Comparison between the Tabernacle and the temples of Ezekiel and Solomon.

Ezekiel and his book:

- Ezekiel and his contemporaries.
- Three divisions in the Book of Ezekiel

Biblical history and the Temple:

- God's Plan and Moses on Sinai
- Building the Tabernacle
- David's desire to honour God.
- God's Plan and the Covenant.

Solomon's Temple:

- Location and dimensions
- Contents, opulence and wealth.

Ezekiel's Temple:

- Location and dimensions
- Contents and unravelling of the vision

Using different approaches in understanding Ezekiel’s vision:

- Literal and figurative approaches to Ezekiel's vision

Summary.

A comparison between the Tabernacle & temples of Ezekiel & Solomon, with significance of the temple in Ezekiel’s book.

Ezekiel was born into a priestly family, but before he could fulfill his duties as a priest, God called him for duty, as a Prophet at 30 yo, some 6 years before Solomon’s Temple was destroyed, in Jerusalem. That made him a contemporary with other prophets, like Jeremiah and Daniel.

Though it is not certain, Ezekiel probably lived at Gilgal, during Babylonian attacks on Jerusalem, but his important work as a Prophet took place in Babylon, during the Exile.

There are 3 main divisions in Book of Ezekiel.

1. Judgement of Judah and Jerusalem .... these oracles ending with his wife’s death ..... Ezekiel 1-24

2. Oracles for foreign nations, critical of their role in the downfall of Judah ..... Ezekiel 25-32.

3. Visions of a FUTURE Temple and a new Jerusalem ..... and examples of its grandeur may be found in ..... Ezekiel 40-46.

In comparing Ezekiel’s visionary temple with Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem, we need to appreciate the history leading up to Ezekiel’s prophecy, at the time of the Exile.

Biblical history leading to the building of the Temple.

In comparing Ezekiel’s “dream temple” with that Solomon built, it is worth venturing back to the time of the Exodus and Moses’ second stay on Mt Sinai.
There, God gave him a detailed plan Exodus 25-31 for God’s Tabernacle, a mobile temple, said to be fashioned after a temple in the heavens ..... Hebrews 9:11, 24.

God’s Tabernacle was built immediately upon Moses’ return from Sinai to his people ..... Exodus 35-40

This was considered to be the MOST HOLY PLACE on earth, by the Jews and here’s more details about the Tabernacle, at:

   Click here for many links to Tabernacle information .....  

In the camp and on move throughout the Exodus, the Tabernacle faced east and was surrounded by the 12 tribes, with the Levite priests attending to function of the Tabernacle, as the Temple of God on earth.

Moving ahead, we read in 2 Samuel 7:5 of King David’s desire to build a Temple for God ..... this is another very important part of our story, as it lead to the Davidic Covenant itself and continuation of David’s lineage, down to Jesus, himself.

God told David, as he was a man of war, he would not be allowed to build the Temple. Instead that task was assigned to David’s son, Solomon “the builder” ..... 1 Kings 9 – 10.

David spent the latter part of his life gathering the building materiels, enormous quantities of gold, silver, cedar wood and other adornments for the new Temple, which was indeed built by Solomon ..... 1 Kings 5 – 8, 1Chronicles 22:5

In Chronicles 21:1-18 & 2 Samuel 24, we read about David’s census and God’s disapproval by sending an angel to destroy Jerusalem, but that tragedy was avoided as David erected an altar to honour God, on Mount Moriah ..... 2 Chronicles 3:1
Psalm 72:9

“They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him and his enemies shall lick the dust.”
Solomon’s Temple:

That same location, was where Solomon built God’s Temple, using measurements exactly double those God had specified to Moses, in the original plans for the Tabernacle ... 1 Kings 6:2

From 1 Chronicles 22:5, David describes Solomon’s Temple, as:

“ ..... and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceedingly magnificical of fame & glory throughout all countries”

Adorning the temple and surrounds were 300 gold shields, each hammered out of 3 pounds of gold ..... 1 Kings 10:17.

Forty-five of these shields were most prominent and were inscribed with intricate geometric symbols and Hebrew writing, which often related to verses in Psalms or Proverbs.

See example, posted on the page above ....

Later, raids on the Temple took their toll, such as, when Shishak of Egypt stole all the gold shields, they were replaced with shields made of bronze ..... 1 Kings 14:26

So obviously, Solomon’s Temple was not only considered the Most Holy place for the Jews, it also flaunted Solomon’s abundant wealth, at that time.

Its magnificence was captured here, by Corinne Heline, in this description of the “Finished Temple”:

“During the seven years that the Temple was being built, no workman was ill and the perfection of their tools remained unimpaired. When completed, the Temple shone like a golden hill set upon a silver mountain. The altar of bronze increased, so that it might embrace the earth. Molten sea encompassed the spirit of all waters.”
“The curtains caught and held the shimmering shadows of blue air and the candlestick, the glory of golden trees, bearing perpetual fruits, which fell only if an enemy approached.

Within the Sanctuary was an ivory wand, the mere touch of which gave injury to the unclean, but proved harmless to the pure. In the interior of the Sanctuary was a transparent wall, which remained crystal clear when approached by the righteous, but turned dark when the unworthy came near.”

In short, Solomon’s Temple was built with God’s blessing, according to God’s plan, by the richest and wisest king Judah had ever known.

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Now, back to Ezekiel. About 14 years after the destruction of Solomon’s Temple and 25 years of the Captivity, Ezekiel had another vision …… a vision of rebuilding of Jerusalem and a new Temple for God.

For the most part, Ezekiel’s Temple would be based on similar plans, as that used to build Solomon’s Temple, but it would also have additional rooms added to the sides for the preparation of sacrifices and maintenance of the Temple.

Additional intricate details, from the building measurements to the appointment of priests to run the Temple, including their behaviour at rituals and feasts, as well as the division of the land surrounding the Temple, may also be found in Ezekiel 40 – 48.

In Ezekiel 43:10, we have God instructing Ezekiel to show the plans for the new Temple and Jerusalem to His people in Exile, in an effort to make them feel ashamed of their idolatry and bring them back to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple for God.
"... shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities and let them measure the pattern."

Despite the building of a new Temple being blessed by King Cyrus, the Return from Captivity by the Jews produced only minimal efforts to bring Ezekiel’s vision into reality.

While it is true Temples to honour God have been built since the Exile, none have achieved the opulence and grandeur of Solomon’s Temple.

Zerubbabel’s temple lasted some 500 years from post-exilic times and Herod built another about 20 BC, but neither would show the splendour of Solomon’s work.

**Using different approaches in understanding Ezekiel’s vision:**

If the Bible is taken literally, some folk still believe today, that Solomon’s Temple will be rebuilt to its original glory. Ez 43:7

However, whilst there is much detail in Ezekiel’s vision about the rebuilt temple (Ezekiel 40-46), we must also keep in mind, that it may have been a figurative spectacle meaning something quite different.

To bolster that argument, Jesus downplays the importance of worship in a Temple, preferring that we “.... shall worship the Father in spirit & truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him” ..... John 4:21-24

Bringing this into clearer focus are two verses from Revelation, where John reveals:

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying: Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God shall be with them and be their God.” ..... Revelation 21:3
But, in the heavens, John tells us that there is no Temple .....  
“ And I saw no Temple therein; for Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” ..... Revelation 21:22

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Some scholars would also argue that Ezekiel’s Temple will never be built again, as the need for animal sacrifices passed with the crucifixion of Christ and his Atonement of our sins.

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Taking the modern figurative argument to the extreme, we see books, like “Tunnel thru the Air” by W.D. Gann, where hero Robert, uses Ezekiel’s vision, as the plans to build an airplane.

Likewise, “Spaceships of Ezekiel” by NASA scientist J. Blumrich, claims that the dimensions given in Ezekiel’s vision were actually the plans to build a spacecraft ..... !~!

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So in summary, Solomon’s Temple was a splendid REALITY, built according to God’s own plans, whereas Ezekiel’s vision so far, has been mainly used as a tool to motivate Jews after Returning from Captivity, to take God seriously once more and build him a new Temple.

So, the question remains ... will Ezekiel’s vision ever be fulfilled?

**Bibliography:**
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de Laurence, LW (1914) “Greater Key of Solomon” p59 Fig 11  
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.....ends Ezekiel Part 1 – a conventional approach.