

HEAVEN:
The Place of Everlasting Paradise!

Message 16

Scripture: Ezekiel 40:1-12

INTRO: We have spent some time on the 30 days after the tribulation Daniel talks about and then the next 45 days. It is amazing how detailed prophecy is with regard to the future, and as I have said before, all of what we are seeing here is part of that which we call our 'heaven' experience. So you can see that calling it 'heaven' is not actually the right name, so I have called it everlasting Paradise. After we die, it is Paradise when we go to heaven. When we come back to earth with Christ, it is Paradise again. Man is at peace. The animal kingdom is at peace. And so we considered the setting up of the millennial government and saw that it is resurrected people that will judge and rule the world with Christ. We will once more have a theocracy.

Then we considered the official beginning of the millennium and the marriage supper of the Lamb, according to the invitation given in Revelation 19. For the first time since the Lord Jesus had the Last Supper with His disciples, He tastes wine. This time it is the fourth cup, the cup of praise. A time of peace and joy and righteousness has enveloped the whole earth. A time has come of which we can only dream now.

But then, as we closed the last message we established the fact that the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem. I believe that the Lord will rule the world from this temple, not from a palace somewhere. This is His Father's House. This temple is described for us in great detail in the last 8 chapters of Ezekiel, and that is our subject for this morning.

Now let me just backtrack a little and give us a brief reintroduction to this temple. We left off at the end of chapter 37 last week where this temple is mentioned at the closing of the chapter. Chapters 38-39 then go on to describe the battle of God and Magog. This is a very controversial battle, with regard to when it will take place but it is either just before or somewhere during the tribulation. In my estimation the most presentable view is that it is the battle of Armageddon and if so, it takes place at the end of the tribulation. I know there are

difficulties with that view but there are difficulties with the other views as well.

If I am correct, let me mention here one other thing that will take place early in the millennium (read 39:11-16). To me, chapter 39 gives numerous events in favor of this battle happening at the end of the tribulation.

I see the last 15 chapters of the book of Ezekiel then, as giving a chronological view of future events. First is the regathering of Israel from among the nations. This has been going on for many years now and is still in progress to our very day. Then follows the tribulation which closes with the battle of Armageddon, and in 39:29 we see Israel saved. That happens at the very end of the tribulation. Then in chapters 40-48, we have the government building and worship centre of the entire earth set up. This is the temple.

Ezekiel 40:1-12 was read for us earlier. These verses gave us introductory information and then began to describe this temple. We could have kept right on reading through chapter 48 and we would have kept on having descriptions of this temple. Now in 40:1 we have the date given when Ezekiel received this prophecy. It is the Hebrew month of Nisan which is part in our month of March and part in April. It took place on the 10th day of that month. That is our Palm Sunday. The year is 573 BC. That was the 25 year of their captivity. They have 45 years left to go.

f. Temple rebuilt cont'd

-Method of interpretation

Now, as we begin to consider the rebuilding of the temple, I want to show you why I think one's method of Bible interpretation is so important. I have recommended to you that one MUST use the normal, literal method to understand prophecy in the way God meant it to be understood. So, before we begin, I want to give you an amillennial perspective of these chapters. I have chosen John Gill, a knowledgeable, educated and worthy commentator on everything but prophecy.

Here, in brief, is his take on Ezekiel 40-48. So, first of all, because these chapters are prophetic we understand that in his view this is

then not a Scripture to be taken literally. It must be spiritualized. And how do you do that? So let us briefly see how he interprets these chapters. Gill was a tremendous Hebrew and Greek scholar. But he was amillennial in his view of prophecy. Let me read to you from his introduction to these chapters. He writes, "This and the eight following chapters contain a vision of a city and temple herein described, and are thought to be the most difficult part of the whole Bible. The Jews forbid the reading of it till a man is arrived to thirty years of age; and then he must expect to meet with things in it he does not understand, and which must be left until Elijah comes to explain them. Many Christian commentators have omitted the exposition of these chapters; and all acknowledge the difficulties in them. Something however may be got out of them, relating to the Gospel, and Gospel church state, which I am fully persuaded is intended by the city and temple; for that no material building can be designed is clear from this one observation; that not only the whole land of Israel would not be capable of having such a city as is here described built upon it, but even all Europe would not be sufficient; nor the whole world, according to the account of the dimensions which some give of it. The circumference of the city is said to be about eighteen thousand measures, #Eze 48:35; but what they are is not certain. Luther makes them to be thirty six thousand German miles; and a German mile being three of ours, the circuit of this city must be above a hundred thousand English miles; and this is sufficient to set aside all hypotheses of a material building, either of city or temple, the one being in proportion to the other."

Let me deal with the measurements later. First, as an amillennialist he says, "This and the eight following chapters contain a vision of a city and temple herein described, and are thought to be the most difficult part of the whole Bible." Now let me tell you why. It is because he and many other commentators hold to a non literal system of Bible interpretation. Second, he says, "Something however may be got out of them,

relating to the Gospel, and Gospel church state, which I am fully persuaded is intended by the city and temple..." What he is saying is, if you really squeeze, you can get something out of these chapters, but not much. Is that not incredible? Would you not begin to question your method of interpretation?

But even according to Gill, verse one is literal. But in verse 2, our problem begins. What is this mountain and this building or house? Well, listen to Gill, "...it is needless to inquire what this mountain was, whether Moriah, on which the temple was formerly built, or any other mountain near Jerusalem, since no material temple is exhibited to be built upon it; nor would such a mountain, especially Zion or Moriah, have been a proper place, if [a] material temple at Jerusalem was here designed, which must have stood upon it; but this is visionary, as well as the city and temple; if it respects anything, it may [be] the strength, the visibility, and exalted state of the church of Christ in the latter day..."

Now, you may say, "Did you say this guy is an educated and a good commentator on Scripture?" Yes, very good and very educated. But he has accepted amillennialism and it has tainted his interpretations. For the sake of time I will leave this and go on but later I will add another interpretation he gives. However, I gave you this example to show you that amillennialism, which is also our own background, destroys the prophets!

Now, about the size of this temple he wrote, "The circumference of the city is said to be about eighteen thousand measures, #Eze 48:35; but what they are is not certain. Luther makes them to be thirty six thousand German miles; and a German mile being three of ours, the circuit of this city must be above a hundred thousand English miles; and this is sufficient to set aside all hypotheses of a material building, either of city or temple, the one being in proportion to the other."

Chapter 48, from verse 30 describes the size of the temple. It is 4,500 on each side. Now we immediately say, "Four thousand five hundred what?" The text does not say, indicating that from the context we will know. So what measurements are used in the context? Look at 40:3 (read). Here is a man with a measuring rod. Now in verse 5 we are told how long this rod is (read). It is a rod that is 6 cubits long. The cubit measurements were not all the same but it was around 18 inches long. That would make this rod 9 feet long. Some give slightly different numbers, but not much.

So, in 48:35, the NKJV and most newer translations take it to be 4,500 cubits, which was a very common measurement and suits the context. If it is cubits, this temple is a little over a mile on each side. If it is the reed measurement, it would be six times as large. Both are well within reason, and there is no need to reject the literal interpretation of this passage.

Others say that even this is too large for the area that is there now. But again, they are not careful students of God's Word. When the Lord Jesus returns to earth with His Church, His wife; something will happen to the topography of the city of Jerusalem. I want you to see it in Zechariah 14 (read 1-4). This will change the lay of the land right in the middle of Jerusalem. We will see more of this later.

-Temple will be the Government centre of planet earth

Now it becomes clear in Scripture that the Lord Jesus will rule the whole earth during the millennium (Is. 2:2-4 and many others). But look now at Ezekiel 43:5 (read). You see, the glory of God that departed from the OT temple has returned to dwell in this temple. No doubt that when this glory returns, it will be an incredible moment. But now note verses 6-7 (read). The place of His throne will be there. A throne is a place to rule from. Here is a very interesting point. You see,

even in OT times, the spiritual and secular were not mixed. A king had no business in the temple. A priest had no business as king. But now, the king will rule from the temple, just like it is in heaven in the temple there.

Furthermore, in our day we separate Church and state. The state is not to dictate to the Church what it can or cannot do. The Church is not to run the state. But in the millennium this will change. Church and state, spiritual and secular will be run from one place. This temple will be both the 'White House' or 'Parliament Buildings' if you like; and the spiritual centre of the whole earth.

CONCL: So, we conclude this message. We have stressed once more the importance of the literal method of Bible interpretation. Without it, the OT prophets largely fall silent. Using the literal method, the prophets come to life. Using the amillennial method, heaven is largely mysterious. Using this method, we learn what God has in store for us and we find it amazing how much is given in detail in Scripture. We learn that Jerusalem will become both the government center and the worship center of all the earth. This gives us some idea how Jerusalem has become such a burdensome stone in our day, because the time is drawing near. There is no way the devil wants this to happen and so we have a situation in the middle east that as yet, no man can solve.

And further, only when we get glimpses into Paradise, our experience after death or after the millennium can we say with the Apostle Paul, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." What are your life circumstances? You see, this life is loaded with sufferings. But, in the life to come, this is changed forever.