Summary

PART 1 is an introduction to this study and offers a research history. This study focuses on the intention and relevance of Ezekiel 40-48 from a Christian theological perspective. In our introductory chapter (chapter 1) we formulate a research question and describe our research method. The vision of Ezekiel 40-48 gives a fascinating description of a new future for Israel. Meanwhile, it evokes questions because of the very lengthy and detailed description of the temple, the variation of visionary and realistic descriptions and its national and cultic focus. Besides, there is some uneasiness from the Christian perspective because of the Old Testament setting and tenor of the vision. Because of that particular character, the vision has gained little attention in practical and systematic theology, except in evangelical (dispensational) circles. Is it justified, however, that Ezekiel 40-48 gets so little attention in mainstream theology? This research will focus on the following question: what is the intention of Ezekiel 40-48 and in which respects is it still relevant for Christian preaching and theology?

This question will be answered in four main parts. The first part gives a description of the research history of Ezekiel 40-48. This chapter forms the background and soundboard of the view developed in this study. Our own view takes shape in the second part, in which we present an exegesis of Ezekiel 40-48. In doing so, we will restrict ourselves to the main lines. We will then explore the theological motives behind the description and the connection between Ezekiel 40-48 and the remainder of that book. In our study of the reception history (third part) we examine the reception of Ezekiel 40-48 in early Judaism, the New Testament, the Jewish tradition and church history. This study of the history of interpretation sharpens our view on the problematic nature of the interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48. In the fourth part, we present our own hermeneutical contribution. First, we formulate the fundamental tenets and preconditions for adequate and reliable hermeneutics. Within that framework, we present our own hermeneutic perspective, based on Biblical and systematic theological study.

Chapter 2 describes the research history from the beginnings of the historic-critical study of Ezekiel in 1841 (Ewald) through 2016. From the great amount of publications it appears that Ezekiel 40-48 has received a fairly great amount of attention in Old Testament studies, in sharp contrast with the little attention that was paid to it in practical and systematic theology. Our survey of the research history shows that the discussion about the inter-
interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48 circles around three main questions, namely the issue about 1) the conceptual and literary unity of Ezekiel 40-48: 2) the character and language of the description; 3) the intention of the vision. In this study we go deeper into these questions, because they are of crucial importance for the answers to the first and second part of our research question: what is the intention of Ezekiel’s vision and in which aspects is it still relevant? In discussion with former research, we will make our own contribution to the scholarly debate on Ezekiel 40-48.

In PART 2 we will go deeper into the three sub-questions from an exegetical perspective.

Chapter 3 gives an exegesis of Ezekiel 40-48, focusing on the main themes. Ezekiel 40-48 is a vision that portrays a new, bright future for Israel. This takes place by means of a visionary report. The date of the vision reminds of the events described in Ezekiel 8-11. As a visionary description of redemption, Ezekiel 40-48 is the counterpart of the description of judgment in Ezekiel 8-11. The date emphasizes the priestly background of Ezekiel. That background is very important for understanding the vision. The description of the new temple has a very technical character. Many unusual (and even unknown) terms make it difficult to understand. In several places the Masoretic text is incomprehensible and corrupted. The LXX translators also had difficulties to understand the written text. Within a visionary framework, Ezekiel 40-48 contains a temple description and three elaborated divine instructions. There is no reason to date the visionary descriptions earlier or later than the instructions. The literary form of a building description and the introduction of a supernatural guide (‘the man’) with measuring instruments remind us of other Ancient Near Eastern conceptions. It is, however, significant that Ezekiel – unlike other contemporaneous authors – describes the temple as an already built structure. No new temple has to be built. The temple is already there as a gift of God.

The description of the building attracts attention through its continuity and discontinuity. In some aspects, the new temple building resembles the old one (e.g. by its tripartite structure with side chambers). The lay-out is quite different, however. One of the most striking features in this respect is the almost empty temple house. The only furniture mentioned in the proper temple is a ‘table for the Lord’. The temple building is characterized by three distinguishing marks. 1) Separation: not everyone is allowed to come everywhere in the temple. 2) Ascension: the temple has the form of a terrace, indicating that some parts are more significant and holy than others. 3) Symmetry: the temple has a square form and is symmetrically structured. Everything breathes order and regularity. This is underlined by the numbers used: most of them are multiples of five. The temple description offers no
detailed building plan. Too many details are missing: no heights are men-
tioned and the building materials are not specified either.

Ezekiel 43:1-44:4 marks the culmination of Ezekiel 40-48, but it also
serves as the transition point The kābōd YHWH comes to dwell among
Israel and starts to speak to the prophet. From now on, the auditio prevails
over the visio. The instruction mainly focuses on the sacrifices, because
they regulate the association between God and man. The altar description
(43:13-17) is the centre of 43:1-44:4, regarding content and literary structure.
The altar is also the mathematical centre of the temple complex. The
description of the kābōd reminds of Ezekiel 1 and 8-11. In Exodus and
Numbers the kābōd is closely tied with God’s covenant and therefore with
the tabernacle and temple. Ezekiel’s description of YHWH’s throne chariot
emphasizes that the kābōd is not automatically connected with the temple.
The return of the kābōd is a sign of God’s grace. YHWH’s presence shall
now be forever more (לעולם) among them. The kābōd is the illustration and
manifestation of God’s holy Name (קדשׁי שׁם). The greatness and holiness
of God reflect on the temple as His dwelling place. Holiness is therefore a
main theme in this vision. The instructions which YHWH gives after the
return of the kābōd, stipulate the conditions under which YHWH wants to
dwell among Israel.

The intention of the vision is to bring Israel to repentance and shame
(43:10-12). The future must be the opposite of the past. Everything in the
temple must contribute to the glorification of God’s Name. Ezekiel ini-
tiates the sacrificial service by God’s orders in 43:18-26. In the used cultic
vocabulary – for example to cleanse (טהר pi), to make atonement (כפר pi)
and to bring near (קרב hi) – this special holiness concept is put forward.

In 44:6-15 a division among the temple personnel is proclaimed. From
now on, only Zadok’s descendants are allowed to act as priests. The rest of
the clergy – mostly referred to as the (other) Levites – should take care of
the temple. This division is the consequence of former loyalty (in the case
of Zadokites) or disloyalty (in the case of the other Levites) to YHWH. Just
as Pinehas and Eli, the Zadokites and Levites are negative or, respectively,
positive examples for the people of Israel (compare 1 Samuel 2:30). The
division has a parenetic scope. The rules concerning the behaviour of the
Zadokites are discussed in detail. The prescriptions are delivered within the
framework of the sanctification of God’s holy Name. Ezekiel 44:30b makes
clear that serving God brings blessing to every individual Israelite.

The temple is built on a new location in Israel. That location becomes the
centre of the Holy Portion, a strip of ground measuring 25,000 by 20,000
cubits. This portion is divided into two pieces of land: one for the Zadokites
and one for the (other) Levites. The Zadokites inhabit the strip of ground
on which also the temple is located. The location of the temple reminds of
Numbers 2 and 3. This division is meant to preserve God’s holiness. The description of the Levitical portion resembles the institution of the Levites’ cities (Num. 35). Old prescriptions are adjusted to new circumstances, but their original intentions are maintained.

In 46:1-2 the former misuse of power by the nĕśîʾîm is dealt with. The prince (nāšî’) shall now have his own, inalienable portion of land. That will control his hunger of property. The prince is summoned to do justice and righteousness, to have consideration with his people and not to exploit them (44:9). The title nāšî marks this figure as a theocratic ruler, descending from the lineage of David and acting like him (cf. 34:23). The prince has to facilitate and organize the sacrificial service. He imposes the taxation for the sacrifices. Fraud should be out of question; all weights and measures are therefore to be verified and stamped. The function of the prince in the temple service is clearly specified. He represents the people of Israel and is the first among his equals.

The cultic calendar which Ezekiel prescribes, differs from the Pentateuchal one. Instead of a day of atonement, there is a week of atonement, beginning at the first day of the new year. There is no mention of a high priest. Of all pilgrimage feasts, only Pesach and Booths are mentioned. The temple service is concentrated around the burnt-offering altar. The sacrifices are mainly focused on making atonement (כָּפָר pi). JHWH stipulates who shall have access to Him. In the new order everyone shall have his own place and function. That concerns not only the priests and Levites, but also the prince and the people.

In Ezekiel 47 and 48 the effects of the indwelling of the kābôd YHWH are described. A brook springs from underneath the threshold of the temple and forms a river that endows abundant life to the most unfruitful part of the land. In this description we recognize motives from the Eden story, the Sion tradition and contemporary temple concepts. Once the land has been healed, it is divided among the several tribes of Israel. When drawing the borders of the land Israel, Ezekiel harks back to old traditions. The far reaching acceptance of the gērîm (sojourners) reveals God’s care for the vulnerable sojourner who joins Israel.

The distribution of the land within its new borders is very schematic. Every tribe gets a strip of ground of the same dimensions: the strips are situated from north to south below each other. This voices social care: no tribe should suffer lack. The flaws of history are repaired (e.g. the preferential treatment of Juda under Salomon). The order of the tribes is based on old traditions (the two wives and two concubines of Jacob). In the description of the new city, Ezekiel gives an adapted form of Sion theology. Ezekiel’s idea is midway between tradition and renewal. Where tradition gave way to treacherous, wicked behaviour, it is changed and reinterpreted. Positive ini-
tiatives in tradition are further developed (care for sojourners, fair division of the land). The blessing presence of YHWH is correcting, renewing, transforming and recreating. Ezekiel paints Israel’s bright future in his own way. His painting differs from that of other prophets.

At the end of this chapter we formulate a preliminary answer to the three sub-questions of our study of the intention of this text unit. Concerning the literary and conceptual unity (sub-question 1), we can conclude that Ezekiel 40-48 forms a conceptual unity. Its main theme is clear: the realization of a dwelling place for the Holy One. How can YHWH again – and now permanently – dwell among Israel? YHWH’s presence requires a respectful worship, but also offers blessing. Besides the conceptual unity, Ezekiel 40-48 also forms a literary unity. The language and conceptual world of Ezekiel 40-48 (sub-question 2) are marked by Ezekiel’s priestly background. The temple plays an important role in the vision. Respecting YHWH’s holiness is the most important motive behind the new cult and the division between the cult officials. This is evident from the frequent use of the stem qds in Ezekiel 40-48. Ezekiel’s conceptual world is linked with contemporary temple concepts. His description of the temple is a variation on the temple descriptions of the Ancient Near East. With regard to the intention of Ezekiel 40-48 (sub-question 3), it is evident that Ezekiel 40-48 offers a promise and a call for repentance and self-reflection (Ezekiel 43:10-11).

Chapter 4 offers a study of the place and function of Ezekiel 40-48 within the entire book of Ezekiel. In the research history, the connection between Ezekiel 40-48 did not get much attention or was not explored profoundly. Our study fills that gap. Ezekiel 40-48 has deliberately been positioned at the end of the book, although it is not the latest dated prophecy. In this way it forms the climax of the book. It describes the target of God’s dealings with Israel. Israel was led into exile because of their own sins. When the temple (and its service), the city, people, prince and land were destroyed, God seemed to have broken His covenant with them. Israel’s sin is qualified as spiritual harlotry. Closely tied with this abuse to God, is the social injustice of which Israel made itself guilty. The history of failure and doom (culminating in the exile; Ezekiel 16 and 23), was changed into a history of salvation through the intervention of YHWH. This happens when Israel becomes what it ought to be: God’s holy people that honours and obeys Him as its Lord. God’s care for the glorification of His Name is an important theme in the entire book of Ezekiel. It is the reason for God’s remaining alliance with His people (Ezekiel 36:20-23). Ezekiel 40-48 shows that God achieves His goal with Israel. These chapters form the climax of the book. YHWH will dwell among them in eternity and be their God. This gives the vision an eschatological character. This eschatological character is
underlined by the placement of the vision after Ezekiel 38-39. That chapter describes the ultimate threatening and deliverance of Israel.

Ezekiel 40-48 functions also as a coda of the entire book. It is a summary of the main motives and topics in the book. The age of salvation consists of the renewal of the temple, city, land, people and (the position) of the prince. This description contrasts sharply with the sinful past and is a reaction to it. Ezekiel 40-48 is a summary and a specification of God’s promises of salvation which are stated in the rest of the book, especially in Ezekiel 34-39. Now the question is answered how the holy God – manifested through His kābôd – can dwell permanently and definitely among Israel.

This chapter gives a further answer to our three sub-questions. Ad 1. The study of the placement of 40-48 within the entire book of Ezekiel, sharpens our view on its unity and content. Ad 2. It has become clearer to us, how much Ezekiel’s conceptual world and language are influenced by his priestly theological background. This is clearly indicated by his frequent use of the terms holy, profane, clean and unclean. Also on an idiomatic and a phraseological level there is a great resemblance between Ezekiel and other priestly texts (e.g. Leviticus). Ad 3. We discovered that Ezekiel 40-48 offers an eschatological outlook. This text unit is a summary and specification of God’s earlier promises of salvation. Beside promises, the text also contains incentives.

**PART 3** investigates into the history of interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48.

Chapter 5 discusses the reception and interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48 in early Judaism and the New Testament and shows a variety of interpretation lines. In the writings of the Qumran community, the content of Ezekiel 40-48 has never been explicitly and systematically discussed. Sometimes verses from Ezekiel 40-48 are cited, but usually in a modified and an updated form, functioning as an expression of the self-understanding of the Qumran community. We also find a lot of allusions to and echoes from Ezekiel 40-48. The Temple Scroll is strongly reminiscent of Ezekiel 40-48, but the writer handles it in a relatively free way. Apparently, most of the early Jewish writers have not considered Ezekiel 40-48 to be a mandatory building prescript or an authoritative description of a future eschatological sanctuary, but rather as a directive: it directs our thoughts when we visualize the future temple building and also gives us an idea of how the eschatological temple and city will look like. This is evident in the writing titled Description of the New Jerusalem. That description differs from Ezekiel’s concept. However, a common thread in such conceptions, is the thought that the new city and temple must be holy and that the entire design must serve the holiness of God, exactly as Ezekiel wanted. When speaking about a new temple and city, the authors make a rather selective use and interpre-
tation of Ezekiel. The prophet gives an overall picture of the new future: a new temple, a new city, a newly distributed land, a renewed people and a new place for the prince. As far as we could see, that overall picture does not appear elsewhere. Early Jewish literature sometimes refers to individual aspects of the vision (although mostly in a modified sense) but nowhere to the vision as a whole. *The Temple Scroll* resembles Ezekiel’s conception most. As a rewriting of the Pentateuch, that scroll leans on ideas of Ezekiel. However, even that scroll does not mention the size of the country as Ezekiel does.

Some texts from Qumran and other early Jewish literature connect the idea of a new temple – described in a manner reminiscent of Ezekiel – with the arrival of the Messiah. Besides, early Jewish literature sometimes speaks about both a new earthly and a new heavenly sanctuary. Allusions to Ezekiel 40-48 often appear in an apocalyptic framework; the temple and the city are portrayed in non-earthly, heavenly features. This is, for instance, also the case in Revelation 21-22. This last example offers a reinterpretation of Ezekiel 40-48. Several elements of the temple and the city receive a new interpretation. Temple and city are no longer distinguished; they melt together and lose both the earthly and provisional character which they had in Ezekiel’s vision. The city is now for Israel and the Christian church. This reinterpretation of Ezekiel rises from a new, Christological and salvation historical perspective. *The Songs of Sabbath* from Qumran present a more spiritual reading of Ezekiel’s vision. The earthly temple is strongly connected to the heavenly one. Building elements in the earthly temple could therefore refer to spiritual realities in the heavenly one. This spiritual reading does not make the earthly temple superfluous, but rather gives it a spiritual surplus value. In the New Testament, we also find a similar spiritualization. However, that spiritual interpretation has its roots in a Christological and pneumatological perspective.

Chapter 6 offers an overview of the interpretation history within the Jewish and Christian tradition. The Jewish interpretation sees Ezekiel 40-48 mainly as a promise for a new, third temple. This temple should have been erected after the return of Israel from the exile, but that was prevented through the sins of the people. Elements of this temple were already visible in the second temple. The temple of Ezekiel will be built in the age of salvation, the Messianic Age or the eschatological time. The rabbis disagree about the precise character of this time and the sequence of the events. According to Maimonides, the temple shall be erected at the beginning of this time. During these days, there will not be a significant change in the natural order. However, according to Kimchi, the temple shall be built when the dead are raised. There is also discussion about whether this future (and the building
of the temple) is an unconditional gift of God, or something that people should try to achieve themselves, at least partly.

In church history, the Christological and ecclesiological-pneumatological interpretation of the temple vision has been dominant. By means of allegory, Jerome and Gregory the Great apply numerous details in the temple description to Christ, the church and the individual believers. This spiritual Christian interpretation is sharply distinguished from the eschatological, earthly-literal Jewish interpretation. It is striking that neither Jerome nor Gregory gives attention to an eschatological reading of Ezekiel’s vision. They do not connect Ezekiel 40-48 with Revelation 21-22. According to Jerome, he only wants to edify the present believers and to bring a practical message.

This interpretation is pre-eminent during the Middle Ages. Richard and Andrew of Saint Victor, however, choose a different approach and lay great stress upon the literal sense (sensus litteralis) of the vision. Before we can find a spiritual meaning, it must be clear what kind of building Ezekiel envisaged. Richard of Saint-Victor describes this temple in great detail. Andrew of Saint-Victor shows much appreciation of the historical-grammatical exegesis of contemporary Jewish exegetes and also offers a literal explanation of Ezekiel 40:1-44:8.

The reformer Calvin gives a fairly short explanation in his only sermon on this vision. It attracts, however, attention through his two clear hermeneutic principles: 1) Christians can receive much spiritual edification from Old Testament institutions and laws, and 2) the words of comfort for the dismayed exiles have permanent relevance for true believers from Jews and Gentiles. They proclaim the spiritual Kingdom of Christ. Just like Jerome, Calvin does not view Ezekiel 40-48 from an eschatological perspective. Calvin is afraid of apocalyptic speculations.

The discussion in Coccejan circles at the end of the seventeenth century shows the question is relevant again: Does the described temple refer to a concrete, earthly reality? Vitringa states that Ezekiel 40-48 involves a concrete building order. It describes the temple that Zerubbabel built. On the other hand, Vitringa, stresses the Christological and ecclesiological meaning of the vision (the temple as a metaphor of Christ and the church). Vitringa has a detailed, balanced and substantive discussion with the Jews.

The dispensationalistic/prechiliastic explanation rejects the Christological-ecclesiological interpretation of many of the before-mentioned exegetes. Within an elaborated eschatological concept – that sharply distinguishes between the church and Israel – the dispensationalists consider the promises of Ezekiel 40-48 as a description of the salvation for Israel during the millennium. The temple of Ezekiel shall be rebuilt exactly as it has been described. The natural environment shall also be changed.
PART 4 has a hermeneutical character. In this part we investigate the relevance of Ezekiel 40-48 for Christian theology and practice. Our preceding research results are elaborated on the basis of biblical and systematic theology and hermeneutics.

Chapter 7 delineates our preconditions and outlines of a sound hermeneutics. We further define the genre of the text unit. This enables us to answer the third sub-question of our research in more detail. In line with our precedent research, we typify Ezekiel 40-48 as an eschatological prophecy in the form of a visionary report. As a vision, Ezekiel 40-48 is the proclamation of a visualized, dramatized and guaranteed promise. As an eschatological prophecy the vision pictures the ultimate realization of God’s covenant with Israel. Prophecy has a strong rhetorical character. First and foremost, it is actual preaching to contemporary hearers. Through its contextual content and the contingent response to the preaching, it is possible that fulfilment of the promises or threats does not fully match with their exact wording. In prophetic preaching there is no differentiation in time of fulfilment.

There is a substantial and firm debate in the Netherlands (and abroad) about the place and function of Israel in the eschatological salvation promises. This discussion is inspired by the foundation of the state Israel in 1948. The question is, what does it mean that the prophecies are primarily spoken to and destined for Israel and proclaim salvation to the Jewish people? In this discussion, there are at least three positions. This disagreement requires further biblical-theological and systematic-theological reflection, because of its impact on the hermeneutics of Ezekiel 40-48.

In conversation with contemporary hermeneutics we formulate three hermeneutical perspectives, which direct us in our interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48. 1) Talstra’s reader-response method; 2) Vanhoozer’s theological interpretation, that does justice to the human and divine authorial intention; 3) Ricoeur’s approach in which the relevance of mystical and symbolical language is emphasized.

In chapter eight, our own hermeneutics takes shape. First, we set the themes of the vision in a broader biblical-theological framework. The main subject of Ezekiel 40-48 is the new temple. The temple is the earthly dwelling place of YHWH as the God of Israel and therefore a token of God’s election of Israel. Starting from its monotheistic belief, Israel puts its own accent on the temple conceptions that it shares with the Umwelt. The temple is the connection point between the godly and human world. As a microcosm the temple refers to the macrocosm (world and heaven). The temple and the Sabbath are signs of God’s rule. The temple is also a source of blessing and a reminder of the first divine dwelling place on earth. Holiness is the indis-
pensable mark of the temple, because that belongs intrinsically to God. In priestly theology, there is a sharp distinction between clean and unclean and holy and profane. There are gradations in holiness concerning the spatial, personal, ritual and temporal dimension. The temple cult regulates the worship of YHWH and the association between Him and his people. The new temple forms the centre of the land. It gives the other themes – city, people, prince and land – their own place and significance. This research result enables us to further define our position regarding the second sub-question (the character, language and conceptual world of the description). The priestly theological worldview forms the background of that description.

Starting from the question whether Ezekiel 40-48 has relevance within the Christian theological perspective, we also study the place that these themes (temple/service, city, land, people and prince) have in the New Testament. We observe both continuity and discontinuity between the Old and the New Testament. All these themes play an important role in the New Testament. However, in the New Testament, a significant paradigm shift takes place through Christ. Furthermore there is a change of perspective.

We will build on this biblical-theological study in a systematic theological discourse. The main question is: how can we read the Old Testament within a Christian reading community? We take our starting point in the unity of the Old and the New Testament. Both are concerned with the one story and salvation plan of God that unfolds in history. This salvation history circles around Christ, in whom the covenant with Abraham comes to its destination and salvation expands itself to the whole world. However, the Old Testament keeps its own intrinsic significance. Its attention to the created, earthly life is striking and remains important (as rightly argued by Miskotte and Van Ruler). In Ezekiel 40-48, this earthly aspect steps to the front.

As people of God’s covenant, Israel has its own place in the Old Testament and it retains that place in the New Testament. A broadening, however, takes place through Christ: the nations become participants in what God has promised to Israel. Ezekiel 40-48 is originally meant for the Jews, but in this way it gets a broader reading community (extended audience). As an eschatological prophecy, Ezekiel 40-48 contains three special aspects that are significant for hermeneutics, that is time, language and rhetoric. Regarding the time: it is important to speak about a lasting double perspective. God’s promises relate to the present and the future. Regarding the language: the realistic description is embedded in an idealistic framework and therefore gets a symbolic surplus value. Symbolic language must be interpreted within the symbolic universe of the hearers. Regarding the rhetoric aspect: The description of Ezekiel 40-48 serves a rhetoric purpose. It is meant to induce a clearly described reader-response. It also visualizes and guarantees God’s promise. The intended meaning of the text for the first readers/hearers, gets
a more amplified character for us (extended meaning). For understanding the relevance of the text, a careful analysis of the relation between form and content, literal expression and message is essential.

The above creates a basis to read Ezekiel 40-48 from a Christian theological perspective. This is a relecture, a recontextualization. This relecture implies respect for the integrity of content, intention and literal expression of the text in its historical context. The description of Ezekiel 40-48 now gets a new accent because of the change of paradigm and perspective in the New Testament. Meanwhile the core of the message remains untouched. We position our relecture next to relectures from other perspectives. This opens up possibilities for a discussion between reading communities.

Ezekiel describes the new temple as the dwelling place of God. Several notions that play a part in this conception, are important for present Christian theology and praxis. The manner Ezekiel articulates the theme of holy proximity, is instructive and enriching. Priestly theology makes a valuable contribution to the reflection and practical implementation of this theme within Christian theology.

Man’s association with God throws light on the other themes that were discussed. The description of the city shows that a human civilization flourishes when God’s rules are observed. The city is a sign of social cohesion within Israel. Serving God is narrowly linked to serving each other. The description of the new land is remarkable for its theological and social dimensions. The land belongs to God and therefore every Israelite and sojourner should be given room and opportunity to develop themselves. On the basis of these premises, we are able to reflect on our possessions, our aim of life and social responsibilities. We must not forget that the promise of a new and bright future, is first and foremost given to the Jewish people. God’s promise of the land Israel does neither evaporate nor become frozen into just one possible mode of fulfillment. The Jewish character of the description underlines God’s remaining faithfulness to His covenant. Gentiles are allowed (and invited) to participate in the salvation that God has prepared for His people. The figure of the prince symbolizes the theocratic ideal. Church and state have their own place and function. Both are, however, accountable to God.

Ezekiel 40-48 is difficult to understand and will remain to be so. Nevertheless, it contains an inexhaustible treasure of theological and practical wisdom. It contains exhortation and promise and is meant for Jews and Gentiles. It grants a fantastic perspective on present and future reality. That is not strange, because when the Holy One is in our midst, everything becomes new - now and later.