

Worship Reform In Ezekiel's Temple Vision

Abstract

Ezekiel's highly complex Temple Vision has been called a "graveyard for commentators." Thoroughly mined by eschatologists, it has been neglected by many others. This is unfortunate because of its potential fertility for ecclesiology, missiology and pastoral care. I read the Temple Vision as a utopia rather than a literal prediction. This dissertation will examine what I believe to be its main theological ideas: YHWH's sovereignty, separateness, mobility and purity-conditions and suggests the first two are the origin of holiness. It will examine rituals of purity and separation in Ezekiel's Presentation of the Temple, and the need for their perpetual maintenance to keep YHWH. Ezekiel makes reverent and careful God-pleasing worship absolutely basic, because he was helping Israel to make sense of YHWH's abandonment. Ezekiel makes such worship foundational to the New Israel. I read it as foundational for the Church. Worship is the trigger for God's grace to transform society. Attention to detail in the sanctuary, exemplified by additions to blood manipulation legislation, precipitates the grace to transform society, as exemplified in Ezekiel's temple spring. This anticipates modern debates about worship's relevance to society. This dissertation will suggest that ritual is additionally the most pastoral of all acts and that attention given to ritual is attention given to pastoral care. It compares Ezekiel's reforms to two other reform movements Anglo-Catholicism and Pentecostalism, which I suggest were responses to the problem of poor worship and concludes that while Anglo-Catholicism partly succeeded, Pentecostalism has perhaps less to offer. Applying Ezekiel's ideas to the Church of Ireland and my internship parish, Ezekiel illuminates for me certain worship shortcomings and the widespread abandonment of Christianity for Orangeism by Ulster Protestants. This dissertation draws a parallel between the positions of the exiles and the current Ulster Protestants and suggests that Ezekiel offers a solution to both.