

Message #48**Ezekiel 44:1-31**

Many people view a place of worship as some light atmosphere. What most people don't realize is when you think right about a place of worship, you begin to see it and sense it as somewhat of a "danger zone."

During the days of the kings, they treated the sanctuary as their own little "royal chapel." Regardless of how they lived or what they did, the sanctuary became the place where they ducked in to partake of something they called worship. In fact, sometimes they built their own place of worship (i.e. II Kings 16:10-18). That kind of thing should have never happened. It should not happen now and we can be certain that it will not ever happen when Jesus Christ is on earth.

When Jesus Christ reigns on this earth, Temple matters become very sacred and very serious. Everything will be precise. No one is permitted to have access to the Most Holy Place, but there are those who will be permitted to enter into the inner court area. But this will be highly regulated.

There are some who basically say this is all symbolic. It really isn't literal or real. Well if that is true, then the last nine chapters of Ezekiel (Ezek. 40-48) are a waste of writing, time and space. Frankly, I don't know how anyone can conclude this isn't real. These are very real predictions with precise details that will exist during the Millennium. What we see here is this:

WHEN JESUS CHRIST REIGNS ON EARTH, WORSHIP AT THE TEMPLE WILL BE PRIESTLY REGULATED AND WILL TAKE ON A WHOLE NEW MEANING.

What we learn from this passage in Ezekiel is that the rules of access into this Temple are much more regulated than they ever were into the Tabernacle. Those who proved themselves to be faithful will be rewarded with the closest access to God. Those who strayed will have limited accessibility. There are six millennial worship facts brought out in this chapter:

MILLENNIAL WORSHIP FACT #1 – The east gate will be shut down. **44:1-2**

One of the main themes of this chapter is regulated entrances and exits.

Now we may recall that Ezekiel had just witnessed the glory of God returning to the Temple through the east gate (43:4). He was brought by the Spirit of God into the inner court (43:5).

Now according to **verse 1**, Ezekiel is brought back to the east gate area and sees it is shut. The reason it is shut is because this is the gate that God entered. This is the gate Jesus Christ actually used to enter the Temple complex. Notice **verse 2**, Jesus is identified as "the Jehovah Elohim" of Israel.

When God enters through the east gate, that gate will be shut down and closed. No human will enter through that gate, God did. What this teaches us is that in the Millennium there will be a tremendous reverence for God and His majestic holiness.

During the Millennium, even though righteousness reigns, there is still a level of righteousness only God has.

Daniel Block, in his commentary on Ezekiel, says this closed gate does three things:

- 1) It shows how sacred God is compared to any human.
- 2) It shows the permanence of God's residence with Israel forever behind this closed door.
- 3) It shows that God is the one who opens doors and closes doors according to His will
(*The Book of Ezekiel, chapters 25-48*, pp. 614-615).

MILLENNIAL WORSHIP FACT #2 – The prince will eat bread before the LORD. **44:3**

Only the prince will sit inside the east gate to eat in the presence of the Lord. The prince has already been identified as King David (Ezek. 34:24; 37:24-25). We know from the last verse in the book of Daniel that Daniel will be raised up to inherit a portion of geography during this very era. But Daniel is not David and in the Millennium, David will play a key role in regard to national Israel.

What we learn here is that King David will also be on the scene, right in Jerusalem and right in the Temple area. David will be allowed to eat some of the bread offerings that worshippers are bringing to the Temple.

This shows the intimate connection King David will have to God and to the whole theme of worship.

MILLENNIAL WORSHIP FACT #3 – Ezekiel sees the glory of God fill the Temple. **44:4-8**

Ezekiel went back into the inner court through the north gate and he saw the glory of the LORD filling the Temple.

According to **verse 4**, when Ezekiel saw the glory of God filling the Temple, he again fell on his face. This is what the real presence of God does to someone. It humbles them.

In **verse 5**, God specifically says to Ezekiel that He wants him to mark everything well—see it and hear it and communicate it. God says this is “the House of the LORD.” This is not the people's house, this is God's house.

God says I am giving you data concerning the Temple and the laws and the entrances and the exits. Now again, I ask this question—why would God tell Ezekiel to see this with his eyes and carefully listen to all descriptions he gives if this is not real? The only logical conclusion is these things are literal and they will happen during the Millennium.

God says in **verses 6-9**, this is what I want you to say to the rebellious ones of Israel:

Verbal Message #1 - Israel is rebellious. **44:6a**

This is interesting. We may recall this is how the book of Ezekiel opened (Ezek. 2:3). God called Israel a rebellious nation who was stubborn and obstinate. Now between Ezekiel 2 and this scene we have a gap of at least 2500 years and God is still calling her the same thing—rebellious.

Israel is not in this Millennium enjoying these blessings because of her faithfulness. The fact is she is rebellious. Any judgment God brings on Israel is well-deserved and well-earned. She has been a rebellious nation since the day He sent Moses to get her in Egypt.

Verbal Message #2 - God has had enough of all your abominations. **44:6b**

She has not just committed sins, she has committed abominable sins. God says My assessment of you is that you have been involved in abominable stuff and now it is enough and now I have had enough. No more of it will be tolerated. This place demands holiness.

Verbal Message #3 - You have profaned God's sanctuary by bringing in uncircumcised foreigners. **44:7a**

I think this has specific application to what will take place in the Temple during the Tribulation. When this temple is up, that no longer will be the case. Zechariah says in that day there will no longer be any Canaanite in the "house of the LORD" (Zech. 14:14).

Verbal Message #4 - You have profaned God's sanctuary by bringing in unacceptable Offerings. **44:7b**

God says when you offer unacceptable offerings, I not only don't accept it, but you make a covenant relationship with Me void. It was Israel's rebellion that led God to put a blindness on Israel. He temporarily divorced her and married a new bride, the Church.

Verbal Message #5 - You have not kept charge of My holy things. **44:8a**

God's holiness was not protected. In fact, when Jesus was here, they had turned the Temple into a den of thieves.

Verbal Message #6 - You have put foreigners in charge of My sanctuary. **44:8b**

Again during the Tribulation, this will become a key factor. The Antichrist will enter the Temple and be permitted to do so and then he will demand to be worshipped as God (II Thess. 2:4).

MILLENNIAL WORSHIP FACT #4 – God will appoint the Levites to take care of His Temple. **44:9-14**

The Levites will have a priestly role to play in the Millennium, but it will be a downgraded role. They will have a secondary role to play and not a primary role to play. There are some key priestly facts that are revealed in this text:

Priestly Fact #1 - No foreigner will be permitted to enter God's temple. **44:9**

No foreigner will ever be permitted to enter the sanctuary. They have no right to it. We know that God originally chose the Levites to carry out this ministry. This is why God will let Levites hold office. It was not because of their faithfulness, but because no foreigner is permitted to serve. They, as it were, will serve by default.

Priestly Fact #2 - The Levitical priests strayed far away from God. **44:10**

They went after idols and they will bear their punishment. It was the religious leadership who led the people away from the truth of God. Frankly, it has been the religious leadership of Israel who has led the people away from the truth about Jesus Christ.

Priestly Fact #3 - The Levitical priests will be ministers in God's temple. **44:11**

They will be allowed to serve as gatekeepers and slayers of sacrifices and helpers of the worshippers. Their priestly ministry will be downgraded.

Priestly Fact #4 - The Levitical priests will be punished for their iniquity. **44:12-13**

These priests will not be permitted to serve the Lord as His priests or come near any of the holy things and the things in the Most Holy Place.

The purpose of this punishment is to make them ashamed of their sin. They did abominable things and they should not be proud of that, but ashamed of that.

Priestly Fact #5 - The Levitical priests will still have a priestly ministry. **44:14**

Even though the priests should be ashamed of their sin, they also will be the recipients of grace.

We may choose to be faithful to God as a believer or not be faithful to God. It is our decision and our decision will have eternal consequences.

MILLENNIAL WORSHIP FACT #5 – God will appoint the priest of Zadok to minister to Him. **44:15-19**

The line of Zadok was one branch of the priestly line that formed a very limited group in the Levites. Once this Temple is completed and once this earthly worship is reestablished, the worship will be vested in the priestly “sons of Zadok.”

Zadok was appointed chief priest during the days of Solomon's reign and he faithfully supported Solomon (I Kings 1:32-35; 2:26-27, 35). Even though the children of Israel went astray from the true worship of God, the "sons of Zadok" remained faithful.

Priestly Reality #1 - The sons of Zadok shall come near to God to minister to Him. **44:15a**

Priestly Reality #2 - The sons of Zadok will stand before God to offer offerings. **44:15b**

Priestly Reality #3 - The sons of Zadok will enter God's sanctuary. **44:16a**

Priestly Reality #4 - The sons of Zadok will minister to God at His table. **44:16b**

Priestly Reality #5 - The sons of Zadok will keep all of God's charges. **44:16c**

Priestly Reality #6 - The sons of Zadok will wear priestly clothing. **44:17-18**

This clothing will be sacred clothing. It will be clothing that will not permit one to sweat. They could wear linen clothing but not wool clothing. So the priestly work will be meticulous work, but it will not be work that causes one to sweat.

There is a gradation to the reward system. People who are saved will be rewarded or less rewarded based on their faithfulness or lack of faithfulness.

Priestly Reality #7 - The sons of Zadok will not wear priestly clothing in the outer court. **44:19**

There is a difference between the secular and the sacred and God's people must always remember that.

MILLENNIAL WORSHIP FACT #6 – God gives a list of things the priest will do and will not do. **44:20-31**

A. C. Gaebelein said these mandates have absolutely nothing to do with the present Church Age. In the Church Age every believer is a priest unto God. We are not under any of these legal mandates. A priest serving in the Temple must be involved in some ritualistic applications of certain laws and during the Millennium there are at least ten mandates that pertain to them:

Mandate #1 - The priests are not to shave their hair off their heads but they are not to have long hair. **44:20**

The shaving of the hair on the head was a mourning practice.

Mandate #2 - The priests are not to drink any wine when they enter the inner court. **44:21**

They may drink wine outside of the inner court, but not inside the inner court. They were not to get drunk and serve as a priest. This corresponds to Leviticus 10:9 and it also is true concerning the N.T. church—I Corinthians 11.

Mandate #3 - The priests are not to marry any widow or divorced woman. **44:22a**

Marriages were to be of pure priestly stock. This corresponds to Leviticus 21:7, 13-14. This would assure that no offspring of a different tribe would accidentally make it to the priestly line.

Mandate #4 - The priests may marry a virgin from the house of Israel or a widow who is a priests' widow. **44:22b**

Mandate #5 - The priests are to teach the people the difference between what is holy and profane; clean and unclean. **44:23**

Mandate #6 - The priests are to act as judges in deciding various disputes. **44:24**

Judgments will be made on the basis of God's Word.

Mandate #7 - The priests are to observe the law of defilement. **44:25-27**

What is specifically pointed out is that a priest was to have no contamination with anything dead.

Mandate #8 - The priests are given no possession in Israel because God is their Possession. **44:28**

They are given a place to live, but they are not specifically given land tribal boundaries.

Mandate #9 - The priests shall share the offerings as payment for their service. **44:29-30**

Those people who give the priests the best will be blessed by God.

Mandate #10 - The priests are not to eat certain birds or beasts who died. **44:31**

H. A. Ironside said, "No word of God shall be void of power; all Scripture is for our learning, and we cannot afford to neglect or pass lightly over any of it as though it contained nothing for our edification" (*Ezekiel*, p. 311).

- 1) We must realize that we, too, have a relationship with God due to His grace. Now who of us has the righteousness that would enable us to enter into the presence of God? Paul says no one does (Romans 3:23).
- 2) We must realize that what we do for the Lord here now does have future eternal ramifications.
- 3) God is sickened when His people are rebellious and involved in that which is abominable.
- 4) God's people need to always remember there is a difference between the sacred and the secular. God's house is to be a sacred place. When it comes to God, we must always concern ourselves with what is holy.