

EZEKIEL

Hard to Heart

“Sur la Temple” 46:1-24

Feasts are featured in this chapter. In fact, it closes with a look at the kitchens the levites will use in their preparations for the various feasts.

First we see the calendar Israel will follow in her feasts.

Ezekiel 46:1 'Thus says the Lord God: "The gateway of the inner court that faces toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, and on the day of the New Moon it shall be opened."

There is so much confusion about the Sabbath, and by that I mean whether or not Christians are obligated to observe it in some manner in the age in which we live.

Over the years we've suggested a multitude of reasons why we are definitely not under any obligation to 'keep' the Sabbath.

As we read the opening verses of chapter forty-six we'll see that the Sabbath *will* be observed in the future Millennium, the one-thousand year kingdom of Heaven on the earth. Reading it's regulations carefully we will see another reason why we are not under obligation to observe it now.

Ezekiel 46:2 The prince shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway from the outside, and stand by the gatepost. The priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings. He shall worship at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not be shut until evening.

Ezekiel 46:3 Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the entrance to this gateway before the Lord on the Sabbaths and the New Moons.

Ezekiel 46:4 The burnt offering that the prince offers to the Lord on the Sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish;

Ezekiel 46:5 and the grain offering shall be one ephah for a ram, and the grain offering for the lambs, as much as he wants to give, as well as a hin of oil with every ephah.

If you haven't been here for our recent studies, we've established that "the prince" is King David in his resurrected body acting as a co-regent with Jesus Christ. These verses tell us how David will conduct the offerings for the weekly Sabbath.

Here is something else essential to remember about the Sabbath. It involved a lot more than doing no work, resting as it were. **It required sacrifices be offered.** And not just any sacrifices, in any place, by anybody!

Listen to Numbers 28:9-10.

Numbers 28:9 'And on the Sabbath day two lambs in their first year, without blemish, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, with its drink offering -

Numbers 28:10 this is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, besides the regular burnt offering with its drink offering.

This very particular sacrifice and offerings could only be made by a Levitical priest at the prescribed place, the Temple altar.

Here's the thing. Seventh-day groups, like the Adventists but there are others, want to burden you with their Sabbath-keeping regulations. **But they are not, and they can not, observe the Sabbath as it was prescribed!** It requires the burnt offering be made by a Levite at the Temple.

Listen, if we can simply make-up our own rules about how to observe the weekly Sabbath, **then it's not something God has prescribed, is it?**

Here is what one author wrote:

To "keep" the Sabbath today is to simply rest from your own efforts to save, heal, preserve, or deliver yourself by your own works. The true "rest" is to rest by trusting in the sure promises of God found in the New Covenant.

In the church age we have entered into the spiritual rest of ceasing from form and ritual and such. To try to observe the Sabbath is, in my mind, counter-productive. It subtracts from the freedom we have in Christ. Instead of rest we add works. Don't do it.

Once again I'd quote the conclusions of the Church Council at Jerusalem in the first century.

Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

Acts 15:29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

Acts 15:30 So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.

Acts 15:31 When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.

Sabbath? No! *No Sabbath for you!*

In verse one there was a mention of the New Moon. Israel followed a lunar calendar and so the phases of the moon were significant. The next three verses address the sacrifices for the time of the New Moon.

Ezekiel 46:6 On the day of the New Moon it shall be a young bull without blemish, six lambs, and a ram; they shall be without blemish.

Ezekiel 46:7 He shall prepare a grain offering of an ephah for a bull, an ephah for a ram, as much as he wants to give for the lambs, and a hin of oil with every ephah.

Ezekiel 46:8 When the prince enters, he shall go in by way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way.

Let me quote some stuff from a Jewish website.

The Jewish calendar is lunar, with each month beginning on the new moon. The new months used to be determined by observation. When the new moon was observed, the Sanhedrin declared the beginning of a new month and sent out messengers to tell people when the month began. People in distant communities could not always be notified of the new moon (and therefore, of the first day of the month), **so they did not**

know the correct day to celebrate. They knew that the old month would be either 29 or 30 days, so if they didn't get notice of the new moon, **they celebrated holidays on both possible days.**

[Thus] you may notice that the number of days of some holidays do not accord with what the Bible specifies. In most cases, we celebrate one more day than the Bible requires [because in ancient times they were not notified on time].

This practice of celebrating an extra day was maintained as a custom even after we adopted a precise mathematical calendar, because it was the custom of our ancestors. This extra day is not celebrated by Israelis, regardless of whether they are in Israel at the time of the holiday, because it is not the custom of their ancestors, but it is celebrated by everybody else, even if they are visiting Israel at the time of the holiday.

All Jewish holidays begin the evening before the date specified on most calendars. This is because a Jewish "day" begins and ends at sunset, rather than at midnight. If you read the story of creation in Genesis, you will notice that it says, "And there was evening, and there was morning, one day." From this, we infer that a day begins with evening, that is, sunset. Holidays end at nightfall of the date specified on most calendars; that is, at the time when it becomes dark out, about an hour after sunset.

The world will be back on a lunar calendar during the Millennium.

All these holidays will mean that lots of people will be going in and come out of the Temple. The next two verses indicate that there will be rules for coming and going.

Ezekiel 46:9 "But when the people of the land come before the Lord on the appointed feast days, whoever enters by way of the north gate to worship shall go out by way of the south gate; and whoever enters by way of the south gate shall go out by way of the north gate. He shall not return by way of the gate through which he came, but shall go out through the opposite gate.

Ezekiel 46:10 The prince shall then be in their midst. When they go in, he shall go in; and when they go out, he shall go out.

I do not think we can emphasize too much that God is orderly. Yes, He is romantic and creative and poetic and artistic. None of that cancels out the fact He is orderly and not prone to confusion.

We, therefore, must be orderly while also giving room for the romantic, the artistic, the poetic.

I think we have a great facility and that we are using it with real creativity. Take the always touchy subject of kids in worship. On Sunday mornings, to maintain as much order as possible in the main Sanctuary, we restrict the kids by age. But there are lots of other areas on campus where families can sit together and still have an orderly worship.

Then, on Wednesday nights, we do something entirely different. I love it! Order with openness.

Ezekiel 46:11 At the festivals and the appointed feast days the grain offering shall be an ephah for a bull, an ephah for a ram, as much as he wants to give for the lambs, and a hin of oil with every ephah.

Ezekiel 46:12 "Now when the prince makes a voluntary burnt offering or voluntary peace offering to the Lord, the gate that faces toward the east shall then be opened for him; and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings as he did on the Sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and after he goes out the gate shall be shut.

The prince figures prominently in all these celebrations. He serves as the facilitator, but also as an example to the people.

Here's a quote by Warren Wiersbe. He said, "Good ministers preach the Word, godly ministers practice it."

Let's open that up to all of us as Christians, not just preachers. Teaching precepts is one thing. Providing the example is quite another.

Ezekiel 46:13 "You shall daily make a burnt offering to the Lord of a lamb of the first year without blemish; you shall prepare it every morning.

Ezekiel 46:14 And you shall prepare a grain offering with it every morning, a sixth of an ephah, and a third of a hin of oil to moisten the fine flour. This grain offering is a perpetual ordinance, to be made regularly to the Lord.

Ezekiel 46:15 Thus they shall prepare the lamb, the grain offering, and the oil, as a regular burnt offering every morning."

In the Old Testament the burnt offering was a staple of the Temple. Burnt offerings were to be made every day, in the morning and the evening (Exodus 29:38-42). An additional burnt offering was to be offered up each Sabbath day (Numbers 28:9-10). Also, at the beginning of each month (Numbers 28:11), at the celebration of Passover on the 14th day of the 1st

month (Numbers 28:16), along with new grain offering at Feast of Weeks (Numbers 28:27), at the Feast of Trumpets, on sacred day in the 7th month (Numbers 29:1ff), and for the celebration of the new moon (Numbers 29:6).

Most of the sacrifices benefited the offerer and the priests in addition to being pleasing to God. Sometimes the offerer would eat some of the meat of the sacrificial animal, and most often the priest received a portion of it.

Not so the burnt offering. Neither the offerer nor the priest partook of any of the meat, for it was all burned in the fire. The hide of the animal was the priest's only portion.

Everyday for one thousand years in the future kingdom there will be a burnt offering in the morning. Why the evening offering ceases I have no clue. It does help to remind us that these verses are most definitely prophetic. Israel has never worshipped this way in a Temple like this.

Ezekiel 46:16 'Thus says the Lord God: "If the prince gives a gift of some of his inheritance to any of his sons, it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession by inheritance.

Ezekiel 46:17 But if he gives a gift of some of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his until the year of liberty, after which it shall return to the prince. But his inheritance shall belong to his sons; it shall become theirs.

Ezekiel 46:18 Moreover the prince shall not take any of the people's inheritance by evicting them from their property; he shall provide an inheritance for his sons from his own property, so that none of My people may be scattered from his property." ' ' "

Not that we need it, but here is additional proof that the prince is not Jesus, because He has sons. David will have sons and they will have an inheritance.

If he gives land to others, it will revert back to the original owners in the "year of liberty." The mention of him taking the inheritance of others isn't to indicate David might get greedy. After all, he's in his resurrected body and cannot sin.

No, it is to remind us that not only will there be a weekly Sabbath, there will be a Sabbatical (Sabbath) year that occurs every seven years, *and* a Jubilee year every fifty years. It is then that land reverts back to its inherited owners.

Leviticus twenty-five describes the Jubilee year. "Jubilee" means *liberty*. The Jubilee year was proclaimed with the sound of a trumpet on the Day of Atonement so that all knew the holy year has begun. God owns the land, and in the Jubilee, He wanted the return of every man to his possession. Men, who worked as a servant to pay off their debt, were freed and allowed to return to their own land and to their families.

There will be twenty such Jubilee years in the Millennium. There is no Day of Atonement celebrated in the Millennium, so I'm not sure when or how it will be proclaimed.

I'm going to share something I came across while researching the Jubilee. I don't want you patriots out there to think I'm a traitor; nor do I want you to think I've gotten into superstition. I just am reporting what I read. It's cited in something called *The Digest of Divine Law* (pages 109-110).

The Liberty Bell, currently located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is an iconic symbol of American independence.

The bell's first inscribed line quotes part of the Jubilee call found in the King James Bible version of Leviticus 25:10. The entire text of the Bible verse, with the part inscribed on the bell's top line in capitals, is:

"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and PROCLAIM LIBERTY THROUGHOUT [ALL] THE LAND UNTO ALL THE INHABITANTS THEREOF: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family."

On July 8th, 1776, the bell rang out summoning the people to hear the reading of America's Declaration of Independence.

Unfortunately, the United States has not obeyed the Law of Jubilee. It is widely believed the bell cracked in 1835 A.D. while being rung. The crack, which occurred roughly fifty years after America's War of Independence ended in 1783, was severe enough to

cause the bell never to be rung again. Periodic economic depressions have occurred in the United States about every fifty years.

You tell me!

The chapter ends with a description of the kitchens and cooking stations of the Levites.

Ezekiel 46:19 Now he brought me through the entrance, which was at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests which face toward the north; and there a place was situated at their extreme western end.

Ezekiel 46:20 And he said to me, "This is the place where the priests shall boil the trespass offering and the sin offering, and where they shall bake the grain offering, so that they do not bring them out into the outer court to sanctify the people."

Ezekiel 46:21 Then he brought me out into the outer court and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and in fact, in every corner of the court there was another court.

Ezekiel 46:22 In the four corners of the court were enclosed courts, forty cubits long and thirty wide; all four corners were the same size.

Ezekiel 46:23 There was a row of building stones all around in them, all around the four of them; and cooking hearths were made under the rows of stones all around.

Ezekiel 46:24 And he said to me, "These are the kitchens where the ministers of the temple shall boil the sacrifices of the people."

There will be a lot of cooking going on in the Millennial Temple. I think the kitchens will be old school as far as gizmos and gadgets.

The kitchens for the priests are to be at the west end of the priests' chambers adjacent to the Temple. The kitchens for the sacrifices of the people will be in the four corners of the outer court. When the people offer fellowship offerings to the Lord, they will be allowed to eat part of the sacrifice in a fellowship meal.

This all points to fellowship being the point, or at least the result, of the sacrifices. The priests and the people will eat together.

We're doing more around food and I think that's a good thing! Beyond that, texts like this encourage us to slow down and spend more time enjoying one another's company.