

Ezekiel Chapters 43-44 - John Karmelich

Title: When things change for the better!

One of the great gifts God gives us is memories. Many of can recall say the birth of our first child as a memory "burned in our subconscious", as such memories are pleasant and big enough that we meditate on such things for the rest of our lives! I suspect "eternity" will have moments like that as well. Maybe the first time we see Jesus, or our departed loved ones again! There are also moments where even now we can appreciate eternal moments just thinking about them. In these chapters we get a vision of God's temple being restored after Israel is a country again during a future 1,000-year period, where Jesus will literally rule the world from there. The last few chapters focused on the temple construction details that will be built then. These chapters focus on the big moment when God (Jesus) enters that temple for the first time! It is historically going to be one of the top historical moments, so hopefully it'll "burn in our memories". I'm pondering, "then what" along with my usual why should we care question!

OK John, why is this particular event so important? We get that Jesus is "making the big entrance". It is a "Jewish thing" as I stated in the last lesson as the church is in the New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven, and this temple is for people living at that time to remember what Jesus did! We get this in Chapter 43. The key point is God wanted the Israelites living then to realize the mistakes they made of turning from Him and here's the long term benefits the Israelites will get despite the fact they turned from Him. The point for Christians is despite our sins, God can't go back on His unconditional promise to us about our salvation! Like the Israelites back then, the issue is to turn from sin when we are aware of it and realize God created us to be a living witness for Him! With that understood, time to go over a few details in these two chapters!

In effect the big moment ties to earlier chapters where Ezekiel saw a vision of God leaving their temple (Chapter 10) prior to the Babylonians destroyed it! Now he's saying in effect, "Remember that big exit scene? God will "reverse that" in the distant future!" The reversal ties well to God's exit of the one the Babylonians destroyed! We get a reference that ties to Revelation 14:2, which also describes this event that again will happen one day! Again, this is the big scene where Jesus takes the throne. Verse 7 states the speaker refers to "My throne", so we know it's a reference to the Messiah ruling there. We have two entities here besides Ezekiel. I argue that one is Jesus, and the other one is Ezekiel's guide. Remember this is a vision! Ezekiel is in Babylon, (Iraq today) hundreds of miles from Jerusalem! The point is his vision of God leaving the temple (way back in Chapter 10) as well as the new one being built, required Ezekiel to be "transported" to Jerusalem! Next is a speech given by the Messiah (Jesus) to the Israelites living with Ezekiel.

The key point is God wants them to realize how much they've messed up. It's another emphasis on why they're in captivity in the first place. This is a well-deserved "guilt trip" given that those Israelites were not being a living witness for God. The lesson for you and me of course is if we fail to use our lives as a witness for God we too could be "taken out of the ball game", not in terms of losing our salvation but it means He can end our ability to be used by Him if we fail that way! It's another reminder that we are not to mess with God and that's why He saved us in the first place!

Now that we established God will literally rule the world one day from Jerusalem, next is a description of an altar used to make sacrifices to Jesus. OK John what gives? Remember this is for people who've survived all the Revelation "bad stuff", and Jesus is ruling the world now! Just as God wants us (say at communion) to remember what Jesus did for us, so these animal sacrifices are for people living then to

realize it was Jesus' full payment for sins and they can continue to live. Since Jesus can't be crucified a second time, animal sacrifices are done then to remember what He did. Doing this gives the Israelites a way to remember Jesus after all the "hoopla" of the big entrance. I'm fascinated that the altar described in Chapter 43 has no mention of any gold, but it is "plain wood" used to sacrifice animals then.

This implies a bunch of things: First there will be animal raising and sacrifices. There are regulations that tie to God's instructions He gave back in Leviticus! Remember the focus is to be on Jesus and now in this era when He's ruling again, life is to be observed as God demands His people to live! As I state a lot, "God's in charge deal with it!" So where will the church be at that time? In the "New Jerusalem" (Revelation 21), says is no temple there as God Himself will be there! How can Jesus be at both places at the same time? I'm convinced our new bodies will exist in more than 3 dimensions! (Remember that Jesus entered a locked room in John 20:19). Anyway, bottom line, life whenever ever this occurs has a return to animal sacrifices to honor Jesus as God. Ritual details are given in Chapter 43.

In chapter 44, we get more details about life after Jesus returns. The Levitical priesthood is restored to the way it was before the temple was destroyed. But John, when the Romans burnt the temple didn't all the Jewish family records get destroyed (70AD)? Yes but "God is God" and if He says the priests who were tied to the priest line of 1st Kings Chapter 2 will be in charge, who are we to argue? Since I know Jesus was raised from the dead, knowing which Israelite came from what tribe when all this takes place is a non-issue to me! If I get to live to see how that works, I admit it'd be nice to see how that happens!

A fascinating bit of trivia is in Chapter 44. It says the east gate to the temple will be shut because that's where the Messiah (Jesus) entered it. There's an east gate built about the 16th Century of Jerusalem. It has been shut for centuries. The Muslims who built that gate, knew the Jews believed the Messiah will enter through it, so it's been sealed and there's a cemetery in front of it. I have no idea if that will be the gate Jesus enters or a new one will exist one day. Trying to prevent Jesus from fulfilling this just as it's written is obviously a waste of time. If you have never seen pictures of it, it is still there to this day!

Most of Chapter 44 gives instructions to the priests who will "work the thing". It's not like Jesus needs new sacrifices! It's to help people living them to get their focus on God and realize what He did for all of them as well as us! Some of the details are also interesting: The priests wear special garments only when they are working. They're to be all linen as wool causes them to sweat! It's a reminder that when we do stuff for God in effect it's "no sweat", as God's guiding our lives His way for His glory. We also get a few words about of all things, haircuts. In effect the priests can't be bald nor have long hair. That means hair still grows in that day, and barbers are needed! I suspect the reason is for the focus to be on God and not on people's looks. Remember no one can see the priests working but God is aware of how they look. Having such regulations gets the focus on Him and not their looks.

We also get regulations on who those priests can marry and bury! In short, they can only marry virgins or a widow of another priest. They can only go to gravesites for close family members. This concept is practiced by Orthodox rabbis today. The idea is rabbis are to be associated with life and not death. We also get references to the fact the priests when Jesus returns must be scattered through the land in effect to help draw people close to God.

OK John, this would be interesting if we were living then. Why should we care? Again, consider what it is we Christians are called to do, be a witness for Jesus. Although the text mentions rabbis have their hair short, I've known bald and long-haired pastors! The text's teaching all of us are to be witnesses for God and not "sweat", as God guides each of us the way He wants us to go to be a witness for Him! We don't have to wear linen to be a witness for Jesus. I believe God's explaining all of this to remind all the

Israelites that one day they will live how He intended them to live. In essence He's in charge, we're not and we must accept that.

With that said, hope you liked this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on one of the two links below. It's a joy to study and write this and I'm grateful for you reading it. The rest of this email is links to questions you may have. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again for reading this!