Clips from Psalms
Psalms 104:19-21
Jehovah's Care over all his Works

"The Lord appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knows his going down. You make darkness and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest creep forth. the young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God."

Kingdom of God or "Millennial Temple?"

A Study of Ezekiel's Vision of a City or Temple

What is Ezekiel seeing? The details of the temple Ezekiel sees as well as the similarities and differences of temples past, present, and future are very significant pieces of the puzzle. Our job is to put these pieces together so that we may accurately identify the temple of Ezekiel's vision. Due to the obvious differences in sacrifices and days of worship there is no way that Ezekiel is seeing a blueprint for Zerubbabel to build a literal temple when the captives return to Jerusalem. God had always expected his people to follow the Mosaic prescribed way of worship with precision (see Galatians 3:10). This new temple is different than the one Moses and Solomon was given measurements for. These three differences help us to see that Ezekiel's temple is something unlike what they had in Jerusalem, under the Mosaic Law, before Babylon destroyed them. This cannot, therefore, be a blueprint for Zerubbabel to use when he returns with fifty thousand people to rebuild the temple (see Ezra 2).

Premillennialist believe that what is being described by Ezekiel is a "millennial temple" that will be constructed during Christ's supposed 1000 year reign on the earth. To the Premillennialist, the passages of Revelation chapters 20 through 22 and Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48 must be taken literal rather than figurative. Charles Lee Feinberg stated, "Along with certain other key passages of the Old Testament, like Isaiah 7:14 and 52:13-53:12 and portions of Daniel, the concluding chapters of Ezekiel form a kind of continental divide in the area of Biblical interpretation. It is one of the areas where the literal interpretation of the Bible and the spiritualizing or allegorizing method diverge widely. Here amillennialists and Premillennialist are poles apart. When thirty-nine chapters of Ezekiel can be treated detailedly and seriously as well as literally, there is no valid reason a priori for treating this large division of the book in an entirely different manner" (The Prophecy of Ezekiel; page 233 taken from "The Millennial Temple of Ezekiel 40 – 48; An Exercise in Literal Interpretation by Dr. John C. Whitcomb). One valuable aspect of understanding the Old Testament prophets has been grossly overlooked by Dr. Whitcomb. Isaiah and Ezekiel often speak in a manner that may be compared to a dual plot found in movies. There are often two different issues at hand as the prophets of God spoke. First, they spoke of their immediate day and secondly they often spoke of the latter days of the kingdom of God. The two thoughts are often so intermingled that a casual study of God's word will yield nothing but confusion as has happened with Dr. Whitcomb.

A closer look at Ezekiel’s vision, in its context, yields eternal visions rather than
a specific time frame such as Dr. Whitcomb thinks of. Ezekiel speaks of an eternal everlasting rule (Ezekiel 37:23-26, 31). Jesus said that this kingdom would be established during the lifetime of some of those who stood listening to him speak (see Mark 9:1). His kingdom came into existence on the day of Pentecost just as the prophets had foretold (see Isaiah 2:2-4; Acts 1:19; and 3:24). Those who receive this spiritual kingdom, through hearing the call of the gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:12), are added to the kingdom through baptism (John 3:3-5 and Acts 2:22-44). God’s Kingdom has a king (Colossians 1:13) and a law (the everlasting covenant; Genesis 17:19; Galatians 3:18, 16; Matthew 4:23 and Hebrews 13:20). Those who receive the law of Christ (i.e., are obedient through faith) become citizens of the Kingdom of God (Ephesians 2:18ff). The collective group of citizens in the Kingdom of God are called the church of Christ (see Daniel 2:44; Joel 2:8ff; Acts 2:17ff; 3:24; Romans 16:16; Colossians 1:13 and 1 Thessalonians 2:12). Lastly, the kingdom of God represents the eternal heaven too (see 1 Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5; James 2:5; and Revelation 21 etc.). The thought is clear; those who accept the teachings of Christ (receive the Kingdom of God within) and are baptized enter into the Kingdom of God (the church) and there remain (unless unfaithful) until they receive their eternal inheritance of heaven (i.e., the eternal Kingdom of God) (1 Corinthians 6:9).

Neither Ezekiel, Daniel, nor the apostle John write of a literal thousand year reign of Christ that will occur after a rapture of righteous souls and seven years of tribulation (Premillennialism). Such theories are a misunderstanding of Revelation 20:1-6 as it relates to Ezekiel’s vision and prophecies reaching back to Ezekiel chapter 37. The Revelation account refers to spiritual battles that take place generation after generation until the Lord comes again to judge the world. There is no place for a future literal temple in the kingdom era where animal sacrifices are to be made because there is no forgiveness of sins in such sacrifices (Ezekiel 45:18ff and Hebrews 10:1-4). Ezekiel was simply speaking in a language in which those of his day could understand. A temple where God’s glory will be present, will be worshipped, and a river that flows out of it with the power to make whole that which was spiritually sick (Ezekiel 47:9, 12 compared to Revelation 22:1-2). These two scriptural references, Ezekiel 47:9, 12 and Revelation 22:1-2, prove that the prophet of God is seeing a vision of the eternal kingdom of God. Here is a spiritual temple in which man receives the forgiveness of sins and fellowship with Jehovah God.

Consider the fact that the Lord refers to the temple that Ezekiel is seeing as a “city” and “house” of God on a high mountain in addition to being a sanctuary or temple (see Ezekiel 40:2; 43:4-5 and 48:35). Upon this high mountain God would make his people a mighty nation ruled by King David (see Ezekiel 37:22-24). The author of Hebrews said that God was the architect of his kingdom city. He writes, “For he (Abraham) looked for the city which has the foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10 see also Hebrews 3:1-6). This high and holy city is precisely identified as mount Zion, the church, and the kingdom of God at Hebrews 12:22-28 (see also Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1ff). The first temple was only a shadow of what was to come in the New Testament church (see Hebrews 8:1-6).

Ezekiel saw the eternal kingdom of God which is the church in the New Testament era and beyond. The detailed measurements depict God’s eternal forethought as he predetermined the structure of his new kingdom people (see Ephesians 1:3-7). Jesus tells us that God’s kingdom is within man (see Luke 17:21). The Apostle Paul quotes from Ezekiel 37:27 at 2 Corinthians 6:16-18 as he identifies the Christian as the temple or kingdom of God. God’s kingdom is the church or saved people (see 1 Thessalonians 2:12). God’s objective with all these details is to illustrate his complete authoritative control over every man’s life (Jeremiah 10:23). Man must be conformed to God’s prescribed pattern and walk as God ordains (see Romans 8:29 and Ephesians 4:1-2). The temple, kingdom, city, and saints that Ezekiel sees in this vision will be forgiven of sins as God exercises his mercy upon them (see Ezekiel 47:9; Matthew 26:26; and Revelation 22:1ff).

I. Self Control - The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24) and the Christian Graces

A. Self-control (egkrateia) means “mastery over a person or thing… self-control” (LS 222). Moulton adds, “continence (self restraint) or temperance (restraint)” (Moulton 113).

B. Restraining one’s self from sinful behavior - 2 Timothy 3:1-3

C. A qualification of Elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

D. “I cannot trust a man to control others who cannot control himself” (Robert E. Lee).

II. Paul’s discussion with Felix (Acts 24:24-27)

A. A major objective preached in the gospel of Jesus Christ along with righteousness and judgment.

B. Felix and Drusilla had no right to be married.

III. Mastering one’s Mind


B. Over Desire (1 John 2:15-17)

Conclusion

Restraint and mastery of unlawful desires is the battle of the ages. The world view of obtaining personal glory, a proud and stout heart, and being lustful over things that do not belong to one are issues that one must keep in check in their lives. To fail to these devices is to fail to meet God’s objective of holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16). To sin is to miss the mark set by God!