

The Altar Offers Hope

Ezekiel 43:13-21

SS Lesson for 11/09/2014

Devotional Scripture: Col 1:10-23

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson examines how **The Alter Offers Hope**. The **study's aim** is to see the significance of the alter in Israel's future worship and to look through the lens of Israel's sacrificial system in order to understand that worship is important to God and crucial to our relationship with Him. The **study's application** is to know God's forgiveness and sacrificial provision for our sins. (Adapted from *the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*).

Key Verse: Ezek 43:18

And He said to me, "Son of man, thus says the Lord God: 'These are the ordinances for the altar on the day when it is made, for sacrificing burnt offerings on it, and for sprinkling blood on it.'

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

When the millennial temple is established and God is enthroned in it, daily services will begin. Ezekiel was given a description of the altar (Ezek 43:13-17) and regulations for consecrating it (Ezek 43:18-27). The height of **the altar** was 19' feet (11 **long cubits**), but part of this was below ground. The height of the altar above the ground (10 cubits) corresponds to the altar constructed by Solomon (2 Chron. 4:1). However, since Solomon used the shorter 18-inch cubit (2 Chron. 3:3), the total height of his altar was only 15 feet compared with an above-ground height of 17½ feet for the millennial altar. **The altar hearth**, 21 feet **square**, was reached by a flight of steps facing **east**. A seven-day ritual will be employed by **the priests... of Zadok** (cf. Ezek 40:46) to set **the altar** apart to the **LORD**. This consecration service will be similar in some ways to the services followed by Moses (Exodus 40:10, 29) and Solomon (2 Chron. 7:8-9) to sanctify their houses of worship to God. After **seven days of offering** bulls, goats, and rams **the priests** will **present** the people's **burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar**. This process will mark the full resumption of God's fellowship with His people, as then God **will accept** them. These sacrifices will point Israelites to Christ who will have given them access to the Father (Heb. 10:19-25).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

When we think of altars today, we often think of the front of the church. Either we use the steps up to the platform as an altar, or there is a short wall at which we can kneel down and rest our arms. But have you ever thought about what an altar really is? The dictionary defines "altar" as "a usually raised structure or place on which sacrifices are offered or incense is burned in worship" (www.merriam-webster.com). The earliest altars may have been a rectangular stone with a hollowed-out basin, but in Israel after the Exodus it was a wooden one covered in bronze. An altar was used to kill and burn an animal sacrifice as an atonement for sin. The Lord gave Ezekiel very specific instructions regarding the dimensions and other details of the future restored altar. The priests would offer a bull, a goat, and a ram as a sacrifice for seven days straight just to purify the altar and consecrate themselves. "And when these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 43:27). The altar was a place of death; yet it was also a place of life. As the animal was sacrificed for the sins of the people, it withheld God's wrath and judgment upon the people. A sacrifice was killed, drained of its blood, and then ignited. In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (12:1). Our God is an all-consuming fire. Paul was urging us to put ourselves on the altar and die to our fleshly, sinful ways. If we are willing to let our old nature die, then His Spirit within us will truly live. When Jesus died upon the cross, He was the ultimate sacrifice. When He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30), His sinless, stainless blood had paid the debt for all mankind in a single transaction. We no longer need to find an animal without spot or blemish and offer it as an atonement for our sin. Jesus is the Lamb of God, and He became that sacrifice. We no longer need to build a physical place to offer our sacrifices. However, that does not mean that the altar is obsolete. Nor does it indicate that there is no longer a need for a sacrifice. Our sacrifices are different now. Today, we build an altar with our hearts. We come before the Father and offer ourselves—our wants, our desires, our needs, and our plans. We lay it all before God in prayer, trusting that there will be a divine exchange of our will for His will. If you have ever checked out a fireplace after the fire has died down, you will notice a lot of ashes. As we continually learn to place ourselves on the altar, allowing the all-consuming fire of God to purge us, we too will have a lot of ashes. But our

God does not allow anything to go to waste. He promised that He would give us beauty for ashes (Isa. 61:3). God takes the remains of death found on the altar and brings forth life. Jesus' sacrifice offered us eternal life.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The TV game show Let's Make a Deal offers contestants the opportunity to trade something they have or a particular item they've won for something else that is hidden perhaps behind a door or under a box. The contestant has to decide whether or not to "make a deal" for the hidden item. The deal often proves to be a good one because that which is behind the door or under the box is quite valuable. But at other times the prize is a "zonk," the deal clearly a bad one. The word picture of a door is often used to describe an opportunity to serve the Lord in a particular place. The Bible uses that picture in 1 Corinthians 16:8, 9; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3; and Revelation 3:8. When a door opens, however, sometimes there is something behind it that we do not anticipate. Imagine Ezekiel, nearing his thirtieth birthday (Ezekiel 1:1), eagerly anticipating the opportunity to carry on the noble family tradition by serving as a priest in the temple (see Numbers 4:46, 47). Then picture his plans shattered as mighty Babylon enforces her will on Judah. Ezekiel finds himself shoved through an open door to end up in a pagan land. The door he preferred, the one that led to service in the temple, was slammed shut. Yet God had plans for his would-be priest. Ezekiel may have been separated from the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, but he was not separated from the Lord himself. As described in Ezekiel 1, God came to him in pagan territory in an awe-inspiring vision to call him to be a prophet to his captive people. And when the magnificent temple vision that we are currently studying was granted to Ezekiel, he saw himself fulfilling a priestly role in that temple in a way he never could have imagined. God closed one door on Ezekiel, but he opened another—taking Ezekiel's ministry in a magnificently unexpected direction.

Today's lesson text picks up where last week's ended. Therefore the background is the same, and that information need not be repeated here. But since today's text introduces the new element of a restored altar of sacrifice, some observations on its predecessors are in order. A vital part of the Old Testament system of worship was the altar. Altars are mentioned in connection with Noah (Genesis 8:20), Abraham (12:7, 8; etc.), and Jacob (35:1-7). After the Israelites emerged as a nation from Egypt, God prescribed exact specifications for an altar of burnt offerings (Exodus 27:1-8; not to be confused with the altar for burning incense in 30:1-10; 39:38). The portable altar of burnt offerings was superseded by the temple's altar, which was more than 50 times larger by volume (2 Chronicles 4:1). Over the centuries that followed, the temple's altar underwent episodes of desecration, rededication, removal, and repair until the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. The altar was rebuilt as a first priority after return from exile in 538 BC (Ezra 3:1-3). But the account of that reconstruction does not claim to fulfill Ezekiel's vision of a new altar, received in 573 BC (Ezekiel 40:1). Fulfillment was to come later (today's lesson).

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Altar's Design (Ezek 43:13-17)

13 "These are the measurements of the altar in cubits (the cubit is one cubit and a handbreadth): the base one cubit high and one cubit wide, with a rim all around its edge of one span. This is the height of the altar:

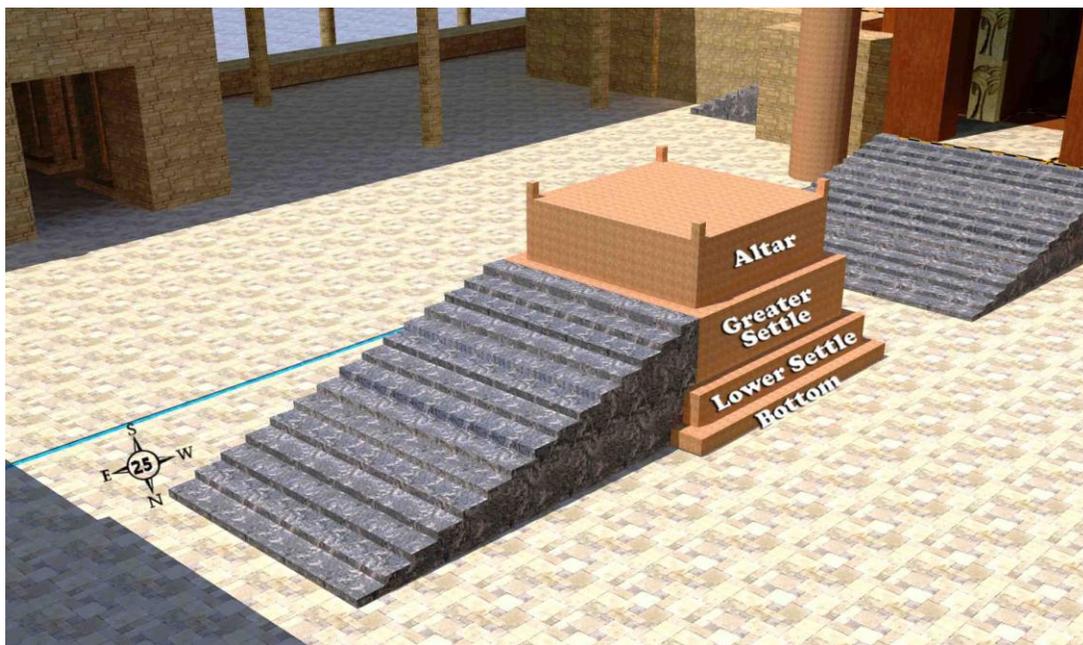
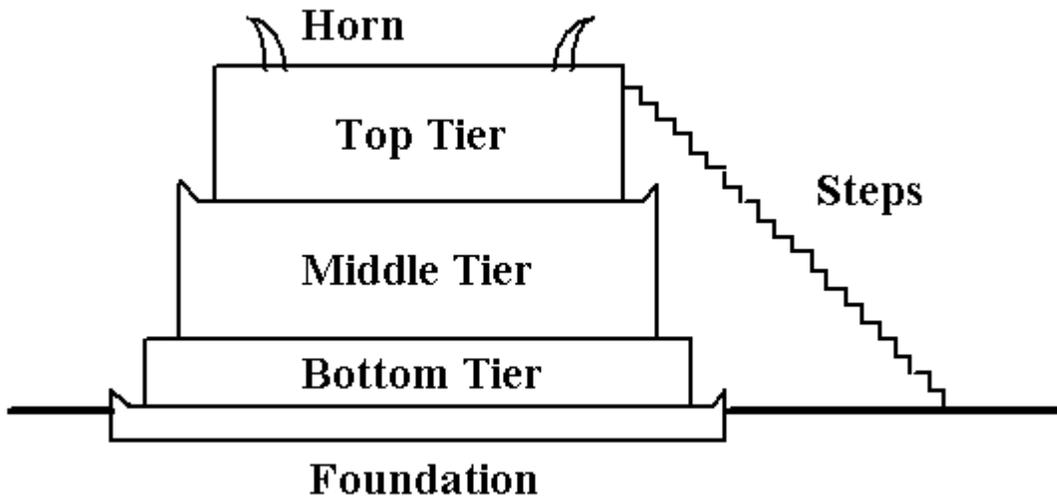
14 from the base on the ground to the lower ledge, two cubits; the width of the ledge, one cubit; from the smaller ledge to the larger ledge, four cubits; and the width of the ledge, one cubit.

15 The altar hearth is four cubits high, with four horns extending upward from the hearth.

16 The altar hearth is twelve cubits long, twelve wide, square at its four corners;

17 the ledge, fourteen cubits long and fourteen wide on its four sides, with a rim of half a cubit around it; its base, one cubit all around; and its steps face toward the east."

Pictorial view of the Altar (13-17)



Precision Matters (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

If you have ever fought through the icy winds of a blizzard, you may have wondered why God positioned the sun so far away. If you have ever suffered through an extended heat wave, you may have wondered why God placed the sun so close. Earth's average distance from the sun is a little over 92,955,800 miles; when combined with the effects of our planet's 23.4° axial tilt, that is the right distance to keep everything within the proper temperature range. Our atmosphere remains in place because the correct level of power of the Earth's magnetic field prevents cosmic radiation from stripping it away. These and other factors allow us to thrive. We may find ourselves uncomfortable from time to time, but God has designed a home for us that meets our needs. We have only to compare Earth's conditions with those of Venus, Mars, etc., to be convinced that precision matters. As we work through our lesson for today, the details that God prescribed for the altar may seem tedious. But these details remind us that God is ever orderly and never capricious. Can we say the same thing about our prayer life? Our giving pattern? Our worship attendance? Think it over— when you have between 1.000 and 2.000 minutes to do so

The Altar's Purpose (Ezek 43:18)

18 And He said to me, "Son of man, thus says the Lord God: "These are the ordinances for the altar on the day when it is made, for sacrificing burnt offerings on it, and for sprinkling blood on it.

Sacrificial offerings (18)

Sacrificial offering starts with offering self to God (Rom 12:1)

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.

Sacrificial offering of service means being steadfast in commitment (Acts 21:12-14)

12 When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

Sacrificial offering of service reaps rewards (Mark 10:29-31)

29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields — and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Sacrificial offering of service is a privilege and it is God's will (2 Cor 8:3-5)

3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

Sacrificial offering is giving all one has (Mark 12:43-44)

43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on."

Sacrificial offering is giving, even though it is the last (1 Kings 17:8-13)

8 Then the word of the Lord came to him: 9 "Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food." 10 So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" 11 As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread." 12 "As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread — only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it — and die." 13 Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son.

Sacrificial offering is service that is almost to death (Phil 2:29-30)

29 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

Sacrificial offering has a motive that is not selfish (James 4:3)

3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Sacrificial offering has a motive that lays treasures in heaven (1 Tim 6:17-19)

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Sacrificial offering has a motive of delighting oneself in God (Ps 37:4)

4 Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Sanctification (18)

Sanctification is when God makes one blameless (1 Thess 5:23)

23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sanctification through the blood of Jesus (Heb 9:13-14)

13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Sanctification is setting apart Jesus as Lord in my heart (1 Peter 3:15)

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

Sanctification is presenting my body as a slave to God in righteousness (Rom 6:19)

19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

Sanctification is the purpose for which God has called His people (1 Thess 4:7)

7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

Sanctification into salvation (2 Thess 2:13)

13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

Sanctification in Jesus (1 Cor 1:2)

2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours:

Sanctification through the washing of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:11)

11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Sanctification through God's will (1 Thess 4:3)

3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;

The Altar's Dedication (Ezek 43:19-21)

19 You shall give a young bull for a sin offering to the priests, the Levites, who are of the seed of Zadok, who approach Me to minister to Me,' says the Lord God.
20 You shall take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar, on the four corners of the ledge, and on the rim around it; thus you shall cleanse it and make atonement for it.
21 Then you shall also take the bull of the sin offering, and burn it in the appointed place of the temple, outside the sanctuary.

Must be through an authorized priest (19)

Jesus, a priest in the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:4-6)

4 No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." 6 And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

Jesus, a priest from the tribe of Judah (Heb 7:11-17)

11 If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come — one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? 12 For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. 13 He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. 14 For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. 15 And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, 16 one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. 17 For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

Satisfaction of penalty through bloodshed (20)

Bloodshed of Jesus that provided reconciliation and peace (Col 1:19-20)

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Bloodshed of Jesus that provided eternal redemption (Heb 9:12-14)

12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

A sin offering must be brought for forgiveness (21)

Forgiveness through Jesus that was obtained once for all (Heb 9:27-28)

27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Forgiveness through Jesus who is at the right hand of God (Heb 10:11-13)

11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. 13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool,

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Thomas L. Constable

The temple ordinances 43:13-46:24

Instructions (statutes) designed to maintain holiness in the new temple follow. The Lord specified how His people were to construct the new altar to accommodate sacrifices (43:13-17) and how they were to dedicate it (43:18-27). He revealed how they were to use the temple (44:1-9), how the priests were to function (44:10-31), and how the sacred land district was to be used (45:1-8). An exhortation to Israel's leaders forms the center of this section (45:9-12). The rest of it contains instructions for the worship leader (45:13-46:18) and directions for the use of the priests' kitchens (46:19-24). "The existence of the millennial temple and the reinstatement of the sacrificial system [though not necessarily the reinstatement of the Mosaic Covenant] is not only understandable but predictable. Ezekiel's vision of a restored sacrificial system was really not so amazing after all. The millennium will afford Israel the opportunity for the first time in its history to use the symbols of their covenant with Jesus as Messiah in view. It will be their first time to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation showing forth to the world the redemptive work of Yahweh in the person of Jesus Christ the Messiah (Isa 53:7; 61:1-3; Zech 4:1 [*sic* 3:10]; John 1:29; Acts 8:32-35; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 7:13-14; 5:9; 13:8; 15:3)."

The altar of sacrifice 43:13-17

Some scholars view this section as the central one in chapters 40-48. The altar was at the very center of the whole temple complex, and it was the centerpiece of the system of worship represented in the new temple complex.

43:14 The square altar rose above its foundation in three tiers, the largest one below, the next largest one above it, and the smallest one on top. The first, largest stage was two cubits (3 feet 4 inches) high and one cubit (20 inches) smaller than the foundation on each of its four sides. The second tier was four cubits (6 feet 8 inches) high and one cubit (20 inches) smaller than the first tier on each of its four sides.

43:15-16 The third tier, which formed the altar hearth, the very top of the altar, was also four cubits (6 feet 8 inches) high. Four horns stood on the top of the altar, one at each corner undoubtedly, symbolizing strength. This tier, the hearth, was 12 cubits (20 feet) wide on each side.

43:17 The second tier was 14 cubits (23 feet 4 inches) square. It too had a curb around its upper edge that formed a gutter, and that curb was half a cubit high (10 inches, cf. v. 13). There were to be steps up to the altar from the east. Formerly the Lord had forbidden the use of steps leading up to His altars (Exod. 20:24, 26). The total size of this altar was about 18 cubits (30 feet) square at the bottom, 20 feet square at the top, and 16 feet 8 inches high. Solomon's brazen altar had been smaller (cf. 2 Chron. 4:1). This design made this altar resemble a small ziggurat.

The cleansing of the altar 43:18-27

43:18 The Lord told Ezekiel what to do when the construction of the altar was complete. The purpose of this altar was to receive the burnt offerings that people would bring to the Lord and to receive the blood of those animal sacrifices. "The offerings presented thereon were meant to be memorials, much as the Lord's Supper is no efficacious sacrifice but a memorial of a blessedly adequate and all-sufficient sacrifice for all time. Thus, whereas the sacrifices of the Old Testament economy were prospective, these are retrospective." Since Old Testament saints will experience resurrection at Christ's second coming (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2-3, 13), perhaps Ezekiel himself will lead this purification ceremony at the beginning of the Millennium. Alternatively the Lord may have dealt with him in the vision as He will deal with the person in charge of the real purification ceremony when it occurs.

43:19-21 Ezekiel was to give to one of the priests that would serve in this sanctuary, a priest from the honored line of Zadok (cf. 40:46; 44:15; 1 Kings 2:35), a young bull for a sin offering. He was to smear some of the bull's blood on the four horns of the altar and on the four corners of its second tier (cf. Exod. 29:12). This would cleanse the altar and make atonement for it (i.e., purify it). Similar ceremonies had taken place to cleanse the tabernacle and Solomonic temple altars (cf. Exod. 29:36-37; Lev. 8:14-17; 2 Chron. 7:9). Ezekiel was to burn the remainder of this bull outside

the inner court (cf. Lev. 8:17). "Cleansing was needed because everything associated with man partook of sin and therefore needed to be cleansed, especially if it was to be used in the worship of the Lord."

43:22-24 The next day Ezekiel was to offer a ram that was free of blemishes as a sin offering. This also was part of the seven-day ritual necessary to cleanse the altar. Then he should present another bull and another ram, equally blemish free, in the inner court. The priest was to throw salt on them, slay them, and offer them as burnt offerings. Salt was an agent of purification and preservation that was often used symbolically (cf. Lev. 2:13; Num. 18:19; 2 Chron. 13:5; Mark 9:49).

43:25-26 On each of the seven days Ezekiel was to prepare a goat for a sin offering and a young bull and a ram as burnt offerings. These sacrifices also had to be without blemish, and they would make atonement and purify the altar. This seven-day ceremony would consecrate the altar for service (cf. Exod. 29:36-37).

43:27 After the completion of this consecration ceremony, from the eighth day onward, the priests were to offer burnt and peace offerings on this altar. The Lord promised to accept the worship of His people if they followed this procedure. "Although all the offerings of Leviticus are not detailed here, it is considered by some that they are implied, and they may well be. Prospectively they all pointed to Christ, so this would be in keeping with that truth in the retrospective sense." Most premillennialists believe that the millennial sacrifices will be memorials of Christ's sacrifice and will have nothing to do with removing sin.⁵⁸⁸ However, some premillennialists argue that since Christ will be personally present on earth during the Millennium, these sacrifices may really purge sins, the sins of believers. The argument rests on the meaning of "atone." Now Christians confess our sins and receive forgiveness (1 John 1:9), but now Christ is not present on earth. When He is personally present and in closer contact with His people, it may take more than just confession to secure adequate cleansing. This may be a correct explanation for the presence of sacrifices in the Millennium, but it seems impossible to be dogmatic about that now. A third view is that the sacrifices are not literal, but that Ezekiel was describing worship in the future in terms and forms that he and his original hearers knew.

(Adapted from URL: <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

While the details we have read today may seem rather tedious and mundane, they were very hopeful and heartening to Ezekiel and the people of God who received this message originally. The destruction of the temple and the sacred area where sacrifices could be offered to the Lord had been emotionally devastating. Add to this the sad state of the people exiled far from the promised land, and we see a picture of near hopelessness. Hope blossomed anew as Ezekiel saw the vision of a restored temple with restored worship of the Lord. Ezekiel's audience could understand that their captivity was not "a period" in the plan of God, marking an end; it was rather "a comma," just a pause. God had other, greater plans for his people. He certainly was not finished with them. Hebrews 13:10 states, "We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat." That writer wants to impress upon his readers the superiority of life in Christ. But what is this altar of which the author of Hebrews speaks? If we think of an altar's primary purpose as sacrifice, then perhaps the altar in Hebrews is the cross, where Jesus sacrificed his life as the ultimate sin offering. As Hebrews 13:11, 12 goes on to say, "The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood." If Ezekiel's vision of an altar brought hope to him and to God's people, how much more does the altar of the book of Hebrews bring hope—the hope of sins forgiven, the hope of new beginnings, the hope of eternal life!

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. God's plans extend to the smallest details of life (Ezek. 43:13-14)
2. We never need to guess what God wants us to do; we simply need to obey what He tells us (vss. 15-17)
3. The concept of sacrifice is central to understanding the work of Christ (vs. 18)
4. Those who serve as spiritual leaders of God's people must be especially careful to follow every detail of God's Word (vs. 19)
5. Holiness must characterize every aspect of our worship (vss. 20-21)