

EZEKIEL

Cry Me a River

*By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down,
yea, we wept When we remembered Zion
Psalm 137:1*

Text

Ezekiel 43:13 - 46:24

Topic

Ezekiel's vision continues with a look at the priests & the Prince serving in the Millennium Temple.

Title

"Someday Your Prince Will Come"

Are you one of those people who make guests remove their shoes before allowing them in?

After what I came across this week in my reading, *I may soon be joining you.*

Shoes track-in a smorgasbord of contaminants: E. coli, salmonella, staphylococcus, fungi, mold, pesticides, herbicides, gasoline, oil, anti-freeze, dead insects, pollen, mold spores, microscopic pests, viruses, and animal waste.

A University of Arizona study by Dr. Charles Gerba found:

- The average shoe sole harbored over 421,000 units of bacteria, with 90% of the shoes tested carrying E. coli.
- Shoes transferred bacteria from the soles to clean tile floors at a rate of 90% or higher.

You'll be thankful to know that we have abandoned the 5 second rule in Kid's Church.

Contamination is not just a physical problem. It is a serious *spiritual* problem. Charles Spurgeon wrote, *"There is not one that has escaped contamination, not one who has come into the world clean..."*

Let's say God has a weekend home in Riverdale. He invites you over. You come just as you are. You knock, and when the door opens, the Lord bids you enter. But first He points upward to a sign on the doorframe: "Sandals off, clean feet."

You refuse. In fact, you are angry. Your feet aren't that dirty. A lot of people have dirtier feet. Besides, you washed your feet before coming and could have only picked-up the tiniest bit of contamination.

The Lord indicates that you didn't let Him finish. He "laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded" (John 13:4-5).

You cannot adequately "clean" your own feet. Your "unclean" is below the skin, embedded deep in your flesh.

"Clean" and "Unclean" are the underpinnings of our verses today. We read in **Ezekiel 44:23, "And [the priests] shall teach My people *the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.*"**

Two characters who facilitate Millennial worship are prominent:

- The word "priest" or "priests" occurs about 16x.
- The word "prince" or its plural occurs about 17x.

We begin with the priests in **Ezekiel 43:13, "These are the measurements of the altar..."** The Millennial altar in Ezekiel 43 is a large, solid stone altar measuring 24' square, 13½' high, with four horns on its corners, an 18" rim around the top, and three steps only on the East side. The rim is a gutter to channel the blood of the sacrifice.

"Altars" are for sacrifice. There will be sacrifices in the future Millennial Temple; *there will be blood.*

Is that compatible with Jesus being the once-for-all substitutionary sacrifice for mankind on the Cross?

Yes. The sacrifices & offerings in the future Millennial Temple have *nothing* to do with salvation.

Matthew Henry wrote, "The sacrifices of the law were far from being of themselves sufficient to take away sin. They were a testimony that there was sin, and a picture of its removal, but not the real removal of it."

During the one-thousand year Kingdom, the Earth will be inhabited by both *mortals* & *immortals*:

- The resurrected immortals in the Millennium will be **1** the raptured & resurrected Church; **2** The Old Testament Saints; **3** the Martyrs from the Great Tribulation; and **4** the Highlander - Duncan McCloud of the clan McCloud.
- All believers who survive the Great Tribulation will remain in their mortal bodies. They will be glorified later. Children born to them will be mortal. That's the nicest way to say they will be born spiritually "unclean."

The cloud called *shekinah* that inhabited the wilderness Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple will return to inhabit the Millennial Temple. It is God's observable, revealed, physical presence on Earth.

There is a problem: The most holy God is unapproachable for a mortal human being.

During the Exodus, Israel reached Mount Sinai, where God's holiness required separation. Even touching the mountain meant death until God provided temporary cleansing through sacrifices and offerings.

The sacrifices and offerings in the Millennium are absolutely necessary in order for mortals to have fellowship with God.

The description of the altar continues through **Ezekiel 43:17**. Then, in **43:18-24**, because men built it, the altar itself is "unclean" until the priests follow God's method for declaring it clean.

Look at 43:25 "Every day for seven days you shall prepare a goat for a sin offering; they shall also prepare a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without blemish. Seven days they shall make atonement for the altar and purify it, and so consecrate it. When these days are over it shall be, on the eighth day

and thereafter, that the priests shall offer your burnt offerings and your peace offerings on the altar; and I will accept you,' says the Lord GOD."

None of these rituals do anything to physically change the altar or the worshiper. They communicate the gap between the Most Holy God and fallen mankind. They teach **"the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean."**

Priests receive and perform most of the sacrifices. A Temple priest must come from the tribe of Levi. **Ezekiel 44:10-15** contrasts two priestly sons who were descendants of Levi: The sons of Aaron and the sons of Zadok.

Look at 44:10 "The Levites [the sons of Aaron] who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who strayed away from Me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity... But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood, says the Lord GOD."

To be faithful, or not to be faithful; that is the question. Faithful is something you *can* be or become. It is a decision to seek the Lord, putting Him first, then following Him.

We love it when Jesus promotes us for faithfulness. **He also demotes us.** He demoted the sons of Aaron. Sin has consequences. I'm glad, however, that His demotions are merciful. The sons of Aaron had duties still to perform in the Temple. Here is another scenario. You might someday demote yourself by taking a stand for the Word of God and thereby losing your position in the world. Daniel & his three friends went as far as they could in obedience to King Nebuchadnezzar. When he demanded that they join with, literally, everyone else and bow to his statue, they drew a line & took their stand.

I will grant you that your boss is like the wicked king, and that everyday you are thrown into some horrible fiery furnace. My counsel: *Congratulations!*

The priest drinks no wine while on duty. He may be called upon to judge disputes when not busy with sacrificial duties. He is married, but only to a virgin Israelite or a priest's widow. He avoids defilement from the dead except for close family, purifying himself before returning to service.

Once the altar is consecrated, it's time. At dawn, the priest will dress in pure linen garments, hair neatly trimmed, ready to serve in God's presence. Entering the

sanctuary, he offers fat and blood on the altar. Before leaving the inner court, he changes into ordinary clothes so the holiness of his garments isn't carried outside. He receives no monetary remuneration, only the holy portions God provides to sustain him. The priest returns for evening sacrifices, ending the day in prayer before the altar **(44:15-31)**.

In **Ezekiel 45:4** we learn the priests live in this district. **"It shall be a holy section of the land, belonging to the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, who come near to minister to the LORD; it shall be a place for their houses and a holy place for the Sanctuary."**

A thread you might want to pull regarding the sacrifices and offerings is the fact that **they are not the same as those in Solomon's Temple**. For one, The Day of Atonement and Feast of Weeks are not mentioned by Ezekiel.

Look at **45:21-24** and its description of Passover:

- **45:21** The Prince will oversee the seven-day Passover beginning on the 14th of Nisan, encompassing Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits.
- On day one, he will offer a bull for himself and the people as a sin offering **(45:22)**.
- Each day, he will provide seven bulls, seven goats, and a male goat for sin, plus a grain offering of one bushel with twelve pints of oil, a bull, and a ram **(45:23-24)**.

What's missing? **There is no lamb**. How can you celebrate Passover without the Passover lamb. Maybe because the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world is ruling & reigning. At any rate, you cannot get upset about animal sacrifices in the Millennium without actually checking them out.

Before we talk about the Prince, let's get a takeaway from the priests.

Following the LORD's prescribed way of offering & sacrifice in the Millennium will not be hard. The sacrifices of bulls, rams, lambs, and goats; fine flour mixed with oil & frankincense. All will be abundant on the utopian Earth. The priests will do the bulk of the sacrificial work - slaughtering, sprinkling blood, burning offerings, and maintaining the altar.

Is the Christian life hard or easy? The answer depends on who is living it at the time:

- Are you living it in the energy of your flesh?
- Or is God living it by the power of the in-dwelling Holy Spirit?

In Ezekiel's Millennial vision, God re-establishes *right* worship **and** *righteous* leadership:

- The priests maintain right worship.
- The Prince maintains righteous leadership.

Who is this Prince?

We see him in **Ezekiel 44:1-4** **"Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. And the LORD said to me, 'This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the LORD God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut. As for the prince, because he is the prince, he may sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way.'"**

Let's notice who is *not* the Prince:

1. The Lord was talking to Ezekiel about the Prince. The Lord is therefore not the Prince.
2. The "LORD God of Israel" is not the Prince.

The Prince is the resurrected King David. King over Israel, yet subordinate to Jesus, who is the universal King of kings, making it fitting to call David both King and Prince.

Ezekiel 34:23-24 is pretty clear. **"I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them - My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them."**

Ezekiel 46 describes worship regulations for the Millennial Temple. The prince enters the east gate on Sabbaths and New Moons, leading the people in worship. Offerings are prescribed for the prince and the people, including burnt, grain, and fellowship offerings. Rules are given for the prince's inheritance to his sons, ensuring land remains in his family.

Wait; How can this be resurrected David if he can have sons? He doesn't "have" sons while in the Millennium because he already *has* sons. David fathered 19 children during his lifetime.

At least two of his sons were saved & would be resurrected with their dad at the 2nd Coming. Who were they?

Popeye the Sailor Man.

Raise your hand if you know who I'm talking about. In short cartoons from the 1930s through the 1950s, Popeye would face a problem or villain (often Bluto), do reasonably well for a bit, start getting clobbered or tied up, and only then, when he was on the verge of defeat, pull out his can of spinach. Once swallowed, he would experience instant super strength, quick victory, "and a jaunty closing tune."

The Popeye Strategy sounds exactly like the approach believers take when it comes to God the Holy Spirit. Like Popeye without spinach, we often try to face life's battles in our own strength. We end up beaten down because we are fighting spiritual forces with natural weapons.

We finally cry out for help. But God never intended His in-dwelling Holy Spirit to be our last resort. He is our constant supply.

The Holy Spirit doesn't just give us a burst of strength in crisis, He indwells us to empower daily obedience, worship, and courage to take our stand. The difference between defeat and victory isn't us "toughing it out," but God's Spirit within us, enabling us to live the life Ezekiel envisioned for God's people.

R.A. Torrey: *"Just stop and think what it means to have the inmost life of that infinite and eternal Being whom we call God, dwelling in a personal way in you. How solemn and how awful and yet unspeakably glorious life becomes when we realize this."*