

CHAPTER 41

An account was given of the porch of the house in the close of the foregoing chapter; this brings us to the temple itself, the description of which here given creates much difficulty to the critical expositors and occasions differences among them. Those must consult them who are nice in their enquiries into the meaning of the particulars of this delineation; it shall suffice us to observe,

I. The dimensions of the house, the posts of it (v. 1), the door (v. 2), the wall and the side-chambers (v. 5, 6), the foundations and wall of the chambers, their doors (v. 8-11), and the house itself (v. 13).

II. The dimensions of the oracle, or most holy place (v. 3, 4).

III. An account of another building over against the separate place (v. 12-15).

IV. The manner of the building of the house (v. 7, 16, 17).

V. The ornaments of the house (v. 18-20).

VI. The altar of incense and the table (v. 22).

VII. The doors between the temple and the oracle (v. 23-26). There is so much difference both in the terms and in the rules of architecture between one age and another, one place and another, that it ought not to be any stumbling-block to us that there is so much in these descriptions dark and hard to be understood, about the meaning of which the learned are not agreed. To one not skilled in mathematics the mathematical description of a modern structure would be scarcely intelligible; and yet to a common carpenter or mason among the Jews at that time we may suppose that all this, in the literal sense of it, was easy enough.

~~340~~ EZEKIEL 41:1-11

THE VISION OF THE TEMPLE

We are still attending a prophet that is under the guidance of an angel, and therefore attend with reverence, though we are often at a loss to know both what this is and what it is to us. Observe here,

1. After the prophet had observed the courts he was at length *brought to the temple*, v. 1. If we diligently attend to the instructions given us in the plainer parts of religion, and profit by them, we shall be led further into an acquaintance with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Those that are willing to dwell in God's courts shall at length be brought into his temple. Ezekiel was himself a priest, but by the iniquity and calamity of the times was cut short of his birthright privilege of ministering in the temple; but God makes up the loss to him by introducing him into this prophetic, evangelical, celestial temple, and employing him to transmit a description of it to the church, in which he was dignified above all the rest of his order.

2. When our Lord Jesus spoke of the destroying of *this temple*, which his hearers understood of this second temple of Jerusalem, he spoke of the temple of his body (~~400~~John 2:19, 21); and with good reason might he speak so ambiguously when Ezekiel's vision had a joint respect to them both together, including also his mystical body the church, which is called the *house of God* (~~508~~1 Timothy 3:15), and all the members of that body, which are *living temples*, in which the Spirit dwells.

3. The very posts of this temple, the door-posts, were as far one from the other, and consequently the door was as wide, as *the whole breadth of the tabernacle* of Moses (v. 1), namely, twelve cubits, (~~626~~Exodus 26:16, 22, 25. In comparison with what had been under the law we may say, *Wide is the gate* which leads into the church, the ceremonial law, that wall of partition which had so much straitened the gate, being taken down.

4. The most holy place was an exact square, twenty cubits each way, v. 4. For the new Jerusalem is exactly square (~~6216~~Revelation 21:16), denoting its stability; for we look for a city that cannot be moved.

5. The upper stories were larger than the lower, v. 7. The walls of the temple were six cubits thick at the bottom, five in the middle story, and four in the highest, which gave room to enlarge the chambers the higher they went; but care was taken that the timber might have *fast hold* (though God builds high, he builds firmly), yet so as not to weaken one part for the strengthening of another; they had hold, but not *in the wall of the house*. By this spreading gradually, the *side-chambers* that were on *the height of the house* (in the uppermost story of all) were six cubits, whereas the lowest were but four; they gained a cubit every story. The higher we build up ourselves in our most holy faith the more should our hearts, those living temples, be enlarged.

3412 EZEKIEL 41:12-26

THE VISION OF THE TEMPLE

Here is,

1. An account of a building that was *before the separate place* (that is, before the temple), *at the end towards the west* (v. 12), which is here measured, and compared (v. 13) with the measure of the house, and appears to be of equal dimensions with it. This stood in a court by itself, which is measured (v. 15) and its galleries, or chambers belonging to it, its posts and windows, and the ornaments of them, v. 15-17. But what use was to be made of this other building we are not told; perhaps, in this vision, it signified the setting up of a church among the Gentiles not inferior to the Jewish temple, but of quite another nature, and which should soon supersede it.

2. A description of the ornaments of the temple, and the other building. The walls on the inside from top to bottom were adorned with *cherubim and palm-trees*, placed alternately, as in Solomon's temple, ~~1119~~ 1 Kings 6:29. Each cherub is here said to have two *faces*, the *face of a man* towards the palm tree on one side and the *face of a young lion towards the palm-tree* on the other side, v. 19. These seem to represent the angels, who have more than the wisdom of a man and the courage of a lion; and in both they have an eye to the palms of victory and triumph which are set before them, and which they are sure of in all their conflicts with the powers of

darkness. And in the assemblies of the saints angels are in a special manner present, ~~4110~~1 Corinthians 11:10.

3. A description of the posts of the doors both of the temple and of the sanctuary; they were *squared* (v. 21), not round like pillars; and *the appearance of the one was as the appearance of the other*. In the tabernacle, and in Solomon's temple, the door of the sanctuary, or most holy, was narrower than that of the temple, but here it was fully as broad; for in gospel-times *the way into the holiest of all is made more manifest* than it was under the Old Testament (~~5008~~Hebrews 9:8) and therefore the door is wider. These doors are described, v. 23, 24. The temple and the sanctuary had each of them its door, and they were *two-leaved*, folding doors.

4. We have here the description of the altar of incense, here said to be an *altar of wood*, v. 22. No mention is made of its being *over-laid with gold*; but surely it was intended to be so, else it would not bear the fire with which the incense was to be burned, unless we will suppose that it served only to put the censers upon. Or else it intimates that the incense to be offered in the gospel-temple shall be purely spiritual, and the fire spiritual, which will not consume an altar of wood. Therefore this altar is called a table. *This is the table that is before the Lord*. Here, as before, we find the altar turned into a table; for, the great sacrifice being now offered, that which we have to do is to feast upon the sacrifice at the Lord's table.

5. Here is the adorning of the doors and windows with palm-trees, that they might be of a piece with the walls of the house, v. 25, 26. Thus the living temples are adorned, not with gold, or silver, or costly array, but with *the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible*.