

Pentwater Bible Church

Ezekiel Message 100
September 10, 2017



Jesus the Messiah and Lion and Lamb of Israel. Artist Unknown.

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Ezekiel Message One-Hundred

THE LEVITES RESTRICTIONS IN MESSIAH'S TEMPLE

September 10, 2017

Daniel E. Woodhead

EZEKIEL 44:9-14

⁹Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any foreigners that are among the children of Israel. ¹⁰But the Levites that went far from me, when Israel went astray, that went astray from me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity. ¹¹Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the house, and ministering in the house: they shall slay the burnt-offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. ¹²Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and became a stumblingblock of iniquity unto the house of Israel; therefore have I lifted up my hand against them, saith the Lord Jehovah, and they shall bear their iniquity. ¹³And they shall not come near unto me, to execute the office of priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, unto the things that are most holy; but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed. ¹⁴Yet will I make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein (ASV, 1901).

ONLY THE CHOSEN ENTER

EZEKIEL 44:9

⁹Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any foreigners that are among the children of Israel (ASV, 1901).

During the Messianic Kingdom there will be no unsaved person or one who engages in sinful behavior allowed in to the sanctuary in Jerusalem. During the Messianic Kingdom there will be people born to those with natural bodies. Some of them will not accept The gospel of the Messiah. They will not be allowed into the Temple for any reason. These of course are the Gentiles. God demands holiness of His people especially in the houses of worship. The Israelites were guilty of doing this and were warned not to do it when they returned after the Babylonian captivity (Ezra 4:1-3; Nehemiah 13:1-9). God demands purity of belief and behavior of His children and only the saved are to be allowed into the house of worship. The same is true of the Church although it is violated regularly.

The teaching services of the Church are meant to build up the believers in wisdom and grace. The services are not the time to evangelize the lost with their stubborn and unresponsive

hearts. When the lost are allowed to participate in our services the accurate and complete teaching of God's Word is severely impaired. The frequent practice in the modern seeker sensitive services results in critically reducing the level of teaching of God's Word to at best a rudimentary level so as to accommodate the unbelievers. At worst it is corrupted to avoid offending those who would find it contrary to their paganized outlook on world behavior. The result is that the saved do not grow in God's Word and the unsaved *may* be led to belief in the Gospel. The early Church did not allow unbelievers into their services for at least two reasons. One, they were persecuted and wanted to avoid potential exposure to spies who would harm them. Two, they were eager to learn God's Word. This paganization of the Church and the services with unbelievers did not happen until the Romans forced Christianity on the culture by merging the Church and the state.

When the Roman Emperor Constantine issued his Edict of Milan (commonly called the Edict of Toleration, 313 A.D.) it ended the Christian persecution and set the stage for Christianity being merged with the state.¹ It would not happen during his reign but in the reign of his second successor Theodosius I. On February 27, 380 A.D. he published the so-called "Edict of Thessalonica" (decree "*Cunctos populos*", Codex Theodosianus xvi.1.2) and ordered that all Roman subjects profess the faith of the bishops of Rome and Alexandria (*i.e., the Christian faith* as amalgamated into semi-Christian pagan religion which he called *Catholica*).

We desire that all peoples subject to Our benign Empire shall live under the same religion that the Divine Peter, the Apostle, gave to the Romans, and which the said religion declares was introduced by himself, and which it is well known that the Pontiff Damascus, and Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic sanctity, embraced; that is to say, in accordance with the rules of apostolic discipline and the evangelical doctrine, we should believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitute a single Deity, endowed with equal majesty, and united in the Holy Trinity. We order all those who follow this law to assume the name of Catholic Christians, and considering others as demented and insane, we order that they shall bear the infamy of heresy; and when the Divine vengeance which they merit has been appeased, they shall afterwards be punished in accordance with Our resentment, which we have acquired from the judgment of Heaven.

Dated at Thessalonica, on the third of the Kalends of March, during the Consulate of Gratian, Consul for the fifth time, and Theodosius.²

He was essentially saying everyone but Catholic Christians are demented, insane and will be punished. He directed this punishment at the Jews and non-Catholic Christians, and encouraged others to do the same. So from this point on we have early Church fathers expressing the same vehemence toward the Jews and non-Catholic Christians.

¹ Sheldon, Henry C. *History of the Christian Church Vol I The Early Church*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA 01961-3473, 1988 pp. 331; 379-395

² Bettenson, Henry ed. *Documents of the Christian Church*, London: Oxford University Press, 1943, pp. 31

This forced all members of the Church at Rome to become Catholic Christians. Since Christianity is based upon personal faith and being chosen by God, false professions of faith to avoid death threats were detrimental to the purity of the professing Church at Rome. The result was a severe paganization of the Christian Church. The group at Rome became populated with pagans and grew significantly in numbers. This growth caused this Church to think of themselves as more significant than other regional churches. They called themselves the Roman Catholic Church and declared their headquarters at Rome.

This merging of Church with State brought the Dark Ages upon the world and many unbiblical practices entered the previously pure, but persecuted, Church. Some of these are: baptismal regeneration; clergy celibacy; The Eucharist (Transubstantiation), indulgences, Mary as Co-Mediatrix and Co-Redemptrix; penance, and others.

In the Messianic Temple there will be no such violation of the house of worship. God forbids it. No unsaved Gentiles will be allowed into the Messianic Temple.

THE LEVITES RECEIVE THEIR PENALTY

Ezekiel 44:10-14

¹⁰But the Levites that went far from me, when Israel went astray, that went astray from me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity. ¹¹Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the house, and ministering in the house: they shall slay the burnt-offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. ¹²Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and became a stumblingblock of iniquity unto the house of Israel; therefore have I lifted up my hand against them, saith the Lord Jehovah, and they shall bear their iniquity. ¹³And they shall not come near unto me, to execute the office of priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, unto the things that are most holy; but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed. ¹⁴Yet will I make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein.

The Levites were descendants of Levi one of Jacob's sons. They were chosen to minister in the Tabernacle and Temple after (Numbers 3:6-13; 18:6). They also were assigned to minister to the priests when these sacrificed in the tabernacle (Numbers 8:19; 18:6), and in particular to take care of the house and all its vessels (Numbers 1:53). The office of High Priest took care of the sanctuary and of the altar, which was assigned to Aaron and his sons alone as Levitical priests (Numbers 18:2-6, 23). Now the Levites are assigned to keep guard and do menial service of the Temple, but are excluded from the priestly office. In the Messianic Kingdom government of God they are shut out from this higher place because of their previous history.

They had followed the people into idolatry, and were a stumbling-block of iniquity instead of resisting the incoming evil and instructing the people in the Laws of God. The future provides results that flow from the past. This is clearly communicated in God's Word.

Galatians 6:7-8

⁷ Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁸ For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (KJV).

So what we sow, that we reap. In other words we receive the consequences of our behavior. If our work is good we shall receive reward, if bad we shall suffer loss. This sober lesson is seen here with the Levites. Their past and its lessons will be a reminder to them as they will fulfill their service, and be a constant reminder to all the people of the nation's past sin, in which the Levites had joined in. They were engaging in the nation's gross idolatry. For the Church in the Messianic Kingdom this amounts to rewards given or denied at the Bema Seat judgment.

I Corinthians 3:10-15

¹⁰ According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. ¹¹ For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; ¹³ every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (KJV).

In verses 10-11, Paul again points out that the basis of the judgment is the works of the believer. This is portrayed as building on a foundation that has already been laid; the judgment is based on *how* one has built on this foundation (Jesus the Messiah). Furthermore, in verse 12, this judgment of works will not be based upon quantity, but upon quality. It will not be a question as to *how much* gold, silver, costly stones or wood, hay, stubble; but *was* it gold, silver, or precious stones, or *was it* wood, hay or stubble?

The point of this judgment is whether or not the believer followed God's will for him. If a believer is doing the will of the Lord, obeys His commandments, and carrying out his responsibilities for which he received capability through spiritual gifts, then he is building on the foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones. But if not then he is building with wood, hay and stubble. While the believer's sins themselves are not brought out in this judgment, they do play a role in the decision. During the period of time the believer is living in unconfessed sin he is building with wood, hay and stubble, and not with gold, silver and precious stones. Thus there are severe consequences for the believer living in sin. The consequence will affect his or her position of authority during the Messianic

Kingdom.

In verse 13, the means of testing is said to be “*fire*”. When fire is applied to wood, hay or stubble, they are burned up and only ashes remain. But, if fire is applied to gold, silver or precious stones, they become refined and more pure. So, some believers will find all their works burned up, and others will merely see them refined. Finally, in verses 14-15, the results of the judgment are given. In verse 14, those who built with gold, silver and precious stones will find their works still remaining, but purified after the fire has been applied; thus, they will receive a reward. In verse 15, Paul states the result of those who have built with wood, hay and stubble, which will all be burned up; and they will suffer loss. But, the loss is merely one of rewards and authority and nothing more. They will not be punished for their sins any more than a runner in a race is punished for not coming in first. If anyone concludes that they lose their salvation, the text states in no uncertain terms that they *shall be saved*. His works do not determine his salvation. His salvation is assured for he trusted in the Messiah, and salvation is by grace through faith apart from works (Ephesians 2:8-9). But, he will spend the entire thousand year Kingdom period with nothing to show for his previous spiritual life post salvation event.

THE REWARDS (CROWNS)

I Corinthians 3:10-15 says nothing about the nature of the reward, but other passages do. They speak of these rewards as being crowns. The Greek language has two words that are translated as “crowns.” One is a *diadem*, which is attributed to royalty, and the other is a *stephanos*, which is given to a victor in a race. Jesus wears the *diadem*. The *stephanos* are the kinds of crowns that we will be given for the quality of exercising our spiritual gifts here on earth as members of the body of believers. We will have overcome the spiritual warfare and will be crowned at the Judgment Seat of The Messiah. There are five such crowns mentioned in Scripture.

The first crown is called the “*incorruptible crown*”:

I Corinthians 9:24-25

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they [do it] to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible (KJV).

This is a crown given to those who exercise self-control and gain the mastery and victory in the spiritual life. It is for those who gained the victory over the old man, the old sin nature. It is for those who have learned to live a Spirit-controlled life.

The second crown is called the “*crown of rejoicing*”:

I Thessalonians 2:19

For what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Are] not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming (KJV)?

This is the crown given to those who win souls for Jesus the Lord. It is a crown available to all those who do the work of evangelism, and the fruits of their labors are seen in people coming to the Lord through them.

The third crown is called the “crown of righteousness”:

II Timothy 4:7-8

I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (KJV).

This is a crown for those who have kept the faith both doctrinally and morally in spite of adverse circumstances. It is a crown given to those “*who love his appearing*”, those who look longingly for the return of the Messiah. A life lived in conformity with the New Testament will include the expectation of the soon return of the Lord, and looking for His return is the result of sound doctrine and keeping the faith. For such, there is a crown of righteousness

The fourth crown is called the “crown of life”:

It is mentioned in two passages:

James 1:12

Blessed [is] the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him (KJV).

Revelation 2:10

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (KJV).

In James 1:12 it is given for those who endure trials. In Revelation 2:10 it is given for those who suffer martyrdom for their faith:

The fifth crown is the “crown of glory”:

I Peter 5:2-4

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight [thereof], not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over [God's] heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when

the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (KJV).

This is a crown for faithfully feeding the flock of God. It is available to those teachers who feed the sheep with the Word of God. There may be other crowns available, but these are the only ones mentioned in Scripture. These five are available to those whose works were judged as being made of gold, silver and precious stones. The rewards of crowns are for the purpose of determining degrees of authority in the Messianic Kingdom and not the Eternal Order which immediately follows the thousand year Messianic Kingdom. In eternity, all believers will be equal, but not so in the Kingdom where believers may have different positions of authority. In the form of a parable Christ explained this truth. It found in the nineteenth chapter of Luke:

Luke 19:11-27

And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me (KJV).

Jesus is saying that the last servant did not really expect the king to come back. Therefore he did not do as the king asked. Matthew's gospel adds that the third servant was thrown out of the kingdom (Matthew 25:30). This servant really belonged to the group of people who did not want the king to reign over them (Luke 19:14). His money was taken away and given to the one who had done the most for the king.

19:27. The two servants who had expected the king's return did as he asked. The enemies of the king were put to death in the king's presence. This parable teaches of the responsibilities of carrying out the work of Jesus through the Spiritual gifts He has given us. Jesus went away to Heaven. When He returns He will be the Messiah King of the earth establishing His kingdom. Until that time His followers are to fulfill the responsibilities He gave them. On His return He would reward the faithful commensurate with their service to Him, and His enemies would be judged before Him.

NEXT MESSAGE: THE PROPHECY AGAINST PART XIV OF THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM
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