

**COME
HOLY
SPIRIT**



Sermon Growth Guide

July 3, 2022
Fill the Temple



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Come Holy Spirit – Fill the Temple

Ezekiel 43:1-7a

Key Verse: Ezekiel 43:5 “Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.”

Big Idea: What good is a temple if God does not live in it? What good is a church building apart from God’s presence? We are God’s temple, God’s holy dwelling place. And we pray, *come Holy Spirit, fill your temple with your glory!*

Foundations

This week we conclude our series, *Come Holy Spirit*.

In Ezekiel 43 we enter a big moment in Ezekiel’s prophecy. From chapter 40–44, he “sees” the restored temple and the glory of God filling the temple once again. This vision must have been overwhelming and incredibly hopeful.

Earlier in the book (10:18), Ezekiel received another vision, a vision of the glory of the Lord departing from the temple. From the sixth year of exile to the 25th year of exile, Ezekiel had lived with the vision of the empty temple. Now the Lord shows him a new vision, a place where the Lord “will live among the Israelites forever” (43:7).

This vision is rich with imagery and sound: the roar of rushing water, the radiance of the land, the soles of God’s feet walking among His people. What Ezekiel experiences is the glory of the Lord, and he falls down face first and must be lifted by the Spirit to see the rest of the vision.

What is prophesied in the Old Testament comes to fulfillment in the New Testament. Jesus has fulfilled the vision of Ezekiel as the One in whom we have forgiveness and assurance of God’s presence.

Understanding God’s Word

Together, read Ezekiel 43:1–7a.

What does Ezekiel see, and how does he describe God’s glory?

What does God teach Ezekiel about His presence with Israel?

Applying God’s Word

Read 1 Peter 2:4–5. Who is the temple now and what is God building?

What does it mean that you are now a living stone? And part of a holy priesthood?

Witnessing God’s Word

Paul prays in Ephesians that we would know the immensity of God’s love for us so that we would be “filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (3:19). As God gives Ezekiel a picture of His glory filling the temple, so Paul prays that we would be filled with the fullness of God in our lives.

As you think about your own life, are there areas where you sense you have not given the Holy Spirit full permission to fill those places with the love of Christ and the power of God’s presence? Ask God to give you courage today and to be open to His healing presence.

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Today we finish our sermon series on the Holy Spirit. **Come Holy Spirit** has been an invitation to ask God for His presence to enter more deeply into our lives and into our life together as a church body. But as we finish our series on the Holy Spirit, know that the Holy Spirit is not finished with you or me—or with us! The Holy Spirit is forming and fashioning each of us to be like Jesus—over a lifetime.

We are in Ezekiel 43 today, so you can turn there in your Bibles. It will also be on the screens. What I want you to know as I read today's Scripture is that we are entering smack dab into the middle of a wild vision that spans 4 chapters. We are entering at the highpoint of that vision. Let's listen to the Word of God, and then hear together what the Holy Spirit has to say to us.

Let's Pray...

Ezekiel 43:1-7a--Then the man brought me to the gate facing east, 2 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. 3 The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when he[a] came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown. 4 The glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east. 5 Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

6 While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me from inside the temple. 7 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 Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Let me start with a question. What does it feel like to be full? We can take that question a number of different ways. Let's start with the last great meal that you had that filled you up! Perhaps you were so full you couldn't move! Maybe you fell asleep. What did it feel like to be full?

What about the last time you filled up your gas tank? Maybe this one is too painful right now! You used to not feel anything when you filled your tank—now you feel frustrated, angry and incredibly poor! Fullness has a big price tag.

When was the last time you had a wonderful and deep conversation with a good friend—and you felt your tank filled up because you spoke openly, freely, honestly from your heart. And so did your friend. Your heart was full.

Maybe you recently had a full night of sleep—and you woke up rested and ready for the day. What did that feel like? Can't remember? I know!

When we talk about feeling "full," we can talk about physical fullness, heart fullness, soul-fullness—but there is often a visceral response to being full. We have some built-in indicators that alert us when we are full.

Our passage today is about fullness. It's about God's presence filling the temple. The center of this passage is in verse 5: "...and the glory of the Lord filled the temple."

What does it feel like to be in a place where God's presence is thick, bursting out of the boundaries and where the Spirit of the Lord is so present you can feel it?! Or you know it?

Ezekiel's vision is a multi-chapter vision. It is about the fullness of God in the world, the filling of the people of God, and the forever-ness of God's fullness. That's a mouthful!

Here is what I want to suggest to you today in this message: **When God returns to his temple, it won't just be his summer address, but his permanent home. What God creates; he intends to fill. Forever.**

So, what's going on here?

As we have discussed during this series, the people of God are in exile in Babylon and Ezekiel is with them. In chapter 40, where this particular vision begins, we read that Ezekiel receives this vision "in the twenty-fifth year of our exile." Let's just pause on that for a moment. Twenty-five years living in someone else's land, under someone else's rules with no end in sight. The temple has been destroyed, and the people of God, according to Ezekiel's work, have completely lost their way. 25 years. It feels like God has abandoned them.

At there is some truth to that...at least the feeling of that absence. You see, in the sixth year of their exile, Ezekiel received a vision from the Lord similar to the one we are looking at today, only exactly opposite.

In chapter 10, we read "then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple..." Ezekiel sees the Lord's presence leaving the people. That's excruciating.

For 19 years, the dominant vision has been one of God's departure. And for 19 years Ezekiel has been calling them back to God—through prophetic visions and oracles and laments and story. And now, finally, God shows Ezekiel a vision of His return to the temple—and it is a glorious picture.

Let's fill in the vision. In the chapters leading up to the moment (beginning in chapter 40), a man comes to Ezekiel with a measuring rod. And for two full chapters, the man measures every inch of the temple...from the threshold to the gates to the walls and the courts to every room and to the altar. Inches and feet...it's rods and cubits—which mean nothing to us. But, you get the point. Every inch is measured and Ezekiel is to write it down. Remember the temple has been destroyed. At this point in the Israel's life, there is no temple. **Is it possible that Ezekiel is receiving the blueprints for a new temple? Maybe.**



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It reminds me of God's very specific instructions to Moses in the book of Exodus when the people of God are constructing the initial tabernacle in the wilderness—every detail is explained and mapped out over 5 chapters: the furniture, the fabric, the vestments, the placement of candlesticks. And carefully and with much work, every detail is built and woven and put together by the people of God.

But here is the thing, friends. **While the temple is beautiful and perfectly measured, a work of art and standing strong, it is really *nothing* until the glory of the Lord enters the place.**

Here's what we read at the end of Exodus after Moses finished the work. "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34).

And here is what we read almost 800 years later in Ezekiel 43:5: "Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple."

The high point for both Ezekiel and Moses is the moment when God fills the temple. The entire book of Ezekiel rests on the power of God and what happens when God sends His Spirit to give life and to change hearts.

Ezekiel grasps for words and metaphors to describe what he sees: Ezekiel 43: 2 "and I saw the glory of the Lord coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory."

The word "glory" is a heavy word full of meaning—it literally meaning the honor, splendor, riches, abundance, radiance and weightiness of God.

As Ezekiel experiences the glory of the Lord returning to the temple, he uses two images—water and light.

First, we read that God's voice sounds like "the roar of rushing waters." God is noisy. You can hear Him. If you've ever camped by a mountain stream, or slept on the beach, the roar of the water is constant and loud. Like this...close your eyes and listen to the noise of the rushing water.

Do you know the sound of God in your life? In our life together? The Psalmist writes, "Be still and know that I am God" (46:10).. Stop for a moment and listen for the sound of God.

God makes noise. God can be heard. God has a voice.

And then Ezekiel describes the land being "radiant with his glory." Radiant light, bright, brilliant, dazzling, shining, resplendent. The Lord comes through the gate facing east. Interesting. What happens in the east every morning?

Each time Moses describes the "east" location in Exodus, it is followed by "the place where the

sun rises." Is Ezekiel experiencing the Lord's glory being like the sunrise? That makes sense. The sun rising is like the glory of the Lord coming.

God is bright and radiant. His presence lights up and warms the whole earth. Light and warmth and brightness are the marks of the Lord. The Psalmist writes, "make your face shine on us that we may be saved" (80:3).

Do you know the light and warmth and grace of God as He fills every inch of this earth and every inch of your life? If you were to measure your life, the Holy Spirit wants to fill every inch (and cubit) of that life.

Water and light. Presence and fullness.

Ezekiel is so overwhelmed by the whole experience, that he falls face down. **When God comes and fills the temple, there is no confusion for Ezekiel about what is happening.** Even after 25 years in exile and 19 years of feeling God's absence, he has not lost his ability to know God's nearness.

And then the man in his vision speaks—(43 verse 7). "The place for my throne and for the soles of my feet is right here. I will live among the Israelites forever." Two more images. A throne and a pair of feet. This is a King who walks with his people. One who lives and dwells and steps into the soil of our lives. And not just for a year or two or thirty-three. But forever, which, in the words of Prince, "is a mighty long time."

Water and light. A throne and a pair walking feet. How do these images of God's presence help us to open up to the fullness of the Holy Spirit in our life together?

New Testament

Fast forward to the New Testament, specifically the Gospel of John just for a moment. John opens his gospel declaring that we have now seen God's glory—the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. Eugene Peterson puts it this way in the message: "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood." I love that phrase.

Jesus. The image of the invisible God. The glory of God. The fullness of God dwelling in human form. The glory of God filling the temple is now fulfilled in Jesus.

Peter pushes the image of the temple into the image of the church and the image of the church into us—living stones—built upon the cornerstone, Jesus himself. Peter is clear: It's not the building, it's the people—filled with the presence of God, made alive in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul pushes the image further into the individual—your body is the temple of God, the Holy Spirit dwells in you. *Do you not know that your bodies are **temples** of the Holy Spirit, who is in you,*



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whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

There is a lot of theology wrapped up in all that I just said, but let me simply say that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, the third person of the trinity, fills the people of God, the church. That's the trajectory of this passage today: God fills his people.

All the architecting we do of our buildings, our lives, our life together means very little apart from the Holy Spirit's work. But when the Holy Spirit of Jesus comes into our lives, like rushing water and a beautiful sunrise, we come to life. With the filling of the Holy Spirit, the church becomes who the church is meant to be—the body of Christ in the world. And you and I become who we are meant to be—living stones and little temples...alive with the Holy Spirit.

Application

That was a lot to take in. And I want to shift for a moment and say a few pastoral words about our life together and specifically about my work with you in the next season of our church life. I've been a pastor here for more than 21 years. And in that time, I've had three different pastoral assignments. About every 6-7 years, my job focus shifts. And as many of you know, it's shifting again. I've been in my Executive Pastor role for 8 years and it's been a joy to serve in that role. But just like you, I grow and mature in my gifts, and the Holy Spirit has made it clear to me and to us that my gifts are ready to be applied in a new way in our next season together. My title now changes to Senior Associate Pastor, and my area of focus in this next season is what I am calling "spiritual health." This has been my focus over the last 6 years in my doctoral work, and everything we've just been discussing from Ezekiel today is about the health that rushes into our lives when the Spirit enters and begins to work in us.

Let me give you one more story and one final image (to add to the rushing water and eastern sunrise) as we come to a close today.

A Doll's House

At the end of May, I attended a play with my daughter at our kid's school—it was the final project of the 11th grade class. They were performing Henrik Ibsen's work, *A Doll's House*. I wrote my final paper on this play my senior year in high school. Ibsen was a Norwegian playwright and theater director in the 1800s, and *A Doll's House* debuted at the Royal Copenhagen Theater in Denmark on Dec. 21, 1879. It's not really your feel-good Christmas drama. Rather, it's a devastating work on marriage, husbands and wives, and the culture of the time. I found myself weeping at the end (looked around—nobody else)—and thought, oh, there is something here in my heart. I could turn it off and stuff it, or I can go home and talk with Adam. Which is what I did—and that led to a deeper discussion about our

marriage and our life together that was difficult but ended up being quite healing. It felt to both of us like a Holy Spirit-led conversation.

There are signals, friends, all time in our emotional lives—that Jesus wants to bring into the open and tenderly help us process and by the Spirit find deeper pockets of healing and truth and health.

Pastor Pete Scazerro uses the image of an iceberg when he writes about the deep work of the Spirit in our lives. At any given time, he writes, only 10 percent of our lives are visible to others. We are fairly comfortable in our lives dealing with that 10 percent--the part that everyone can see. But underneath the water is 90 percent of the iceberg...the parts of our lives that are often unseen, unchanged, and remain frozen...in our discipleship lives we can begin to get below the surface, but a large part of our lives remain untouched by Jesus.

Spiritual health is about letting Jesus begin to touch that other 90 percent. Allowing the Spirit to begin to thaw those places that are in deep freeze can feel overwhelming, or too much, or too painful. Things in our past, in our family systems, dark behavior, or addictions that we are desperately trying to manage.

Becoming spiritually healthy is simply allowing the Holy Spirit to fill every inch of our lives and our life together with the presence of Jesus that we might live freely and with joy and light and with the roar of rushing water, living water flowing through every area.

Are there places in your life that are dark or closed off? Places you have abandoned because you don't know what you will find if you dig too deep?

Maybe the word of God through Ezekiel today speaks to something in your heart that the Lord longs to heal or bring you to a place of freedom. It is freedom weekend, by the way.

But know that you are not alone in this. The glory of the Lord fills the temple—the house of God, the people of God. This is church-activity, friends, at its finest. The Holy Spirit working in the body to transform and heal and bring health. We come together—even in our toughest moments—because we know God is at work in our life together.

The book of Ezekiel ends with a few powerful words—you can turn there if you've got your Bibles open. At the end of Ezekiel's vision, the words simply are these:
"And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE."

Friends, the Lord is here. The Spirit of God is working right now in your life. In our life. Let's pray.

