

Ezekiel Part 52 (Ezekiel 45-46)

1. Ezekiel 40-48.
2. These chapters are some of the most misunderstood and misinterpreted passages in the O.T.
3. How can these prophecies be understood literally when the N.T. states that the sacrificial system has been done away with by the death and resurrection of Christ?
4. It appears that Ezekiel prophesies that the sacrificial system used by the Jews before the time of Christ will be reinstated.
5. However, the N.T. in general and the book of Hebrews in particular is emphatic in declaring that Christ has by one sacrifice forever done away with the need for animal sacrifices. (Hebrews 10:1-9)
6. There are 2 primary interpretations of Ezekiel 40-48. One is spiritual and the other is literal.
7. First, some state that these sacrifices are not to be understood literally, but only as symbols or foreshadows of what was fulfilled in Christ's all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross. (Hebrews 1:1-2)
8. The N.T. teaches that Christ fulfilled and abolished the O.T. sacrificial system and priesthood. (Hebrews 8:8-10)
9. The book of Revelation describes the Heavenly city of the future with no temple or sacrifices, only Christ the Lamb. (Revelation 21:22-27)
10. Ezekiel portrays the Gentiles as excluded from Israel's temple – which is contrary to the N.T. teaching that Jew and Gentile are one in Christ. (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:12-22)
11. The N.T. speaks of the church as a spiritual Israel in which O.T. prophecies are fulfilled. (Galatians 6:16; Hebrews 8:8-10)
12. However, this view violates the normal, historical-grammatical way to interpret the text.
13. It also attempts to read N.T. meaning back into the O.T. text rather than understanding the O.T. text as it is written.
14. They also state that the sacrifices prophesied by Ezekiel could be pointing back to the cross, just as the O.T. ones pointed forward to it.
15. The literal interpretation looks to the actual restoration of the temple and sacrificial system, just as Ezekiel prophesied it would be fulfilled during the millennium. (Revelation 20)

16. Ezekiel presents a highly detailed description, with numerous measurements, and historical scenes that do not fit with a spiritual interpretation.
17. If this passage is spiritualized, then on similar grounds most of the O.T. prophecies could be spiritualized away, including the obviously literal ones about the first coming of Christ – which we know from their fulfillment was literal.
18. The same then applies to His second coming.
19. The Scripture distinguishes between Israel and the church. (1 Corinthians 10:32; Romans 9:3)
20. Promises unique to Abraham and his literal descendants, such as the Promised Land, are not fulfilled in the church, but remain yet to be fulfilled in the future. (Genesis 12:1-3; Romans 11; Revelation 20)
21. The passage of Scripture in Revelation 21 is not about the millennium - it is about the eternal state that will follow the millennium.
22. Ezekiel's prophecy (40-48) will be fulfilled in the millennium. In the eternal state there will be no temple or sacrifices.
23. The sacrifices mentioned by Ezekiel have no atoning significance. They are merely memorial in nature – looking back to the accomplished work of Christ on the cross, the same the Lord's Supper does for believers today.
24. The rest of Ezekiel's prophecy will be fulfilled in a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ. (Revelation 20:1-7)
25. If so, then there is no reason not to take the prophecy about the sacrifices as literal too.
26. The O.T. did not foresee how Jew and Gentile would be joined together, but it did envision that the Gentiles would be blessed. (Ephesians 3:4-6 and Isaiah 11:10-16)
27. Ezekiel's prophecies do not exclude this later revelation. (Colossians 1:26)
28. The book of Hebrews speaks only of abolishing animal sacrifices as in an atoning sense – not in a memorial sense.