

EZEKIEL 46

MORE PRINCIPLES OF WORSHIP

It does not seem that the rules for public worship which are here laid down were intended to be literally observed in the second Temple; for we do not find in the history of that latter part of the Jewish nation that they governed themselves in their worship by these ordinances, but only by the law of Moses. And so we also ought to look upon them as pictures and principles of spiritual worship under the Gospel.

We read that the place of worship was fixed, and rules concerning it were given to both the prince and the people. The east gate was ordinarily to be kept shut (chapter 44:2), while the other gates of the court were opened every day. However, on the Sabbath Days and certain other special occasions, the east gate was to be opened for the prince, who was to go in by the way of the porch of that gate (verses 2, 8). He did not go through the gate (as the glory of the Lord had done), even though it was open; but he went by the way of the porch of the gate, stood at the post of the gate, and worshiped at the threshold of the gate. There he had a full view of the priests' performances at the altar, and there he signified his concurrence in them – both for himself and also for the people of the land, who stood behind him at the door of that gate (verse 3). Thus must every prince show himself to be of David's mind, who would very willingly be a doorkeeper in the house of his God, and remain at the threshold (Ps. 84:10). Even princes, when they draw near to God, must worship with reverence and Godly fear – confessing that even they are unworthy to approach to Him. But Christ is our Prince, Whom the Lord causes to draw near and approach to Himself.

As for the north gate and the south gate, the rule was given that whoever came in at the north gate should go out at the south gate, and whoever came in at the south gate should go out at the north gate (verse 9). We may suppose that they came in at the gate that was nearest their own houses; but when they went away, God would have them go out at that gate which would lead them the furthest way about. This was so that they might have time for meditation; being thereby obliged to go a great way around the sanctuary as they went home, they might have an opportunity to improve their time well in thinking about what they had seen and heard. This reminds us that in the service of God, we must be still pressing forward (Phil. 3:13) and not looking back.

But not only was the *place* of worship fixed, the *ordinances* of worship were also fixed. God Himself appointed them, for it is His prerogative to institute the ceremonies of worship. Every morning, a lamb for a burnt-offering was to be sacrificed (verse 13). It is strange that no mention is made of the evening

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ More principles concerning the worship of the priests and people – verses 1-15
- ❖ A law concerning the prince's inheritance – verses 16-18
- ❖ The places provided for the preparation of the sacrifices – verses 19-24

sacrifice; but since Christ has now come and offered Himself in these “last days” of the world (Heb. 9:26), we are to look upon Him as the Evening Sacrifice – for it was about the time of the offering up of that sacrifice that He died on the cross. On the Sabbath Days and other special days, certain sacrifices were also appointed to be offered, in addition to the others which the Lord required. All the sacrifices were to be without blemish, for Jesus – the Great Sacrifice – was pure and spotless (1 Pet. 1:19). And so also, Christians – who are to present themselves to God as living sacrifices – should aim and endeavor to be blameless, harmless, and without rebuke.



In verses 16-18, we have a law for the limiting of the power of the prince in the disposing of the lands belonging to him. If he has a son that is a favorite or has merited well, he may (if he so pleases) settle some parts of his lands upon him and his heirs forever, as a token of his favor and in recompence for his services (verse 16) – provided that it does not go out of the family. Yet if he has a servant that is a favorite, he may not settle lands upon him in that same manner (verse 17). The servant might have the rents and profits for a set time, but the right of inheritance shall remain in the prince and his heirs. Moreover, whatever estates the prince gives to his children must be his own (verse 18); he shall not take of the people’s inheritance, under pretense of having many children to provide for. It is far from being a prince’s honor to increase the wealth of his family and government by encroaching upon the rights and properties of his subjects. Nor will he himself be a gainer by it in the long run; for he will be a poor prince indeed when the people are scattered from their possessions, and when they leave their native country – being forced out of it by oppression. It is better for leaders and rulers to gain their people’s affections by protecting their rights, than to gain their estates by invading them.

In the rest of the chapter, we have a description of buildings around the Temple; and these were places in which to boil the meat of the offerings (verse 20). In these preparation-rooms, the priests were to boil those parts of the trespass-offerings and the sin-offerings which were allotted to their own use. Here also, they were to bake their share of the grain-offering, which was given them for their own families. Care was taken so that the priests would not carry these things out into the outer court, and so that the people would not imagine that they were sanctified by touching those sacred things. From Haggai 2:12, it seems that there were some persons who had such a conceit; and therefore, the priests were not to carry any parts of the holy offerings away with them, lest they should encourage that conceit.

Lord Jesus, we praise You as our Prince in the midst of Your people, Whose light and smile are always to be seen, and Whose gifts of spiritual bounty are as free to the lowly sons and daughters of poverty as to the children of wealth. Amen.