



Book of Ezekiel

Chapter 44

Theme: Millennial Temple

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Ezekiel 44:1

Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it *was* shut

Constable: Ezekiel's guide next took him back to the east outer gate (cf. 40:6-16). The gate itself, on the east side of the gate complex, was shut and was to remain shut. The Lord told the prophet that this gate was shut because He had entered the temple complex through it (43:1-3). Its sealed condition guaranteed God's promise that He would never depart from the temple again (37:24-28).

"As a mark of honor to an Eastern king, no person could enter the gate by which he entered . . ." ¹

This is not the eastern gate of Zerubbabel's or Herod's temple (Israel's second temple); there is no evidence that either of those gates was closed. Nor is it the gate on the east side of the temple enclosure in modern Jerusalem that has been sealed for centuries. The dimensions are different. It is the east gate of the millennial temple.

"The eastern gate that overlooks the Kidron Valley today is closed as it has been since the Crusades, nearly a thousand years ago. Crusaders walled up the gate because they believed that Jesus entered the temple mount by this gate on Palm Sunday and that it should be closed until he returns to reenter the temple mount. Zechariah 14:4-5 presents the Messiah coming to the valley on the eastern side of the temple in preparation for his entry into the temple area. This has been regarded as biblical evidence that the gate should remain closed until Jesus returns.

"Today the eastern gate, also called the Golden Gate, is a significant holy site for three major world religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Jews believe that when the Messiah comes he will open the east gate and enter the temple mount first and then enter the city of Jerusalem. Moslems believe that the gate is the site of final judgment and call it the gate of heaven and hell. They believe the final judgment of humanity will take place before the eastern gate and the redeemed are those who will be allowed to enter the temple mount; all others will be outcasts." ²

The Romans destroyed the wall around Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The present Golden Gate dates back to the seventh century A.D. The Crusaders walled it up in the eleventh century. The Ottoman Turks partially destroyed it and then repaired it in the early sixteenth century. The Turkish governor then walled it up again in A.D. 1530, and it has remained closed ever since. ³

¹ Feinberg. P. 257

² L. Cooper, p, 388

³ Ibid., p. 389

Dake: Then—after being informed about the dedication of the altar, the prophet was brought back to the east gate. He found it shut, not to be opened anymore to the general public, except on sabbaths and new moons (Ezekiel 46:1-3), because of God entering through it in His return to earth and the new millennial temple (Ezekiel 44:1-2). It was to be for the private use of the prince though, that he might go in and out while living in the chamber of the east gate (Ezekiel 44:3).

BKC: 44:1-3: Ezekiel had been standing in the inner court of the temple, receiving instructions about the altar there (43:5). Now he was led out of the inner court to the east gate of the outer court, and it was shut. This gate at the outer court opened toward the Kidron Valley and the Mount of Olives. Ezekiel had just seen the Lord enter it on His return to His temple (43:4). God’s presence had hallowed the gate. Therefore it is to remain shut because the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered through it. No one else will be allowed to tread through the gate which God Himself had entered.

Some have thought that the “Golden Gate” of Jerusalem, now sealed, is the gate spoken of here. However, the dimensions of the “Golden Gate” do not correspond with Ezekiel’s gate, which is still future.

Only one person will be allowed to enter through the east gate complex: the prince himself (cf. 46:2). This prince has already been identified as King David (cf. 34:24; 37:24-25). He will be allowed to eat in the gate, possibly referring to the fellowship offerings which the worshipers will eat after offering them to the Lord (cf. Lev. 7:15-21). The portico (vestibule) faces the outer court (see the eastern G¹ in the sketch “The Millennial Temple,” near Ezek. 40:1-4), so David, going east, will enter the gate complex from the outer court.

IVP: east gate permanently shut. The Sacred Gate of the city of Babylon was the gate through which the procession of Marduk (the primary god of the city) and other deities passed and returned again. Like the east gate described by Ezekiel, the Sacred Gate was apparently opened for the deity to pass through and was shut at all other times.

Ezekiel 44:2

Then said the LORD unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.

Missler: Now incidentally, it doesn’t say he uses the gate, he uses the porch.

The East gate was the place where the Shekinah Glory left the Temple (Ezekiel 10). It is the same gate by which the Shekinah Glory just entered the Temple (Ezekiel 43).

In the next several chapters, we will find that the East Gate is special. It is used only by the Lord. That raises the question about who the “prince” is; and we will be coming to that one. It was an eastern tradition that one way to honor a king was to provide a gate for him that no one else used. So it is a point of honor, conveyed not just in the Old Testament, but also here. What makes this particular gate fascinating is, if you visit

Jerusalem today, there is a gate on the east, toward the Mount of Olives, sometimes called the Golden Gate, and it has been sealed since 1543 A.D.

Now Ezekiel was written approximately 574 B.C., so roughly 2000 years earlier we have this interesting comment in the Book of Ezekiel that that gate would be shut. And the Lord will go through the East gate. There is a rabbinical tradition that that gate will be sealed until it is entered by their Messiah.

See Zechariah 14:1-4. Is this figurative, allegorical Mount of Olives? No. It is a literal place, you can go and visit it. Remember in Acts when our Lord ascended, where did He ascend from? The Mount of Olives. They were all there staring up, and two men dressed in white asked them, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”

The people who live in apartments on the Mount of Olives know about the fault which runs through the mountain; they hear the rumbles. The Mount will cleave toward the east and west, and there shall be a very great valley and half of the mountain shall move toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And the Lord my God shall come, and the Church with Him. It turns out that one of those faults apparently goes right up to a gate that is now sealed, called the Golden Gate. And rabbis tell you that it will remain sealed until their Messiah goes through it. Zechariah 14:5-11

Clarke: This verse has been adduced by the Roman Catholics to prove the perpetual virginity of the mother of our Lord; and it may be allowed to be as much to the purpose as any other that has been brought to prove this very precarious point, on which no stress should ever be laid by any man. Mary was a virgin when she brought forth Jesus.

shall not be opened. This “east gate” has, indeed, long been completely sealed. Whatever reason the Muslim rulers of Jerusalem may have had for this action at the time, the most remarkable testimony of this verse is that “the Lord, the God of Israel, once entered in by it.” That is, the Creator, *Jehovah*, the God of Israel, had become a man, that He might actually enter the temple through the east gate, the gate through which Ezekiel had just seen the *shekinah* glory come into the house (Ezekiel 43:4). In the new temple, the gate will be open again, and the God/man, the King of kings, Jesus Christ, will enter thereby.

Ezekiel 44:3

It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.

Missler: Now we get down to this business of the prince. He is mentioned several times in the next several chapters. He is a very prominent person. Who is this prince?

The Messiah?

There are at least three reasons why the indications are that the prince here is not the Messiah. First of all, this prince has no priestly rights. Even some of the former kings of Israel picked up certain priestly rights (1 Kings 8:22, 54; 9:25; 10:5). In 2 Kings 16:12-13

and 2 Chronicles 26:16 you will find that even some of the kings of Judah even usurped some of the priestly rights. This prince has no priestly prerogatives which are described in Psalm 110:4; and are very prominent in Zechariah 6:12-13. Clearly, the Messiah has a priestly role. This mysterious personage here that is called the prince, does not have a priestly role...

The second thing we are going to discover in the next chapter is that this prince offers a sin offering (45:22). That would appear a bit contrary, the Messiah would not offer a sin offering; He offered Himself for sin. That offering was not a ceremonial thing which we see here.

Thirdly, you will discover in Chapter 46:24 that this prince has sons. That gives the commentators a bit of a problem, trying to visualize the Messiah as having natural sons.

David?

So that leads to a second view. Some scholars believe that the prince may be David, and if you recall in Chapters 34:23-24 and 37:24 we had reference to David reappearing. A literal appearance of David himself might qualify quite nicely to be this prince; but that is a little strange, too, because if that were the case, why didn't the text just say David and not this "prince"? You see? Ezekiel had no problem of speaking of him as David before.

Lineage of David?

So there is another view and that is that it is from the Lineage of David, not Messianic, but from his lineage. The arguments there go that there is no High Priest, nor king, mentioned in any of these passages. The prince, we are going to discover, has a relationship that is somewhat intermediate between the people and the priests. So while he does not have priestly rights, he certainly is above the people in some sense.

He is not permitted to enter the inner court, but he can get closer to it than the people can. The inner court, by the way, is only going to be open on the Sabbath. The whole Sabbath thing will become a big deal again, as we will see. This prince is obligated under the laws to provide Festival Offerings, and certain solemnities on behalf of Israel; we will discover that in the next chapter (45:13-22). He is allowed land. There is a portion for the prince; but he is prohibited from usurping anybody else's inherited land. We will see that in Chapters 45:7-8; 46:18 and 48:21-22.

So this "prince" is a mystery figure as far as I am concerned. It is not clear to me who he is.

Constable: A prince (king) who would rule over the Israelites would sit in this gate complex and eat sacrifices to the Lord there (cf. 34:24; 37:25; 46:2, 8-10). Jesus Christ will be the King of Kings. He will rule over many kings including this king (prince). The city gate was a place of civil and judicial business in the ancient world (cf. Ruth 4:1-11). It was where the elders of the city assembled to discuss and transact important matters. Therefore sitting in this gate pictures the prince as an administrator of the temple area. He would go in and out of the gate complex by way of the vestibule at its west end, but no one would be able to enter or exit the outer court through the gate at the east end of this structure.

This prince (Heb. *nasi*) is not Messiah. This becomes clear later when the writer described him as presenting a sin offering for himself, something that it is impossible to imagine Jesus Christ doing (45:22; cf. Heb. 4:15; 9:22-28). Furthermore, this leader will

produce natural children, another extremely unlikely action for Messiah (46:16). Third, he is not a priest and exercises no priestly rights, whereas Jesus Christ is now and ever will be our great high priest. Ezekiel mentioned no high priest in his revelation of the millennial priests. Jesus Christ will fill that role (Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 17; 8:1). Rather, this prince will function in an intermediate status between the priests and the people (cf. 45:13-22; 46:2, 10, 18; 48:21-22).

The exact identity of this leader is presently unknown, but he will apparently function as Messiah's administrative representative in charge of certain affairs in the Millennium. Some believe he will be King David resurrected. This person appears in every chapter in Ezekiel that follows except chapter 47.

McGee: The eastern gate of present-day Jerusalem is shut -- it is completely walled up. Some of my premillennial brethren feel that this is a fulfillment of these verses in Ezekiel and that the gate will not be opened again until the Messiah comes. I have two objections to this viewpoint that I would like to mention.

My first point is that the prince mentioned here who is coming is not the Lord Jesus Christ. Ezekiel tells us that this prince offers a sacrifice and worships God (chs. 45-46); therefore he cannot be the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is God, and He never has and never will offer a sacrifice. It is not necessary for Him to do so, for He is still able to say, "Which of you convinceth [convicteth] me of sin?..." (John 8:46). This prince is not the Lord Jesus Christ. I personally feel that the prince is David. There are many fine men who do not agree that it is David, but they do agree that it is not the Lord Jesus. Many of them feel that the prince is simply another man in the line of David.

My second objection is that the gate in question is obviously not the gate of the city -- it is the gate of the temple. It is true that the temple is not there yet, and the temple must be built before any of this can take place. The walled-up gate to the city has nothing to do with it. He probably will come through that eastern gate of the city, but it could be the present gate, or the wall could be torn down and an entirely new wall and gate be built before then. We must remember that the wall that is there now is neither the wall that Christ knew nor that Ezekiel knew -- both of those walls have long since been destroyed.

Dake: [the prince] The prince will be the earthly ruler of Israel under the Messiah—not the Messiah Himself or David. His portion will be in the holy oblation on both sides of the city (Ezekiel 45:7). He will offer sacrifices of animals (Ezekiel 45:17), and receive gifts of flour, oil, animals, and other things from all Israel for his support (Ezekiel 45:13-16). He will have sons and servants (Ezekiel 46:16-17), and will live and worship with the people (Ezekiel 45:22-46:18), and be considered an earthly mortal among his people. Such will not be the case with Christ, David, or any other resurrected man over these natural people. Israel will have earthly kings and princes under the Messiah and David (Ezekiel 43:7; Ezekiel 45:8-9). The prince could even be the high priest, as he has so much to do with the sacrifices and worship in the sanctuary.

IVP: prince. The prince in this context is a religious figure who is responsible for eating his sacrificial meals before the Lord in the sacred gate. Earlier in Ezekiel the term was used for a Davidic figure (e.g., Ezekiel 34:24; 37:25). Here he has no royal or political role to play, only a role inside the temple precincts. He has no access through the east

gate that is reserved for divine use; he only has an act to perform there. It is clear that he is not serving a priestly function, for he is not allowed to actually step inside the inner court. **portico of the gateway.** The prince was able to enter the gate structure through the portico (or vestibule) of the gateway, meaning that he had already come into the courtyard through another gate and entered the eastern gateway from the inside. He stood by the post of the gate, which enabled him to see the cultic activity of the priests. The identity of the prince is not clear. The prince cannot be the Lord, since he “eats bread” before the Lord (v. 3) and offers sacrifices (45:22) for himself. He is either a member of the Davidic royal line or, as some have suggested, David himself.

for the prince. The gate will also be open for “the prince” (see note on Ezekiel 34:24), probably King David. The “prince” cannot be the Lord Jesus, for he has “sons” (Ezekiel 46:16).

Ezekiel 44:4

Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and I looked, and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD: and I fell upon my face.

Constable: The guide proceeded to take Ezekiel through the north inner gate into the inner court of the temple. There he saw again the glory of the Lord that filled the temple proper, and he prostrated himself before it out of fear and reverence (cf. 1:28; 43:1-5). "The new reference to the glory of God simply makes clear that it is the return of God to the temple that serves as a basis for the regulations to follow."

Dake: Then—after his visit to the east gate the prophet was brought to the north gate to witness the glory of God filling the house or temple. Upon seeing this he again fell upon his face (see also Ezekiel 1:28; Ezekiel 3:23; Ezekiel 9:8; Ezekiel 11:13; Ezekiel 43:3). This was the sixth time he fell upon his face before Jehovah, overcome by the Divine Presence, prostrating himself before the glory of God.

Ezekiel was overwhelmed with the “glory” of God. He taught the people that they, too, could behold God’s “glory” when the blinders they imposed upon themselves were stripped away by God’s judgments

Ezekiel 44:5

And the LORD said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the LORD, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary.

Here it is again, an instruction to take particular note.

Constable: The Lord spoke to Ezekiel and instructed him to pay close attention to all

the instructions that he would receive concerning worship in the temple (cf. 40:4). He needed to give special attention to the entrances leading to the temple proper because it was there that the common life of the people interfaced with the holiness of the inner sanctum.

Clarke: Mark well, and behold—Take notice of every thing; register all so fully that thou shalt be able to give the most minute information to the children of Israel.

Dake: Twice here God told Ezekiel to "mark well," and see with his eyes and hear with his ears all the ordinances and laws of the temple, and the entering in and going out of both the temple and the sanctuary. The term "mark well" simply means to set the heart upon learning all these things.

mark well. Even though this is the millennial temple and the Lord Jesus reigns, there will still be people entering that kingdom who have not yet died. They will have been judged worthy to enter the kingdom, having been saved by faith in Christ. However, their descendants during this thousand-year period may not be, whether Jews or Gentiles, and so these laws of worship and behavior must be enforced, especially for those ministering in the temple.

Ezekiel 44:6

And thou shalt say to the rebellious, *even* to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations,

Constable 6-9: Ezekiel was to tell the rebellious Israelites that the Lord had had enough of all their abominations, particularly profaning His Jerusalem temple. They had brought unbelievers into the temple, and they had misused the food brought as sacrifices to Him. They had even appointed foreigners to take care of the temple instead of taking care of it themselves.

"The religions of the ancient Near East frequently used foreign captives as temple servants to aid the priests."

The Israelites had done this, too. One of the early instances of it took place when they made the conquered Gibeonites temple servants (Josh. 9:23, 27; cf. Ezra 8:20), though there is no evidence that the Gibeonites served as priests. The Mosaic Law forbade any unauthorized person from serving in the tabernacle or temple as a priest (Num. 3:10). Believing foreigners could offer sacrifices there and assist the priests, but they could not serve as priests (cf. Num. 15:14; Isa. 56:3, 6-7; Zech. 14:21). In the millennial temple, foreigners (uncircumcised in heart and flesh, i.e., unbelieving Gentiles) would not be allowed to enter the temple proper and probably not even the temple precincts (v. 9; cf. Ezra 4:1-3; Neh. 13:1-9; Acts 21:27-31).

Ezekiel 44:7

In that ye have brought *into my sanctuary* strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, *even my house*, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations.

Clarke: The fat and the blood—These never went into common use; they were wholly offered to God. The blood was poured out; the fat consumed.

Dake: Four sins of Israel (Ezekiel 44:7-8):

1. Israel brought strangers, unsaved and uncircumcised men, into the sanctuary to pollute it.
2. Israel broke God's covenant.
3. Israel has not kept the charge of His holy things.
4. Israel has set keepers of the sanctuary for themselves and not for Jehovah.

Ezekiel 44:8

And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves.

Missler: It is interesting to me to find this accusation. The word “rebellious” is a very frequently used word by Ezekiel in the first 24 chapters. As you recall, we went through chapter after chapter after chapter of Ezekiel bearing the heavy message on his people. Once Jerusalem fell, his message shifted to the future, and he talked positively, upliftingly. There was the dry bones, the regathering to the land, and all that. Remember? The words “rebellious” in verse 6, and “abominations” and “iniquities” leap out at us here, because Ezekiel has not used those words for several sections; but now they come up again.

Foreigners

We also notice that part of the indictment was their permitting foreigners to enter and profane the Sanctuary. Don't misunderstand. Under the Levitical laws, it was permissible under certain circumstances to allow foreigners to offer offerings. You will find that in Leviticus 17:10, 12 and Numbers 15:4. But never was it allowed to have foreigners officiate in the Sanctuary. You not only had to be Jewish, you had to be of the Tribe of Levi.

What they were being accused of here was letting foreigners officiate. This is one of the things that gives rise in my own mind, just for what it is worth, that what we may be seeing here are events which come on the heels of the tribulation defilement which, of course, is climaxed by the abomination of desolation. That may not come as a surprise. It may have been a slowly building, cascading thing, where not only were foreigners involved in the seven-year treaty and all that, but in the middle reaching its climax with a heathen offering in the Holy of Holies, the abomination of desolation, this major event prophetically spoken of by Daniel and talked about by Jesus in Matthew 24. That could

very well fit, and if that does happen, now of course we have some apostate priests to deal with as seen in verse 9.

Dake: [holy things] The holy things were the altar, sacrifices, the sacred vessels, the devoted things, and all portions of the priests.

IVP: others in charge. Foreigners had been recruited for temple service probably as temple guards perhaps since the time of Manasseh and Amon. Furthermore, Neo-Babylonian and Phoenician records appear to affirm the probability of the installation of foreigners in this type of temple service.

Ezekiel 44:9

Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.

Dake: Again God forbade any stranger, any unconverted man (one uncircumcised in heart), or one uncircumcised in the flesh to enter the sanctuary. Violating this has been mentioned many times as one of the sins committed by the priests of Israel.

Ezekiel 44:10

And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity.

Constable 10-12: Most of the Levitical priests, who had been responsible for profaning the temple in the past, would have to bear the punishment for their iniquity. They would be able to minister in the temple by overseeing the gates and serving in the temple precincts in other ways, perhaps as foreigners had done previously. They could also slaughter the sacrificial animals at the inner gate complexes (cf. 40:38-43). Under the Mosaic system of worship, the offerer, rather than the priest, killed the sacrificial victim. However, since the Levitical priests had led in the ritual worship of idols and so caused the other Israelites to stumble in their walk with God, the Lord would judge them by limiting their service in the millennial temple.

Clarke: **And the Levites that are gone away far from me**—This refers to the schism of Jeroboam, who, when he set up a new worship, got as many of the priests and Levites to join him in his idolatry as he could. These, on the return from the captivity, should not be permitted to perform the functions of priests in the new temple; but they might be continued as keepers of all the charge of the house—be treasurers, guards of the temple, porters, etc.; see verses 11-15. The whole of these passages refer to the period of time when the second temple was built.

Dake: Here is another example of the sins of previous generations. The sin referred to was that of rebelling against the house of David in the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam and Jeroboam (1 Kings 12). The Levites that went with Jeroboam who made golden calves to worship and turned the hearts of the northern tribes against Jehovah and His worship, are not to take part in the most sacred ministry of the millennial temple. They are not to be cast off entirely, but be used only as gate keepers, butchers of the sacrifices, and in other lower type services; they will not be priests who come near God and minister the holy things in the most holy place (Ezekiel 44:10-14). They will be an example of punishment for sin—an object lesson among coming generations.

Ezekiel 44:11

Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, *having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them.*

Dake: [**ministers in my sanctuary**] According to the new system, the Levites as a body were to receive part of the holy oblation (Ezekiel 45:5). The only way these rebellious ones could have any part in the future program would be as a part of the whole body, to which they were reunited in service, but in the lowest grade.

Ezekiel 44:12

Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord GOD, and they shall bear their iniquity.

Dake: This no doubt refers to the time of the division when God saw a number of them follow Jeroboam. He then lifted up His hand (which is figurative of making an oath) that they should never be fully restored to their former position and place in the priesthood. In view of this past oath God was to reduce them to a lower service in the future program (Ezekiel 44:9-14).

Ezekiel 44:13

And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy *place*: but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed.

Constable 13-14: They would not be able to approach the Lord and serve Him; they could only serve the people. They would not be able to handle what was most holy, most closely associated with the Lord, in the temple. This would be a source of shame for them because of their former sins. Yet within this limitation the Lord promised to allow them to be in charge of the temple structure, its maintenance, and certain things that transpired

there. The Levites in Solomon's day had more responsibility (cf. 1 Chron. 15:16; 16:4; 23:28-31).

"They have their counterparts today in all aspects of church life and doubtless then, as now, many reckoned it a privilege to be attending on the people of God in the more mundane details of their religion. After all, they were doing their duties by divine appointment (14)."

Ezekiel 44:14

But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein.

Zadokite Priests

Now we are going to see a line of priests that is conspicuously the other way, that have been uniquely faithful throughout history to God's ordinances; and those are the sons of Zadok.

IVP: duties of the temple. The duty of guarding the gates of the house implies more than just the temple but the entire temple complex. The Levites were also responsible for caring for the temple and grounds, and supervised activities on the temple grounds. For more information on the importance of this task see the comment on 1 Chronicles 9:22-27.

Ezekiel 44:15

But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD:

Constable 15-16: The Levites from Zadok's branch of the priestly family, however, would have special privileges since Zadok and his sons had served the Lord faithfully in the past (cf. 40:46; 1 Sam. 2:35; 2 Sam. 8:17; 15:24-29; 1 Kings 2:26-35; 1 Chron. 6:7-8). They would be able to approach the Lord Himself and minister to Him by presenting the sacrifices of the people to Him. They had permission to enter the temple proper, to place sacrifices on the "table" (the altar, 40:46, and or the table in the holy place, 41:22), and to fulfill what God commanded concerning His worship.

"In every age the sovereign and gracious God has a remnant of those who cleave to Him in spite of adverse circumstances and the mounting pressures of the majority to conform. The Zadokite priests kept themselves from the idolatry of the nation, even though the other priests complied to the idolatrous desires of the disobedient people. For this faithfulness the reward from the Lord will be access to His presence, the privilege of ministering in any and all phases of priestly duty."

Allen believed God gave this revelation to settle disputes about the staffing of the post-exilic temple.

Dake: The Levites of the sons of Zadok that remained true to the house of David when the kingdom was divided shall have charge of the most holy services in the millennial temple (Ezekiel 44:15-16). As a body the Levites remained true to God in the division of the kingdom (2 Chron. 11:13), but there were a few who went with Jeroboam and his rival worship; these will never be restored to their former services (Ezekiel 44:9-14).

Only sons of Zadok will be allowed to minister in the new temple. Zadok was one of two priests whom David appointed. He served with Abiathar (2 Sam 8:17; 15:24). Zadok's descendants are chosen, perhaps because Zadok supported Solomon as David's successor (1 Kin 1:8, 32, 34, 38, 39).

Ezekiel 44:16

They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.

Ezekiel 44:17

And it shall come to pass, *that* when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, whiles they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within.

Constable 17-18: The Zadokite priests would need to wear linen, not wool, garments when they served the Lord in the temple sanctuary and the inner gates and court (cf. Exod. 28:42; Lev. 16:4; Rev. 19:8). This included linen turbans and undergarments. No fabric that caused them to sweat would be acceptable because perspiration would make them wet, and dry skin stays cleaner than sweaty skin. Wool may have been an unacceptable material too because it is a product of animals, whereas linen comes from plants.

Clarke: No wool shall come upon them—The reason is plain; wool is more apt than linen to contract dirt and breed insects; linen breeds none; besides, this is a vegetable, and the other an animal substance. It was an ancient maxim, that whatever was taken from a dead body was impure in matters of religion, and should not be permitted to enter into the temple. The Egyptian priests always wore linen on their bodies, and shoes of matting or rushes on their feet. The Mohammedans never write the Koran upon vellum or skin of any kind, as they would consider that as a defilement.

Dake: In this section (Ezekiel 44:17-31) we have information concerning the garments, laws, and regulations related to the priesthood repeated from the law of Moses, with but little change. Priests will be required to wear linen clothes at all times while ministering in the temple. No wool or anything that generates heat excessively will be permitted; and the reason is given—because of producing sweat (Ezekiel 44:17-18).

IVP: linen, not wool. One possible reason for the prohibition of wool may be a practical one. Wool was more likely to cause one to sweat. Since many bodily excretions caused defilement, steps needed to be taken to prevent their occurrence in the temple complex. This appears also to be the case in Egypt, where, according to Herodotus and the Roman writer Lucian, linen was used in the material for priestly garments. Herodotus adds that the Egyptian priests were constantly washing their linen garments.

Ezekiel 44:18

They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird *themselves* with any thing that causeth sweat.

Sweat was Levitically unclean and that was an Old Testament idea; we see it also here.

For the priests who ministered in the temple, “sweat” was ritually unclean. The ceremonial cleanliness of the priests symbolizes the moral cleanliness of the people. The vestments were to be made of linen, which, because of its light weight, produced less “sweat” and a clean appearance.

Ezekiel 44:19

And when they go forth into the utter court, *even* into the utter court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments.

Constable 19-20: When the priests went into the outer court they would first have to change their clothes in the rooms designated for that purpose (42:1-14) so they would not transmit what was holy to what was common (cf. Lev. 6:11). Contact with holy things consecrated those things and brought them under the restrictions governing holy things (cf. Exod. 29:37; 30:29; Lev. 6:27; Hag. 2:12). They were also to keep their hair trimmed, not let it grow long or shave it all off. Long hair signified mourning, and pagan, idolatrous priests used to shave all their hair off as a sign of mourning (cf. Lev. 10:6; 21:5-6, 10).

Dake: The priests and Levites who ministered to the people were to put off their linen or ministerial garments when they went to the outer court. They were to change clothes in the holy rooms provided for this purpose before going out among the people.

Ezekiel 44:20

Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads.

In other words, both shaved heads and extremely long hair were both signs of mourning. These priests were to be moderate in their habits here.

Clarke: Neither shall they shave their heads—The priests of Isis shaved their heads close to the skin; the priests of Budhoo do so still, their ordinances oblige them to shave their heads every tenth day. To let the hair grow long would have been improper; therefore the Lord commands them to poll—cut the hair short, but not to shave.

Various regulations are given, like this one concerning cutting hair (cf. Lev 21:5). These regulations (vv. 20-27) were signs of the holiness and separateness required of the priests, who had to bear the burden of the iniquity of the people. They also illustrated the difference between the holy and the profane

Dake: Up to this point in Ezekiel 40-48 we have had no less than 43 commands recorded. See 116 commands, note, *Ezekiel 44:6. In this section (Ezekiel 44:20-31) we have 17 commands to priests concerning their outward appearance and personal conduct. They were to be a very special class, wearing special garments when they ministered to the Lord in the temple services. Among the people they were to be normally dressed—like the people to whom they ministered. In their rooms that were sanctified and called holy, they were to change clothes before carrying on other duties; and they were to keep their hair cut—not wear long locks as the Nazarites. They were not to have any special mark of identification while in normal life among men; all distinction as to dress and outward appearance was to be only while in the actual temple service. The priests were the teachers and judges in Israel (Ezekiel 44:23-24), and were limited as to whom they could marry (Ezekiel 44:22). As to dead bodies they were allowed to touch only those of very close relatives (Ezekiel 44:25), after which they were to go through seven days of ceremonial cleansing in order to become fit to minister again in the temple, such a ceremony being concluded with a sin offering for the uncleanness (Ezekiel 44:26-27). The priests were also limited as to inheritances and earthly possessions; and they were the only group in Israel to receive and use certain parts of the sacrifices and offerings, the devoted things, the firstfruits of all things, and oblations (Ezekiel 44:28-31). And finally, they were not to eat any meat of any animal that had died of itself, or that had been torn by any wild beast or by an accident of any kind (Ezekiel 44:31).

IVP: hair regulations. Shaving the head bald or letting the hair grow very long was most likely forbidden because of the pagan customs associating it with Canaanite cults of the dead. The taboo has its inspiration in Leviticus 21:5 (see comment there).

Ezekiel 44:21

Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court.

And that, of course, is consistent with Leviticus 10:9; and there are examples in Acts 2:13, 15, 18.

Constable 21-22: Moreover the priests were not to drink wine before they came into the inner court (cf. Lev. 10:9), nor were they to marry a widow or a divorced woman. They could only marry virgin Israelite women or the widows of former priests. Under the Mosaic system these marrying restrictions bound only the high priest (cf. Lev. 21:7, 14), but under the millennial system they will apply to all Zadokite priests.

IVP: wine prohibition. This prohibition has its parallel in Leviticus 10:9. Though ritualized intoxication was well known, for example, from the Babylonian creation epic, *Enuma Elish*, it is most likely that the prohibition was to make sure that the priest had control of his faculties (see comment on Isaiah 28:7).

Ezekiel 44:22

Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before.

Clarke: Neither shall they take for their wives a widow—This was prohibited to the high priest only, by Moses, Leviticus 21:13, 14.

IVP: marriage regulations. The explicit prohibition concerning the priest and marriage comes from Leviticus 21:7 (comments), 10-14 (see comments there). There, it appears that the concern was for maintaining the purity of the priestly line, although Ezekiel does not mention the reason for the prohibition.

Ezekiel 44:23

And they shall teach my people *the difference* between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

Constable: Part of the priests' job would be to teach the people the difference between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean. The people would learn this difference as they observed the distinctions prescribed here and as the priests explained them to them (cf. 22:26; Lev. 10:10-11; 11:47; Deut. 33:10).

"The priests were by their lives to be examples of separateness; their ritual holiness was intended to promote ethical holiness among the people they were called to serve.

This is also the duty of believer priests today (1 Pet. 1:13-16).

Ezekiel 44:24

And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths.

Constable: The Zadokite priests were also to serve as judges for the people and to make decisions in harmony with the Lord's laws (cf. Deut. 17:9; 19:17; 21:5). Not only will the prince serve as an administrator under Messiah (v. 3), but the priests will also serve under His authority. They themselves would have to keep His laws and His rules concerning the appointed feasts, and they would have to observe the Sabbath Day. While observance of the Sabbath Day is not part of the New Covenant law of Christ, God will reinstitute it during the kingdom dispensation. What God told people they could eat in various dispensations also differed. Before the Fall, God told Adam and Eve that they could eat any plants in the Garden of Eden except the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 1:29; 2:17-18). After the Fall, they and their descendants continued to be vegetarians. Then He told Noah that he and his descendants could eat animals as well as plants (Gen. 9:3). Under the Mosaic Law God proscribed certain foods as unclean. But later Christ declared all foods clean (Mark 7:19; cf. 1 Tim. 4:3). Even though the Sabbath Day was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant (Exod. 31:13, 17), reinstatement of Sabbath observance does not necessarily involve reinstatement of the whole Mosaic Covenant.

Ezekiel 44:25

And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves.

Constable 25-27: The Zadokite priests would not be able to have any contact with a dead corpse except in the case of their own immediate families (cf. Lev. 21:1-3). People will die during the Millennium (cf. Isa. 65:20), but no one will die in the eternal state (Rev. 21:4). After his initial cleansing from the defilement caused by contact with a corpse, the priest would have to wait seven days before resuming his priestly duties (cf. Num. 19:11-19). On his first day of service after his cleansing, he would have to go into the inner court and offer a sin offering for himself.

Clarke: **And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves**—Touching the dead defiles a Hindoo now, as it formerly did a Jew; and they must bathe to become clean again.

Ezekiel 44:26

And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days.

Ezekiel 44:27

And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel 44:28

And it shall be unto them for an inheritance: I *am* their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: I *am* their possession.

Constable 28-29: These priests would receive no other inheritance in the land but the privilege of serving the Lord in the special ways that He permitted. The Lord would designate a portion of the land in which they would live (45:4; 48:10-11), but this was not their inheritance. The perquisites of this inheritance would include the privilege of eating parts of the best grains and animals that the people brought to the Lord as sacrifices (cf. Deut. 25:4; 1 Cor. 9:9-12; 1 Tim. 5:18). Everything that the people would bring as offerings to the Lord would go to them. These were "devoted" (Heb. *herem*) things, things given that the offerer could not redeem (buy back; cf. Lev. 27:21, 28; Num. 18:14).

Clarke: I am their inheritance—Those who affect to form their ecclesiastical matters on the model of the Jewish Church have with one consent left this out of the question. They will not live on the free-will offerings of the people; but must have vast revenues, and these secured to them by law. That every minister of God should be supported by the altar I grant; but I think, instead of that method of paying the parochial clergy which I see is so much objected to, and breeds so much dissension between the pastors and their flocks, it would be better, on these accounts, to assign them a portion of land adequate to their supply, or let the state maintain them as it does its other officers. In Israel God was their inheritance and their possession; but they had the breast and shoulder of all sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, and all dedicated things were theirs; and they had a portion of all the dough that was prepared for bread. These were considered as the Lord's property, and these he gave to them; and this is always implied in the Lord's being their inheritance and their possession. They had a plentiful support.

Hitherto tithes have been thought the best mode of paying the clergy, and providing for the poor of each parish; but these matters have undergone such alterations since the time of their institution, that some emendation of the system is at present absolutely necessary.

There should be a public acknowledgment of God in every nation, and this should be provided for by the state in a way the least burdensome to the people, that all may rejoice in the benefit. Happy the nations that have a Bible so correct, and a Liturgy so pure, as those in the British empire! In such cases, a religion established by the state is an unutterable blessing to the nation; only keep it to the Bible, and to the Liturgy, and all, under God, will be well; but when the sermon is against these, all is bad.

Ezekiel 44:29

They shall eat the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs.

IVP 29-30: priest's portions. Although these verses provide the physical sustenance for the priests, there is more. The priests were actually invited to eat Yahweh's food. For more information see comments on Numbers 18:12-19. They were also authorized to eat the *herem* or "every irredeemable devoted thing." These items were evidently those designated for any use, except that which was prescribed for the cult.

Ezekiel 44:30

And the first of all the firstfruits of all things, and every oblation of all, of every sort of your oblations, shall be the priest's: ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house.

Constable 30-31: They would also receive the best parts of the firstfruits of every kind that the people brought to the Lord. The Lord would bless the people who were careful to provide the priests with their firstfruits (cf. Mal. 3:8-12; 2 Cor. 9:10-11). Priests were not to eat any animals that died a natural death or had been slain in a way other than as a sacrifice to the Lord (cf. Lev. 17:5; 22:8; Deut. 14:21). These animals might be inferior and might carry communicable diseases.

Ezekiel 44:31

The priests shall not eat of any thing that is dead of itself, or torn, whether it be fowl or beast.

Missler: Death is the wages of sin; therefore, death is the end of sin, its natural end. Death has always been seen as Levitically unclean. That is why they whitewashed the tombs around Passover time so that someone traveling in the land who was unfamiliar with the ground, would not stumble onto a grave and thus become Levitically defiled so they could not celebrate the Passover Festival. So this whole concept of not touching a dead thing was consistent with the Mosaic ideas we are familiar with from the Torah.

Zadok: Background

Now a little bit about Zadok. Zadok was the son of Ahitub, of the line of Eleazar. But the main thing about Zadok was that, during the insurrection of Absalom, Zadok was faithful to David (2 Samuel 15:24). He distinguished himself by being faithful to David during Absalom's insurrection.

Also, the sons of Zadok anointed Solomon as king after the abortive attempt of Adonijah to seize the throne (1 Kings 1:32). If you want to do a study of Zadok: 1 Samuel 2:35; 2 Samuel 15:24; and 1 Kings 2:26 - 35. They distinguished themselves historically in their loyalty to the king. They kept themselves from idolatry during a time when other priests complied with the idolatrous desires of the disobedient people.

Now do we mean a literal Zadok here? Or is it possible that the Lord through Ezekiel uses the name Zadok here in the same sense that he spoke of Jezebel in the 7 letters to the 7 churches?

In those letters, our Lord made references to the future, using the idioms of the past. Jezebel assisted her husband Ahab in obtaining lands through an inquisition and false accusations - Naboth's vineyards, if you remember. There are a number of places in those letters where, using the historical examples, historical idioms, for prophetic future.

Is it possible that what we are referring to here is literally the line of Zadok? Probably. Or it just might be that there will be a line of priests that, during the tribulation period, do not support the infusion of the foreigners and the abomination of desolation being established; and that line of priests, being obviously, uniquely chartered if you will, during the Millennium, which is what we have described as Zadok.

It is interesting that through all of this, there is no high priest mentioned. But, again, that is consistent with Zechariah 6:12-13. The duties of the Levitical priests are mentioned in Leviticus 10:10 and Malachi 2:7.

One of the things which should have hit you here as we went through, is that in the Millennium, there will be death. What does death mean during this Millennial reign of Jesus Christ? We certainly have reference to it here in Chapter 44. It is also mentioned in Isaiah 65:20. It is rare, but it does exist.

Best Offering

In regard to the offerings here, they give nothing but the best. If you have studied the offerings in Leviticus 22:8 or 17:15 or Deuteronomy 14:21, etc., you know that the Lord is entitled to the best, not the worst. Not only without blemish, but the best of the series, whatever it is. That makes sense when you study the Torah or the offerings. It is something we usually forget when we are making a sacrifice of ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, whether it is an offering in the Sunday morning envelope, or whether it is some other kind of sacrifice that we are giving to the Lord. He is entitled to the firstfruits, and He is entitled to whatever is our best.

oblations. That is, "sacrificial offerings."