

NOVEMBER 22

Ezekiel 44-45:12

I'm sure there is a lot we don't understand yet about life and living during the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. In fact, we know practically nothing about it. In these chapters we are given a glimpse into what is going on, in and around the temple. In some respects, all of this detail gives us some idea of what the Lord will be doing with Israel and with the world.

Israel will fulfill their obedience before the Lord and be a witness to all other nations for those thousand years. The sacrifices will be a memorial remembrance to Christ's sacrifice. Although their "religious" lifestyle might look burdensome to the world, there will be amazing blessing in Israel. Those with discerning hearts will see that it is not a blessing borne of works, but borne out of a relationship with their King. Their obedience will be out of love and gratitude, not out of payment for a service. The nations, who will all be rebuilding their cities and governments, will need assistance and will come to Israel for healing and to draw near to the visible Lord God of Israel. Faith in Christ will still be a choice.

Ezekiel 44

Vs. 1-3 This east gate of the temple has not been made yet, so it isn't that closed, golden gate you sometimes see in the wall of Jerusalem. That golden gate might be what Jesus will use to enter Jerusalem, but this temple will not have been built when He returns. This gate will be off limits, because the glory of God will enter the temple through it. Only the prince of the people, David, will be able to use it.

Vs. 4-8 As God gives Ezekiel these instructions, it is still present time. The people had desecrated all that God had given them and all that was holy. By doing so, they had held God up to scorn for the nations. Therefore, there is a sense of judgment and harshness in these words. Those who serve the Lord in that temple will not need these words of caution. Most of those listening to Ezekiel speak will never return to Israel, and many will only see a temple (those early chapters of Ezra) that was the shadow of the glory of Solomon's temple. These words then are first, a rebuke to the exiles, but second a revelation to give Israel hope as a nation, that they will someday have a glorious future in service to God.

Vs. 9-14 Notice that circumcision will still be practiced as the sign of the covenant with Abraham, that is, a sign of the faith of Abraham. But even more importantly, no one will be able to come before God with a false heart. There won't be any politicking with Jesus.

The Levites will still serve in the temple, but because of their past transgressions, none but the sons of Zadok will be able to come before the Lord. It seems interesting to think that there will still be distinctions between people with Jesus present, but these 1000 years serve more than one point for all of mankind. The fact that the Jews will serve before God and that the nations will still be the "Gentiles" shows that, in humility, people will have to seek Christ and understand and trust Him. And even now in the church, we have human distinctions based on God's choice of leaders and His assignment of gifts.

Vs. 15-27 These are the priests, *the sons of Zadok*, who come before the Lord in the temple. As you read this, take note of the detail. I wonder what that table is for. It is mentioned again. I wonder why they can't sweat. Will there be air conditioning?

The job of the priest as described in vs. 23 & 24 is interesting. This is the opposite of the effect the priests had on the people in the time of Jesus.

Vs. 28-31 We have often read that the priests would have no inheritance, but that God would be their inheritance. Their joy was to serve in His presence and their trust was to have been in His sole provision. I think this service and inheritance foreshadows the life of a disciple.

Luke 12:32-36 *Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* ³³*Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.* ³⁴*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* ³⁵*Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning,* ³⁶*and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.*

Mark 10:28-30 *Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you."* ²⁹*Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel,* ³⁰*who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.*

Ezekiel 45

Vs. 1-8 This will be the land that is designated for the city, the prince, the priests and the Levites. Apparently it will extend from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan and will encompass the city of Jerusalem.

V. 8 These princes are still future and they will help rule, or judge, Israel. If you are asking me, I believe we know the names of these princes. *Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* (Matt. 19:28)

Vs. 9-12 So who are these princes? God seems to be referring to the conduct of the past kings and present exiled leaders. The only prince that has been mentioned up to now is David, who will rule the city and country as the king. This passage then seems to be a rebuke to the leaders, as represented in all of the kings and leaders up to this point. Remember that if you look at the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel together, you find a lot of kings; and most of these were horrible shepherds who fleeced the sheep. God will assign the prince his portion so that he will not take land or stuff from the people. In a way, this is more of an object lesson to the people present with Ezekiel, because I'm sure that David won't abuse his privileges and neither will the twelve disciples. The mention of honest measurement might be literal, as in how the leaders cheated the people who brought their tithes and taxes; or it could be a reference to the dishonesty of their hearts. In both cases, that will never be the situation in the future when the Messiah reigns over the world.

You can see that after the harvest of our times, there will still be a last period of time where people will have to make a choice for Christ. During that time there will still be death and there will be sickness, but the cures for all of these will be in Jerusalem. The nation of Israel will be the light, and the King on the throne will be the Savior. And who knows what we'll be doing. Some of us might be getting some much needed R&R, and others might be helping by teaching and by helping rebuild a very tattered earth. After the rapture, the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom, we might find ourselves still employed in the harvest, teaching and helping others, but we'll be fully resurrected in Christ. (Rev. 20:6)

1 Peter 1:1-12

We haven't heard from Peter in months. At the time of writing this letter, Peter was now a very seasoned apostle, having served for more than 30 years after the resurrection of Christ. It seems that this letter was written to all Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire. This letter is probably written sometime between the beginning of Nero's persecutions in 64 A.D. and Peter's death at Nero's hand in 67 A.D.

Like James, this letter is written to encourage Christians in the harvest who were having to endure very tough times. Doesn't it seem like endurance in following Christ is becoming a

constant theme in the Word? We saw it in Hebrews, in James and now here. But then, we also saw endurance in faith in Paul's life and in his letters. And we saw it in the life of Jesus. The Lord let His disciples know from the beginning that this life in the harvest wouldn't be easy. Many of Jesus' disciples left Him. During this time in the church, many were leaving. And even today, many people hang around church and make the right noises only because everything in the west is so easy and non-confrontational. In our western culture, if we don't live as a witness for Christ, who cares? Believing is totally easy and the requirements of following Christ are few. Just stay out of trouble.

But Jesus invited people to walk as He walked and to suffer as He suffered in the harvest. *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.* (Phil. 1:29-30)

The point of remaining on earth is to reach the lost and to make disciples, that is, being witnesses and followers of Christ. On this planet, that means opposition. If we give up and don't learn to endure in our faith, we miss God's purpose for us. We miss seeing His grace in the lives of those who are saved and then become disciples, who make disciples. We miss the work that only He can do in our hearts unless we only have Him to depend upon. And worst of all, we miss getting to know Him and having Him and the Father make their home with us. See John 14:21-23.

Vs. 1-2 Since we are reading of the temple in Ezekiel, remember that everything that was holy and to be used in the service of the Lord was sprinkled with blood. There are also references like this in Hebrews. Peter is trying to encourage disciples who are beginning to face a hard persecution.

Vs. 3-5 There is a lot to observe here, but for me the comment in v. 5, that our faith guards us, is important. Peter will develop this.

Vs. 6-7 Notice that the testing, or proving, or strengthening, of faith is valuable and important. Notice the word *necessary*, referring to God's choice for them. Notice also that not only does our faith protect us, but when it is proven, instead of bitterness and dejectedness, our faith, in the present and in the future, projects glory and praise to Christ. How often have we read that disciples shouldn't complain about anything if we believe God truly is in control and if the Holy Spirit guides our steps each day?

Vs. 8-9 And this is why we don't complain. It is because we are in love with the Lord we follow.

Vs. 10-12 It is interesting how Peter is encouraging them. I was reading yesterday that as Jesus was observing the joy of the 70 and was teaching, at one point, He turned to the Twelve and said privately to them, *For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.* (Luke 10:24) Jesus was telling them what a privilege they had received. Peter, remembering that day, was telling these people, and us, what a privilege it is to know Jesus and to be following Him in the harvest at a time like this.

Psalm 119:17-32

So, you've read this amazing psalm already once this year. But now, you've got a lot more of the Bible under your belt. As you read and make observations, notice how David begins to weave his feelings of distress and suffering and depression into his prayer. It is the Word that is strengthening David to get up every day.

Vs. 17-24 Notice how the first verse sets the tone of this section. To be dealt with bountifully meant to receive God's protection of his life. In the midst of all the threats to David during this short journey on earth, the Word became David's delight.

Vs. 25-32 *My soul clings to the dust* may be an expression regarding the frailty and sinfulness of the flesh, similar to Paul's *Wretched man that I am*. The life David needed was in the Word. Notice in v. 26 that there was the recognition of relationship, that God was answering David out of the Word. In all of this there is a sense of desperately pursuing God.

It seems pretty obvious to me, that just like people who are clinically sick physically, sin makes us spiritually bi-polar and clinically at risk. We need our meds constantly, every day. We are only kidding ourselves if we skip the Word or get hooked on secondary sources. It is the Word that is alive. This spiritual sickness we have doesn't require intermittent care, but rather, constant care; and that spiritual care we need is the daily input of the Word of God. Accept no substitutes.

Proverbs 28:8-10

V. 8 seems to say that God will make sure that what this guy idolized is properly distributed to aid others.

V. 9 This could be that same guy, but now he is religious. He is religious and now leading God's little ones to stumble/sin. (Matt. 18:6)

V. 10 This could still be that same guy, but God reminds us again that following the Lord will be rewarded in the end and that He will protect His own.