

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious

Part LXII: The Millennial Temple Ministers: A Lesson In Serving The Lord In Holiness

(Ezekiel 44:1-31)

I. Introduction

- A. Ezekiel chapters 40-48 predict God's restoration of Israel following His many prophecies of judgment on the nation for sin, and Ezekiel 44:1-31 predicts the temple ministers and their service in the restored Kingdom.
- B. This passage reveals the great holiness of God in the realm of temple ministry to the Hebrew people of Ezekiel's day in sharp contrast to the way they had profaned and desecrated the temple ministry in Jerusalem.
- C. We thus view Ezekiel 44:1-31 for its lesson on serving the Lord in holiness for our insight and edification:

II. The Millennial Temple Ministers: A Lesson In Serving The Lord In Holiness, Ezekiel 44:1-31.

- A. God's separation from sin, His holiness, will be seen in the purified use of the eastern temple gate, Ez. 44:1-3:
 - 1. The prophet Ezekiel, who in a prophetic vision had been in the inner court of the Millennial temple, was led to the outer court where he found the eastern gate that opened to the Kidron Valley was shut, Ez. 44:1.
 - 2. The Lord explained that this gate would be shut because the Lord God of Israel had entered the temple through that gate, hallowing it so that no man might pass through it, Ezekiel 44:2.
 - 3. The prince, the resurrected king David, would be allowed to sit at the gate to eat bread before the Lord, and he would be able to come and go there through the "vestibule" of that gate, but even he would not be allowed to pass through the eastern gate itself that had been sanctified by God's use of it, Ezek. 44:3 ESV.
 - 4. This use of this gate stood in huge contrast to the Ezekiel 8:16 abomination where God had shown Ezekiel how about 25 men with their backs to the temple of the Lord had faced the east gate to worship the sun!
- B. God's separation from sin, His holiness, will be seen in the ministry of the Levites, Ezekiel 44:4-14:
 - 1. The Lord then explained to Ezekiel His fury over how Israel had brought ungodly Gentiles into His temple to perform menial labor, polluting it in violation of Numbers 18:7. (Ezekiel 44:4-9) This pollution began in the days of Joshua when he had failed to seek God's counsel to discern the deception of the Gibeonites so that Joshua ended up subjecting the Gibeonites to perform manual labor in the tabernacle, Jos. 9:1-27.
 - 2. In place of godless Gentiles, the Lord would assign the Levites who had largely departed from Him to do the menial labor and other functions that had been downgraded from their former ministries, Ez. 44:10-14.
- C. God's separation from sin, His holiness, will be seen in the lives and ministries of the priests, Ezek. 44:15-31:
 - 1. The priests who were the sons of Zadok had kept the charge of the temple when Israel had departed from the Lord, so God would reward them by letting them come near unto Him to minister, Ezekiel 44:15-16.
 - 2. These priests would exemplify holiness in their use of proper clothing in their ministry, Ezekiel 44:17-19.
 - 3. They would neither let their hair grow long or shave themselves bare, both practices of mourning, but use moderation in grooming their hair, Ezekiel 44:20; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Ezekiel 44:20.
 - 4. The priests would not drink wine when they entered into the inner court lest it negatively impair their ability to think or physically to conduct themselves to the best of their ability before the Lord, Ezek. 44:21.
 - 5. They would not marry a widow or a divorced woman, but only a virgin or a widow of a deceased priest to insure the genealogical purity of the priestly line, Ezekiel 22:22.
 - 6. The priests would teach others to distinguish the holy from the profane, the clean from the unclean, v. 23.
 - 7. They would act as judges in accord with God's Word, themselves keeping God's laws and statutes in all His appointed feasts and Sabbaths, Ezekiel 44:24.
 - 8. The priests would not come near a dead person ceremonially to defile themselves except for close relatives, and even then they would need to practice purification rites, Ezekiel 44:25-27.
 - 9. No land inheritance would be given to the priests, for God was their inheritance. They would trust the Lord to provide for their livelihood needs through the gifts and offerings of the other tribes, Ez. 44:28-30.
 - 10. The priests would practice holiness in not eating any animal that had died of itself or that had been torn by predator animals, but only animals that had been butchered by man, Ezekiel 44:31.

Lesson: *In contrast to Israel's past corruption of idolatry, unbiblical ministry associations and sins regarding clothing, grooming, substance abuse, marriage, errant teaching, administering injustice, misconduct relating to the dead, not living by faith in God for one's livelihood and an errant diet, God's temple servants would be holy.*

Application: *May we live and serve God separate from sin, living and serving in true holiness before the Lord.*