

## *Second Baptist Church of Doylestown*

### *Ezekiel Chapter 43-44*

*4/20/16*

### *Ezekiel Chapter 43*

#### **God's Glory Returns to the Temple - Verses 1-12**

<sup>1</sup>Then the man brought me to the gate facing east, <sup>2</sup>and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory. <sup>3</sup>The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when he came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown. <sup>4</sup>The glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east. <sup>5</sup>Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. <sup>6</sup>While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me from inside the temple. <sup>7</sup>He said: "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. The people of Israel will never again defile my holy name—neither they nor their kings—by their prostitution and the funeral offerings for their kings at their death. <sup>8</sup>When they placed their threshold next to my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them, they defiled my holy name by their detestable practices. So I destroyed them in my anger. <sup>9</sup>Now let them put away from me their prostitution and the funeral offerings for their kings, and I will live among them forever. <sup>10</sup>"Son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins. Let them consider its perfection, <sup>11</sup>and if they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them the design of the temple—its arrangement, its exits and entrances—its whole design and all its regulations and laws. Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations. <sup>12</sup>"This is the law of the temple: All the surrounding area on top of the mountain will be most holy. Such is the law of the temple.

**43:1** This is the culmination of chapters 40-42 because God's glory returns to the temple. It reverses the negative tone of the book and serves as a fitting end for all the passages dealing with the blessings reserved for the restored remnant. All true believers should long for that moment when God's name will finally be glorified and he will live among his people forever.

**43:2** In 11:23, God's glory stopped over the Mount of Olives, to the east of Jerusalem, before leaving the city. This prophecy states that his glory would also return from the east.

**43:2-4** It was completely devastating for Ezekiel when God's glory departed (11:23) from the temple, but Ezekiel was overwhelmed with awe and joy beyond expression when he saw God's glory return.

**43:3** The Kebar River connected with the Euphrates River and was the location of a Jewish settlement of exiles in Babylonia.

**43:9-11** God's departure from the city had been a signal for the destruction of the city and the temple. Now for God to return, his conditions had to be met: Idolatry had to be removed. Some commentators feel these verses indicate that Ezekiel was commanding the people of his day to build this temple according to the designs and regulations that the angelic architect had given. But the people never repented and the conditions were not met, so the fulfillment was postponed.

**43:12** The basic law of God's temple was holiness. In all he does, God is holy, perfect, and blameless. There is no trace of evil or sin in him. Just as God is holy, so we are to be holy (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16). People are holy when they are devoted to God and separated from sin. If we do not understand the basic concept of holiness, we will never progress very far in our Christian growth.

### **The Great Altar Restored - Verses 13-27**

<sup>13</sup> "These are the measurements of the altar in long cubits, that cubit being a cubit and a handbreadth: Its gutter is a cubit deep and a cubit wide, with a rim of one span around the edge. And this is the height of the altar: <sup>14</sup> From the gutter on the ground up to the lower ledge that goes around the altar it is two cubits high, and the ledge is a cubit wide. From this lower ledge to the upper ledge that goes around the altar it is four cubits high, and that ledge is also a cubit wide. <sup>15</sup> Above that, the altar hearth is four cubits high, and four horns project upward from the hearth. <sup>16</sup> The altar hearth is square, twelve cubits long and twelve cubits wide. <sup>17</sup> The upper ledge also is square, fourteen cubits long and fourteen cubits wide. All around the altar is a gutter of one cubit with a rim of half a cubit. The steps of the altar face east." <sup>18</sup> Then he said to me, "Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: These will be the regulations for sacrificing burnt offerings and splashing blood against the altar when it is built: <sup>19</sup> You are to give a young bull as a sin offering to the Levitical priests of the family of Zadok, who come near to minister before me, declares the Sovereign Lord. <sup>20</sup> You are to take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar and on the four corners of the upper ledge and all around the rim, and so purify the altar and make atonement for it. <sup>21</sup> You are to take the bull for the sin offering and burn it in the designated part of the temple area outside the sanctuary. <sup>22</sup> "On the second day you are to offer a male goat without defect for a sin offering, and the altar is to be purified as it was purified with the bull. <sup>23</sup> When you have finished purifying it, you are to offer a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without defect. <sup>24</sup> You are to offer them before the LORD, and the priests are to sprinkle salt on them and sacrifice them as a burnt offering to the LORD. <sup>25</sup> "For seven days you are to provide a male goat daily for a sin offering; you are also to provide a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without defect. <sup>26</sup> For seven days they are to make atonement for the altar and cleanse it; thus they will dedicate it. <sup>27</sup> At the end of these days, from the eighth day on, the priests are to present your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar. Then I will accept you, declares the Sovereign LORD."

**43:18-27** This vision was simultaneously flashing back to Mount Sinai and forward to Mount Calvary. When the people returned from exile, they would seek forgiveness through the sacrificial system instituted in Moses' day. Today, Christ's death has made the forgiveness of our sins possible, making us acceptable to God (Hebrews 9:9-15). God stands ready to forgive those who come to him in faith.

## ***Ezekiel Chapter 44***

### **The Priesthood Restored**

<sup>1</sup> Then the man brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, the one facing east, and it was shut. <sup>2</sup> The LORD said to me, "This gate is to remain shut. It must not be opened; no one may enter through it. It is to remain shut because the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered through it. <sup>3</sup> The prince himself is the only one who may sit inside the gateway to eat in the presence of the LORD. He is to enter by way of the portico of the gateway and go out the same way." <sup>4</sup> Then the man brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple. I looked and saw the glory of the LORD filling the temple of the LORD, and I fell facedown. <sup>5</sup> The LORD

said to me, "Son of man, look carefully, listen closely and give attention to everything I tell you concerning all the regulations and instructions regarding the temple of the LORD. Give attention to the entrance to the temple and all the exits of the sanctuary. <sup>6</sup> Say to rebellious Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Enough of your detestable practices, people of Israel! <sup>7</sup> In addition to all your other detestable practices, you brought foreigners uncircumcised in heart and flesh into my sanctuary, desecrating my temple while you offered me food, fat and blood, and you broke my covenant. <sup>8</sup> Instead of carrying out your duty in regard to my holy things, you put others in charge of my sanctuary. <sup>9</sup> This is what the Sovereign LORD says: No foreigner uncircumcised in heart and flesh is to enter my sanctuary, not even the foreigners who live among the Israelites. <sup>10</sup> "The Levites who went far from me when Israel went astray and who wandered from me after their idols must bear the consequences of their sin. <sup>11</sup> They may serve in my sanctuary, having charge of the gates of the temple and serving in it; they may slaughter the burnt offerings and sacrifices for the people and stand before the people and serve them. <sup>12</sup> But because they served them in the presence of their idols and made the people of Israel fall into sin, therefore I have sworn with uplifted hand that they must bear the consequences of their sin, declares the Sovereign LORD. <sup>13</sup> They are not to come near to serve me as priests or come near any of my holy things or my most holy offerings; they must bear the shame of their detestable practices. <sup>14</sup> And I will appoint them to guard the temple for all the work that is to be done in it. <sup>15</sup> "But the Levitical priests, who are descendants of Zadok and who guarded my sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from me, are to come near to minister before me; they are to stand before me to offer sacrifices of fat and blood, declares the Sovereign LORD.

**44:2** Why was this east gate to remain closed? Several reasons have been suggested: (1) This was the gate through which God entered the temple, and no one else could walk where God had been (43:4); (2) the closed gate indicated that God would never again leave the temple (10:19; 11:23); (3) it would prevent people from worshiping the sun as it rises in the east from within the temple grounds (8:16).

**44:3** Although Christ is called a prince (37:25), this prince is probably not Christ because he offers a sacrifice to God (46:4) and he can enter only by the "portico of the gateway." He is a princely ruler of the city, but he is distinguished from other princes because he will be just and fair (see 45:8-9). Another view is that this picture anticipates Christ coming to offer the sacrifice of his own life to God.

**44:9** Unbelievers would not be allowed to enter the temple. Ezekiel's vision was for a restored, purified worship where only those who prepared themselves physically and spiritually could participate. In 47:22-23, we find that people from other nations are allowed to join in worship by accepting the standards of faith and practice declared in the law (see Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 15:29).

**44:15** Zadok's descendants are mentioned because many of the priests in Zadok's line had remained faithful to God, while others had become corrupt. Zadok supported God's choice of Solomon to succeed David, and was therefore appointed high priest during his reign (1 Kings 1:32-35; 2:27, 35). Zadok's descendants were considered the true priestly line throughout the time between the Old and New Testaments.

#### Verses 16-31

<sup>16</sup> They alone are to enter my sanctuary; they alone are to come near my table to minister before me and serve me as guards. <sup>17</sup> "When they enter the gates of the inner court, they are to wear linen clothes; they must not wear any woolen garment while ministering at the gates of the inner court or inside the temple. <sup>18</sup> They are to wear linen turbans on their heads and linen undergarments around their waists. They must not wear anything that makes them

perspire. <sup>19</sup> When they go out into the outer court where the people are, they are to take off the clothes they have been ministering in and are to leave them in the sacred rooms, and put on other clothes, so that the people are not consecrated through contact with their garments. <sup>20</sup> "They must not shave their heads or let their hair grow long, but they are to keep the hair of their heads trimmed. <sup>21</sup> No priest is to drink wine when he enters the inner court. <sup>22</sup> They must not marry widows or divorced women; they may marry only virgins of Israelite descent or widows of priests. <sup>23</sup> They are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean. <sup>24</sup> "In any dispute, the priests are to serve as judges and decide it according to my ordinances. They are to keep my laws and my decrees for all my appointed festivals, and they are to keep my Sabbaths holy. <sup>25</sup> "A priest must not defile himself by going near a dead person; however, if the dead person was his father or mother, son or daughter, brother or unmarried sister, then he may defile himself. <sup>26</sup> After he is cleansed, he must wait seven days. <sup>27</sup> On the day he goes into the inner court of the sanctuary to minister in the sanctuary, he is to offer a sin offering for himself, declares the Sovereign LORD. <sup>28</sup> "I am to be the only inheritance the priests have. You are to give them no possession in Israel; I will be their possession. <sup>29</sup> They will eat the grain offerings, the sin offerings and the guilt offerings; and everything in Israel devoted to the LORD will belong to them. <sup>30</sup> The best of all the first fruits and of all your special gifts will belong to the priests. You are to give them the first portion of your ground meal so that a blessing may rest on your household. <sup>31</sup> The priests must not eat anything, whether bird or animal, found dead or torn by wild animals.

**44:20-31** These laws were originally given to God's people during their wilderness wanderings. They are recorded in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. They reveal the importance of approaching God respectfully, and they give guidelines for the priests to live above reproach so they could carry out their responsibility to teach the people "to distinguish between the unclean and the clean" (44:23).