

Message Five

**The Vision of the Holy Building of God
in Its Outstanding Features**

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 40:1—42:14

- I. God's eternal purpose is to have a building as a mingling of Himself with His chosen people (Ezek. 40:1—48:35; Matt. 16:18; 1 Pet. 2:5); whatever God does among His people and among the nations on earth is for His building; this is confirmed by the book of Revelation, which is parallel to the book of Ezekiel and concludes with God's ultimate building, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2—22:5):**
- A. After the destruction of the temple built by Solomon (2 Kings 25:8-9), the temple was rebuilt by the captives who returned from Babylon (Ezra 3:6b-13; 6:13-15).
 - B. Later, this temple was replaced by Herod's temple, which was built in forty-six years (John 2:20); Herod's temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Roman army under Titus (Dan. 9:26; Matt. 23:38; 24:2).
 - C. Neither the temple in Ezra's day nor the temple of Herod's time was the full recovery of the temple built by Solomon; however, the temple of Ezekiel's vision was a more than full recovery of Solomon's temple; although the temple itself was the same size as the one built by Solomon (Ezek. 41:2, 4; cf. 1 Kings 6:2), a number of details related to the gates, the courts, and the buildings around the temple in Ezekiel's vision indicate an enlargement over Solomon's temple.
 - D. Thus, beginning with Abraham's tent, progressing to the tabernacle and then to Solomon's temple, and concluding with the temple in Ezekiel's vision, there is a continual progression in the enlargement of God's building in the Old Testament; this enlargement signifies a continual increase in the experience of Christ by God's people—cf. 1 Kings 6:2, footnote 1.
 - E. God's spiritual building in the New Testament, which begins with Jesus Christ, the incarnated God, as God's tabernacle (John 1:14) and God's temple (2:19-21), advances to the church, the Body of Christ, as the enlargement of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 2:20-22), and consummates with the New Jerusalem as the ultimate manifestation and enlargement of God's building in eternity (Rev. 21:2-3, 15-17).

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- F. Literally, the visions concerning God's holy building in Ezekiel 40—48 will be fulfilled in the restoration, when the restored Israel will rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem for their dwelling with God in the millennium.
 - G. The spiritual significances of all the details should be applied to the New Testament believers as components of God's spiritual building, the church.
- II. Ezekiel saw the first vision, the vision of the appearance of the glory of the Lord, when he was thirty years of age, the age at which a priest begins to function (1:1); he saw the last vision, the vision of the holy building of God, twenty years later (40:1; cf. 1:2), at the age of fifty, the age of retirement for a priest (Num. 4:3); this indicates that to see the building of God, Ezekiel needed more maturity in life (cf. Ezek. 1:1, footnote 1):**
- A. The beginning of the year (40:1) indicates that the vision of God's building brings us to a new beginning.
 - B. The tenth day of the first month was the day on which the people of Israel prepared the lamb for the passover (Exo. 12:3); this indicates that every new beginning in our Christian life is based on Christ, the Passover lamb (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7), and His redemption.
- III. To see the vision of God's holy building, Ezekiel was brought from the land of captivity to a high mountain, signifying the resurrection and ascension of Christ, in the land of Israel (Ezek. 40:2), a type of the all-inclusive Christ as the portion allotted by God to His people (Deut. 8:7; Col. 1:12), and in the city of Jerusalem; this was the right position, standing, and angle for Ezekiel to see such a vision.**
- IV. The man of bronze at the gate of the building is Christ (Ezek. 40:3); bronze signifies being tested by God's judgment (Num. 16:37-39; 21:8-9); having passed through God's judgment, Christ is fully qualified to measure (take possession of by judging) what belongs to God's building (Zech. 2:1 and footnotes).**
- V. "The man said to me, Son of man, look with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your heart on all that I show**

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you, because for this purpose you have been brought here, that it may be shown to you. Tell all that you see to the house of Israel”—Ezek. 40:4:

- A. While God was showing the vision of His building to Ezekiel, the prophet needed to have keen sight and to listen intently.
- B. Also, in order to absorb the things that would be shown to him, he had to set his heart on them; then he would be able to declare to God’s people all that he had seen and heard—cf. 1 John 1:3.

VI. The wall around the house is for separating what belongs to God from what cannot belong to Him—Ezek. 40:5:

- A. The thickness and height of the wall are both six cubits; thus, a cross section of the wall is a square six cubits by six cubits.
- B. The number six signifies man, who was created on the sixth day; hence, the wall with a square cross section of six cubits signifies Christ Himself as an upright, perfect, and complete man.
- C. Such a Christ is a separating line of God’s building; only what is included in Christ belongs to God’s interests and God’s building—Eph. 2:21; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 4:1.

VII. The gate is divided into four sections: an outer threshold (Ezek. 40:6), a passage (a court, v. 14), an inner threshold (v. 7), and a porch (vv. 8-9):

- A. As the entrance to God’s building, the gate signifies Christ as the gateway for us to enter into God and into God’s interests, God’s building, and God’s kingdom (John 14:6, 20; Rev. 21:21a); whereas the wall separates sinners from God, the gate brings people into God and into God’s building.
- B. The three guardrooms on each side of the gate (Ezek. 40:7, 10) signify that the guardrooms are a person, Christ Himself, who as the Triune God (three) became a man (six) and was “split” on the cross:
 - 1. Each of the six guardrooms is six cubits square and is thus the same in size as a cross section of the wall; this indicates that the Lord Jesus in His person and work is the guard of God’s glory and holiness.

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2. By passing through Christ as the gate, we are qualified to enter into God's building, which is full of God's glory and holiness.
- C. The width of the porch is six cubits, the number six signifying man, who was created on the sixth day; the length of the porch is eight cubits (vv. 8-9), the number eight signifying Christ's resurrection, which took place on the first day of a new week as a new beginning (John 20:1):
1. These dimensions signify that the Lord Jesus as a man, who is the gate of God's building, is fully in resurrection.
 2. They also signify that when we arrive at the porch, we are in resurrection, in a new beginning.
- D. The width of the entrance of the gate was ten cubits (Ezek. 40:11), the number ten here implying the Ten Commandments; this indicates that whatever the Ten Commandments require, the entry of the gate fulfills; the Lord Jesus as the "square," upright, and perfect man fulfilled all the requirements of the Ten Commandments, and He has become the gate for us to enter into God's building—cf. Rom. 8:4.
- E. The palm trees on the posts of the gates signify that Christ, the guard of God's holiness and glory, is the everlasting, victorious One, standing, bearing, sustaining, and prevailing; palm trees grow in the wilderness, are evergreen, and signify victory and everlasting power (Exo. 15:27; Rev. 7:9); Christ is the post that supports and bears God's building with a victorious, everlasting life—Ezek. 40:16.
- F. There were six different sections, or areas, of pavement around the inside of the wall on the east, the south, and the north sides of the outer court, and on each section there were five chambers, giving a total of thirty chambers (v. 17); in addition to the thirty chambers on the pavement, there were four small courts, one at each corner of the outer court (46:21-24, v. 21 and footnote 1); these were places for the people to boil the sacrifices:
1. The pavement, probably made of stone, signifies the standing of regeneration, which makes us stones (John 1:42; Matt. 16:18), as a separation from the dirt of the world (cf. Luke 15:22, footnote 7).

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2. The chambers were dining places where the people ate the sacrifices, indicating that they were places for people to enjoy Christ as the sacrifices and offerings; (whereas the priests ate in the inner court [Ezek 42:1-14], the people ate in the outer court).
3. After passing through the gate of God's dwelling place, we come to the outer court and enter into the chambers, where, standing on the "stones" of our regeneration, we eat and enjoy Christ, who is the reality of all the offerings—Heb. 10:5-10.

VIII. The details of the gates to the inner court (Ezek. 40:28-37) were the same as those of the gates to the outer court, indicating that as we enter into the inner court, we repeat our experience of Christ; we experience the same Christ, but we experience more of Him (Phil. 3:8-10):

- A. At the entrance to the inner court there is another set of stairs (cf. Ezek. 40:22, 26), consisting of eight steps; this indicates that the more inward we progress in our experience of God's building, the higher we become.
- B. The number eight signifies resurrection; this indicates that if we would come into the inner court, we need to be in resurrection; all the natural life and the natural man must be repudiated and crossed out.
- C. A chamber, probably within the north gate of the inner court, was for the priests to wash the burnt offerings (v. 38); this indicates that at this point in our experience, we are ready to be a burnt offering for God:
 1. When we pass through the gate to the inner court, we are in resurrection and on a higher level.
 2. Here, we are not merely the common people in the outer court; we have become the priests who are ready to minister to the Lord by offering the burnt offering, meaning that we are ready to be absolute for the Lord—Lev. 1:3, footnote 1.
- D. The altar, which signifies the cross of Christ, is not only the center but also the circumference of God's holy building—Ezek. 40:47:

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1. The cross is implied in the gate, in the eating of the sacrifices, in the boiling houses, and in the tables on which the sacrifices are slain (v. 39); thus, the cross spreads in every direction and to every corner of God's building; if we wish to contact God and enjoy His riches in His house, we must pass through the cross.
2. The death on the cross was the release of God (Luke 12:49-50; John 12:24) and the termination of man and all negative things (Rom. 6:6; Heb. 2:14; 9:26-28; Gal. 6:14; Eph. 2:14-15); in Christ's death God passed through death in man to be released, and man died in God to be terminated.

IX. Whereas the altar signifies the cross, the temple signifies both Christ (John 2:19-21) and the church, the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21):

- A. The cross, Christ, and the church are the central subject not only of the New Testament but also of the entire Bible; that the altar stands in front of the temple indicates that we cannot have the church apart from the cross; we can have the reality of the church only after we have passed through the cross.
- B. All that we do and say in our life and work should be through the cross and by the Spirit to dispense Christ into others for the building up of the Body of Christ.
- C. The elevation of the temple was ten steps higher than that of the inner court and twenty-five steps higher than the elevation outside the temple (Ezek. 40:49, 22, 31); this indicates that the further inward we proceed in our experience of God's building, the higher we rise.
- D. The fact that Ezekiel does not give us the measurement of the pillars indicates that they signify a supporting strength that is unlimited and immeasurable; thus, the two pillars by each post signify Christ as God's witness (two) bearing the house of God with a strength that is unlimited and immeasurable—cf. John 3:34; Phil. 4:13.
- E. The entrance of the porch measured fourteen cubits (Ezek. 40:48), the entrance to the outer temple (the Holy Place), ten cubits, and the entrance into the inner temple (the Holy of Holies), six cubits (41:3); this indicates that the further inward

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we progress in our experience of God's building, the narrower the way becomes; the closer we are to the Lord, the more we will be restricted by Him (cf. Matt. 7:13-14).

- F. The number six in relation to the thickness of the wall (Ezek. 41:5) signifies the humanity of the Lord Jesus as the standing strength of God's dwelling place; in the tabernacle the boards of acacia wood standing upright also signify the humanity of the Lord Jesus (Exo. 26:15); as a proper human being, the Lord Jesus is the standing and supporting wall of God's building.
- G. The thirty side chambers for expression (Ezek. 41:6) are based on the thirty chambers for enjoyment (40:17); we can express Christ only to the extent that we have enjoyed Him; our enjoyment of Christ eventually becomes the fullness, the expression, of Christ (Eph. 3:16-19).
- H. The side chambers becoming wider as they go up (Ezek. 41:7) indicates that as we go higher with the Lord, we become broader and richer in our experience (cf. Eph. 3:18); this indicates that the experience of God's holy building is progressive.
- I. All the parts of the building related to the temple were paneled with wood (Ezek. 41:16); wood signifies the uplifted humanity of Jesus; in God's building in Ezekiel, the primary material is the crucified, resurrected, and ascended humanity of Jesus.
- J. On all the wooden paneling, cherubim and palm trees were carved (vv. 18-20):
 1. Cherubim signify the glory of the Lord manifested upon the creatures (10:18; Heb. 9:5), and palm trees, which grow in the wilderness and are evergreen, signify the victory of Christ and the everlasting and ever-existing power of Christ.
 2. The carving of the palm trees and the cherubim on the walls indicates that the victory of Christ and the glory of the Lord have been "carved" into our being through sufferings—cf. Col. 1:24.
 3. In Ezekiel 1 the cherubim had four faces (vv. 6, 10), but in the carvings on the walls they had only two faces—the face of a man and the face of a lion, signifying and expressing victory in humanity—41:19.

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4. The fact that between every two cherubim there was a palm tree (v. 18) signifies that as parts of God's building, we manifest the victory of Christ in the manifestation of the glorious image of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14-16; 3:18).
- K. The incense altar standing in the temple was made only of wood, signifying the humanity of Jesus—Ezek. 41:22:
1. In the tabernacle and in the temple there were the incense altar and the table of the bread of the Presence, but here in Ezekiel the altar is also the table, the altar being for us to offer Christ as incense to God for His satisfaction, and the table being for God to prepare Christ as food for our satisfaction—v. 22.
 2. The altar of wood was put in a place of wood paneling carved with cherubim and palm trees, indicating that if we are those who manifest the glory and victory of Christ, we will have the altar-table for God and us to have fellowship together in Christ; here God is satisfied by the incense we offer in Christ, and we are satisfied by the food supplied by God in Christ.
- L. The function of the “doors” in the church (v. 23) are to let the positive persons and things in and to keep the negative persons (cf. Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:29) and things out; the fact that each door had two swinging leaves (Ezek. 41:24) indicates that the doors in the church should be flexible.
- M. The fact that the palm trees were carved on the walls next to the windows indicates that victory and everlasting power and strength always go together with spiritual air and divine light; this means that our victory and power are related to the life-giving Spirit; if we enjoy the life-giving Spirit, we will also enjoy Christ's victory, power, and strength.
- X. The holy chambers, located on both the north side and the south side, are buildings that connect the inner court with the outer court—42:1:**
- A. The chambers on the pavement in the outer court are for the people to eat the offerings, whereas the holy chambers are for the priests to eat the offerings and also to place and store the offerings and to lay their priestly garments (vv. 13-14); whereas

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the offerings signify Christ as our enjoyment, the priestly garments signify Christ as our expression (Exo. 28:2).

- B. In the holy chambers we reach the highest peak of spiritual experience; to live in the holy chambers is to live in Christ (Phil. 4:13), to eat the offerings in the holy chambers is to eat Christ (John 6:57), and to wear the holy garments is to wear Christ for His expression (Rom. 13:14, 12).
- C. Like the side chambers, the holy chambers are of three stories (Ezek. 42:3), indicating that they correspond to the fullness, the expression, of Christ (41:6); the priests enjoy Christ to such an extent that the height of their chambers equals the height of the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph. 3:16-19).