lord departing and judgment declared against the corrupt rulers of Jerusalem. (11:1-25) [Note: In each vision the glory of the Lord is moving further out of the temple.]
  - Symbolic action: Ezekiel carries his belongings into captivity. (12:1-16) [Note: This and the next two sections all end with “(they / you) shall know that I am the Lord.”(12:16, 20; 13:23)]
  - Symbolic action: Eating and drinking with anxiety for the coming destruction. (12:17-20)
  - Message against scoffers and false prophets. (12:21-13:23)
3. **Ezekiel 14:1 - 19:14** Ezekiel’s third collection of messages begins in 14:1. Each of the first six messages begins with the phrase “The word of the Lord came to me saying, ‘Son of man...’” (14:2-3, 12-13; 15:1-2; 16:1-2; 17:1-2; 18:1) [Note: The sixth message in this section omits “Son of man”. (18:1)] Each ends with “says the Lord God” (14:11, 23; 15:8; 16:63; 18:32) except the fifth, which ends with, “I the Lord have spoken and have done it.” (17:24) The collection concludes with a lament. (19:1-14)
  - Message against idolatry. (14:1-11)
  - Message of judgment against persistent unfaithfulness. (14:12-23)
  - Allegory of the useless vine. (15:1-8)

- Allegory of the adulterous bride. (16:1-63)
- Allegory of the two eagles and the vine. (17:1-24)
- Message of individual accountability before God. (18:1-32)
- Lament for the rulers of Jerusalem. (19:1-14)

The theme of this section is clearly judgment. However, two sub-themes seem prominent. First, this judgment is both tragic and unnecessary. God did not want to judge them. Their stiff-necked resolve to do wrong had given Him no alternative. Second, the purpose of this judgment is to purify a remnant. This second idea is set forth in all but the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> messages in this collection.

4. **Ezekiel 20:1 – 24:27** Once again this unit is set apart by a date. The following messages commenced on the 10th day of the 5th month in the 7th year of Jehoiachin's captivity. These messages reach in to the 9th year. (24:1) Each of the seven messages begins with "The word of the Lord came to me saying "Son of man..."(20:2-3, 45-46; 21:1-2; 22:1-2; 23:1-2; 24:1-2; 24:15-16)
  - Israel has been rebellious from the beginning, but God has been gracious. (20:1-44)
  - Message of judgment against the south. (20:45-49)
  - The sword of God's judgment. (21:1-32)
  - Indictment of Jerusalem and Israel. (22:1-31)
  - Allegory of the 2 sister harlots: Oholah & Oholibah. (23:1-49)
  - Allegory of the boiling pot. (24:1-14)
  - Message involving the death of Ezekiel's wife. (24:15-27)

Note: the final three units all begin in the same way: "The word of the Lord came to me saying, 'son of man...'" or in the case of the last unit, "...the hand of the Lord was upon me... son of man." These phrases are not limited to these introductions. However the units are also held together by common themes.

5. **Ezekiel 25:1-32:32** Ezekiel's message of consolation begins with a prophecy concerning God's judgment of the enemies of his people. Seven nations are addressed.
  - Judgment against Ammon. (25:1-7)
  - Judgment against Moab. (25:8-11)
  - Judgment against Edom. (25:12-14)
  - Judgment against Philistia. (25:15-17)
  - Judgment against Tyre. (26:1-28:19)
  - Judgment against Sidon. (28:20-26)
  - Judgment against Egypt. (29:1-32:32)
6. **Ezekiel 33:1 – 39:29** This section consists of two messages concerning God's judgment and five messages concerning God's future plans for his people. The thrust of this section is to get the people to recognize the reason for this judgment so that they might begin to seek God and thus prepare themselves to enjoy His glorious future plans for them. Each message begins "Then the word of the Lord came to me saying: Son of man..."
  - Responsibility of the prophet & the individual accountability of God's people. (33:1-20)
  - Desolation of Jerusalem & Judah as proof of Ezekiel's office. (33:21-33)
  - Message of consolation: God will shepherd His people. (34:1-31)

- Message of consolation: Edom will be made desolate and Israel will be exalted and cleansed. (35:1-36:38)
  - Message of Consolation: Life restored to Israel. [Valley of dry bones.] (37:1-14)
  - Message of Consolation: Judah and Israel will be one nation under one king. (37:15-28)
  - Message of Consolation: The defeat of Gog & Magog. (38:1-39:29)
7. **Ezekiel 40:1 – 48:35** The final division of Ezekiel is a glorious picture of the new Temple. This vision was not meant to describe a literal temple but to illustrate a glorious new relationship between God and His people.
- The measurements of the temple. (40:1-42:20)
  - The arrival of the glory of the Lord from the east. (43:1-12)
  - Temple regulations. (43:13-44:31)
  - Measurements of the holy portion of the land. (45:1-12)
  - Temple regulations. (45:13-46:24)
  - The river that flows toward the east. (47:1-12)
  - Measurements of the land. (47:13-48:35)

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