

Regulations for the Priests In The Millennial Kingdom, part 2

In our last study in the book of Ezekiel, we began to discover how mortal believers in the future millennial kingdom will worship God. In chapters 40 through 42, the magnificent temple was described. In Ezekiel 43:1-9, we discovered that the glory of God will return to the temple in the millennial kingdom after it is built. The glory of God will descend on the Mount of Olives, which is northeast of Jerusalem, and then pass through the east gate of the temple complex and move to the temple proper in Jerusalem. That will be a time of praise and rejoicing to see Yahweh return to live among every mortal and immortal believer. Then in the rest of chapter 43, the altar of sacrifice in the inner court was described and dedicated.

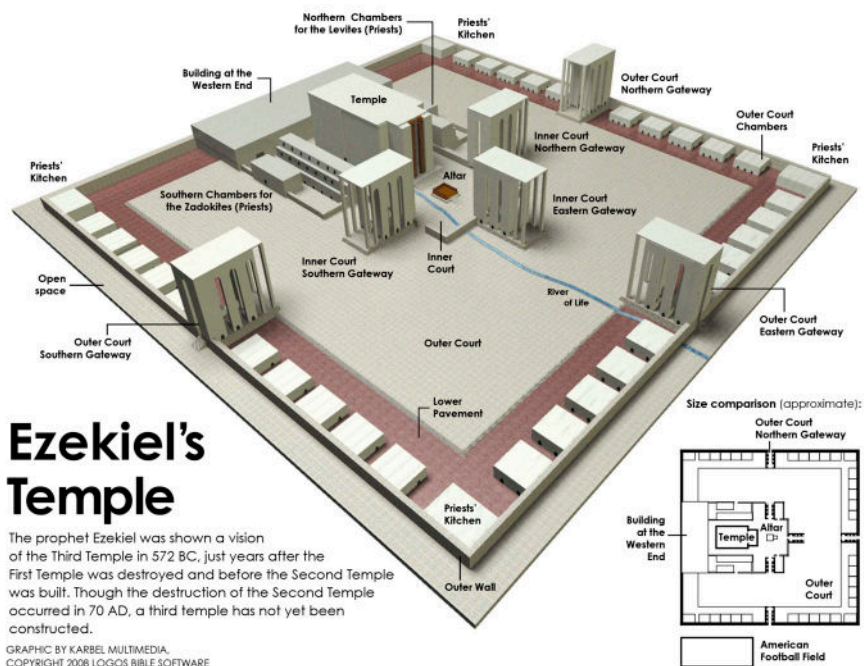
In our last study, we began to discover some of the regulations that Yahweh will impose on the citizens of the millennial kingdom. In Ezekiel 44:1, we discovered that the east gate will be closed to everyone because Yahweh will have entered the temple through that gate. People will only be allowed to enter the temple complex through the north and south gates to worship Yahweh. We were told that only repentant, mortal believers will be allowed to worship at the temple. The mortal unbelievers will

not be allowed to enter. These mortal unbelievers will be the children of those mortal believers who survived the tribulation and then entered into the millennial kingdom.

Regulations for the Levites. In the previous study, we looked at four sections in Ezekiel 44. In this study we will begin with the fifth section of Ezekiel 44. Verses 10-14 describe the regulations related to worship in the millennial kingdom. We should remember that this kingdom will be the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and it was designed by God the Father (Matthew 25:34). The section is titled, "Regulations For the Levites." I will summarize this entire section rather than read all of the verses. This section is about the Levites but not the priests who are the descendants of Zadok.

Numbers 3:2-10 and 1 Chronicles 6:1-2 tell us that Levi had three sons: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Each

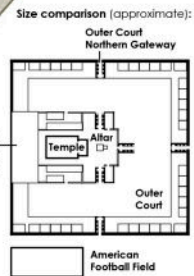
of these sons and their descendants had various responsibilities in the tabernacle in the wilderness, Solomon's temple, and Herod's temple. That will also be true in the temple in the millennial kingdom. For example, the sons of Gershon and Merari were given responsibilities for the care or maintenance of the



Ezekiel's Temple

The prophet Ezekiel was shown a vision of the Third Temple in 572 BC, just years after the First Temple was destroyed and before the Second Temple was built. Though the destruction of the Second Temple occurred in 70 AD, a third temple has not yet been constructed.

GRAPHIC BY KARBEL MULTIMEDIA.
COPYRIGHT 2008 LOGOS BIBLE SOFTWARE



tabernacle. To be specific, the Gershonites had responsibility for the fabrics of the tabernacle. The fabrics included the porpoise skin covering for the top of the tent, the screen for the front of the tent and the doorway of the court, the hangings in the court, and the cords. The sons of Merari were responsible for the structural support of the tabernacle. This included the frames, bars, pillars, sockets, and all of the other related equipment. So, the sons of Gershon and Merari were responsible for the overall care of the temple.

The descendants of the third son of Levi, the sons of Kohath, became the priests who performed the sacrifices and entered the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies on behalf of those who came to worship. The high priest Aaron was a son of Kohath. His descendants had responsibility for the ark of the covenant, the table of shewbread, the golden lampstand, the brazen altar, and all of the utensils used in worship. These descendants of Kohath were called the Levitical priests. They ministered before the Lord as they performed the sacrifices and entered the Holy Place. Only the high priest entered the Holy of Holies.

In Ezekiel 44:10-14, we are going to discover that the sons of Gershon and Merari will still have their responsibilities in the temple in the millennial temple. These sons are usually referred to as Levites and not priests. The passage explains why every Levite, that is a son of Gershon or Merari, will not be allowed to minister before the Lord. The explanation is that the Levites went astray from Yahweh by worshipping other gods and being rebellious. Ezekiel 8 reveals they led

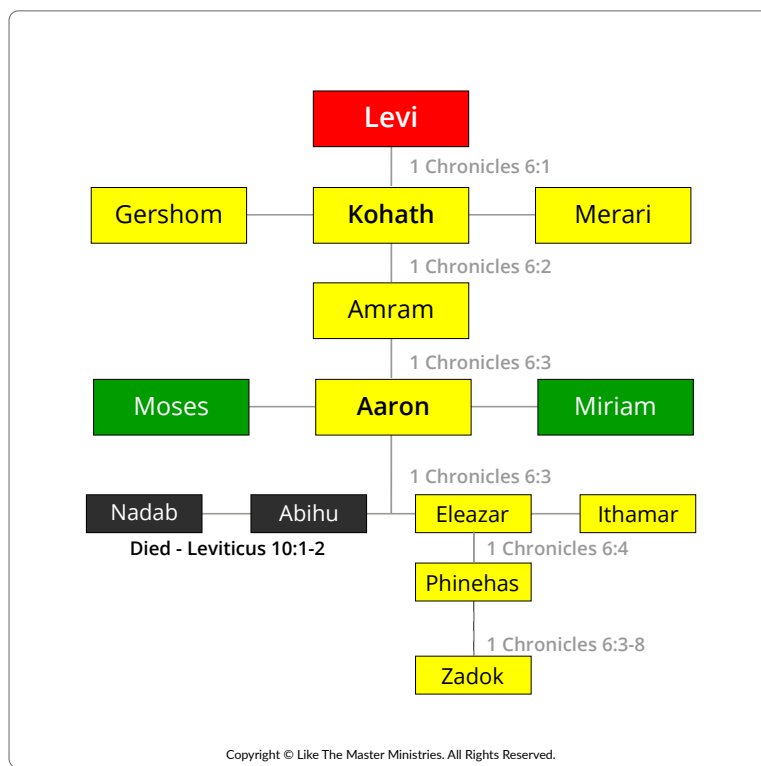
the Israelites in the worship of other gods such as Tammuz, Asherah, maybe Osiris and Ra, and others. That would have occurred from the time of King Solomon to the Babylonian invasion of Judah and Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The hearts of these Levites were not fully devoted to Yahweh. Consequently, Ezekiel 44:10-14 says,

“But the Levites who went far from Me when Israel went astray, who went astray from Me after their idols, shall bear the punishment for their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, having oversight at

the gates of the house and ministering in the house; they shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them. Because they ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel, therefore I have sworn against them,” declares the Lord GOD, “that they shall bear the punishment for their iniquity. And they shall not

come near to Me to serve as a priest to Me, nor come near to any of My holy things, to the things that are most holy; but they will bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed. Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the house, of all its service and of all that shall be done in it. Ezekiel 44:10-14 (NASB)

In verses 12-13, Yahweh said that the Levites will only care



Levitical Genealogy

for the house of the Lord and prepare the animals brought for sacrifice in the millennial kingdom. They can prepare the sacrifice for the burnt offering but nothing more because they had not been faithful and completely devoted to Him.

Regulations for the Levitical Priests. The sixth section of Ezekiel 44 is Ezekiel 44:15-31. The section is titled, “Regulations for the Levitical Priests.” Verses 15-16 say,

“But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood,” declares the Lord GOD. They shall enter My sanctuary; they shall come near to My table to minister to Me and keep My charge. Ezekiel 44:15-16 (NASB)

These two verses refer to the time during the reigns of King David and King Solomon when Israel and the priests were idolatrous and disobedient, except for the high priest Zadok (1 Samuel 2:25; 2 Samuel 15:24-29; 1 Kings 1:32-40; 2:26-35). 1 Chronicles 6:3-8 tells us that Aaron had a son named Eleazar, who had a son named Phinehas, who was the forefather of Zadok. So Zadok was a descendant of Aaron. Zadok was the Levitical priest and 1 Kings 2:35 tells us that King David made Zadok a high priest when all of Israel rebelled against Yahweh.

Numbers 25:1-13 records an event that explains why David did this. The event occurred during the time of Moses. It reveals that Phinehas, a descendant of Aaron, and a high priest had stood for holiness and killed two Baal worshippers, one of whom was a Midianite woman from Israel. Consequently, Yahweh promised Phinehas that he would have a perpetual priesthood. That is why Zadok was appointed as the high priest during the reign of King David and King Solomon. Now Ezekiel 44:15-16 tells us that Yahweh will honor the descendants of Zadok in the millennial kingdom. This is a wonderful fulfillment of a covenant that was given by Yahweh to Phinehas. Yahweh’s covenant is called the Covenant of Peace (Numbers 25:12).

The covenant was made because Phinehas stood for holiness and then later so did Zadok.

Once again we see that Yahweh rewards holiness. Holiness will be the reality and theme of the millennial kingdom. This means that Yahweh seeks godly men to be His pastors and ministers. Holiness is not just a nice concept that means we should not sin. The pursuit of holiness is rewarded with blessings from Yahweh. An important passage to remember is Matthew 5:6. I do not want us to miss this important verse. It says,

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Matthew 5:6 (NASB)

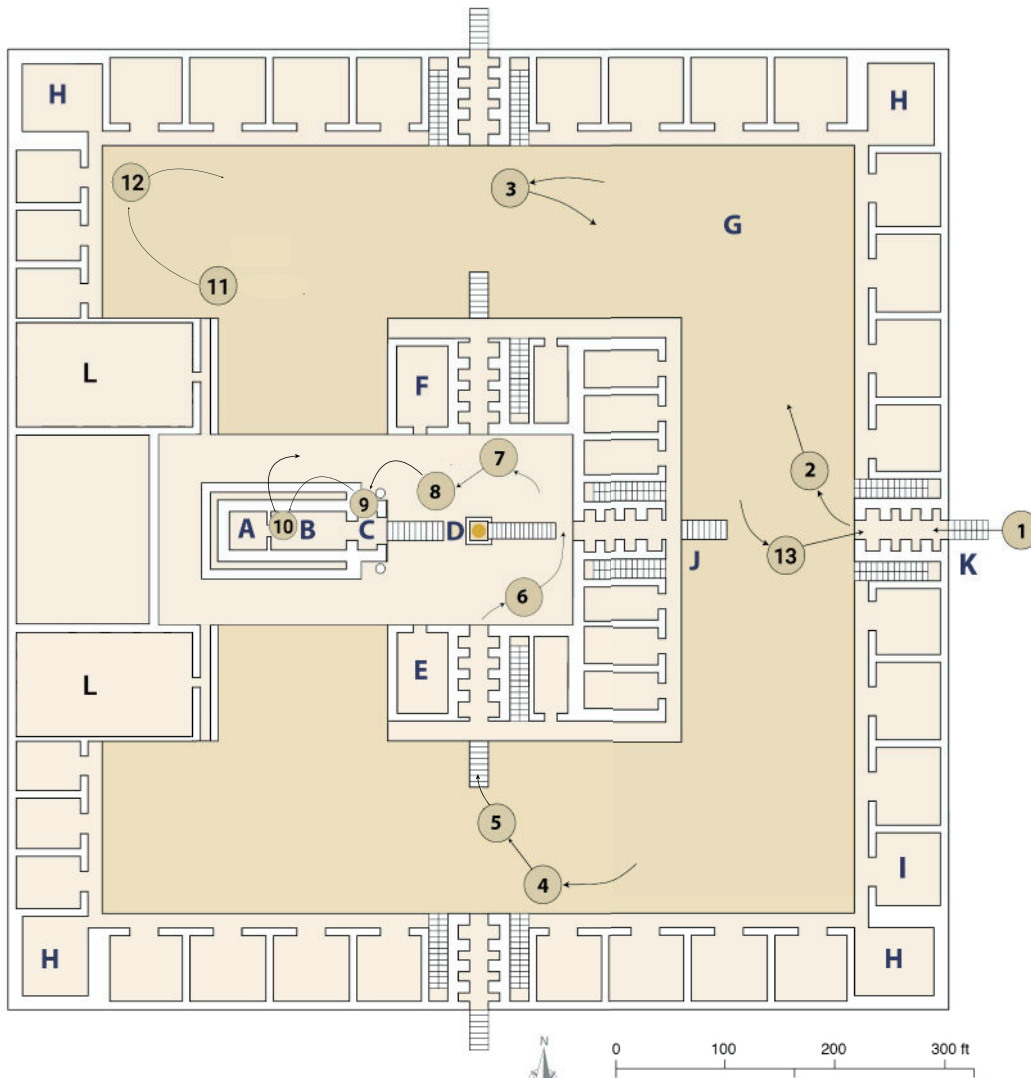
This verse is one of the beatitudes that Jesus gave during what we call the Sermon on the Mount. Here Jesus said that we can have satisfaction if we pursue righteousness as if we were extremely hungry and thirsty. Usually, we eat food in order to satisfy our hunger and drink water to satisfy our thirst. Why do we do that? We seek satisfaction in order to be satisfied. But Jesus said, “No, pursue righteousness, in order to be satisfied.” So, Yahweh rewarded Phinehas and Zadok because they pursued righteousness. Later in Matthew 6:33 Jesus said,

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33 (NASB)

Again, notice that the reward for seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness is “all these things.” God rewards righteousness.

Consequently, since the non-Zadok priests did not seek righteousness, Yahweh punished them for their sins, and their ministry will be limited in the millennial kingdom. Their sins are given in verses 12-13.

Beginning in verse 15 Yahweh gives the regulations for the Zadok priests. The sons of Zadok have been told that they will have the privilege of offering the sacrifices to the Lord. The other Levites, or those not the sons of Zadok, will prepare the sacrifices, but the sons of Zadok will offer



Ezekiel's Temple In The Millennial Kingdom (Used by Permission of Crosswalk, edited.)

them. The “table” mentioned in verse 16 refers to the altar of sacrifice that sits outside the house or the temple proper. We can determine this by noticing in Ezekiel 40:46 that the altar is where the sons of Zadok will offer the various sacrifices. We are told that is where the sons of Zadok will minister to the Lord. The same event is described in Ezekiel 44:16 when we are told the sons of Zadok will minister to the Lord at the table. So, the Zadok priests ministered before the Lord at the Altar of Sacrifice, but not the Levites.

Now Ezekiel 44:17-18 gives us more regulations. Verse 17 says that when the Zadok priests minister before Yahweh, they must wear linen garments and not wool. Verse 18 adds

that the turbans they put on their heads and the underwear they wear must also be made of linen. All of their clothes must be made from linen, from their head downward. This verse explains why the priests were not allowed to wear wool. Yahweh did not want them to sweat as they ministered before Him. The priests would not be allowed to wear clothes made of a mixture of wool and linen either (Exodus 28:39-40, 43; 39:27-29).

So, the Zadok priests were not to wear anything that might cause them to sweat. Maybe they did not have deodorant in those days! This requirement would have solved the issue. We should notice that there are no recorded

Temple Plan

The labels below are arranged from the innermost, and most sacred, area and moving outward. It must be borne in mind that “temple” can have two quite distinct references: it can refer generally to the entire “temple” complex, including the outer gates and court; in its more “strict” reference the “temple” is the innermost structure itself, which has a single (eastern) entrance and contains the Most Holy Place.

	Reference	Explanation
A	41:4	The “Most Holy Place.”
B	41:3	The inner room of the temple.
C	42:2	The entrance to the temple.
D	43:13–17	The imposing altar; although the number of stairs is not given, the entire altar structure is about 16 feet (4.9 m) tall, so many steps would have been required. This area of the inner court was accessible only by priests—not even the prince was permitted entry.
E	40:46	Chamber for Zadokite priests.
F	40:45	Chamber for “priests who have charge of the temple.”
G	40:17–19	The outer court, with its 30 chambers in the outer wall (40:17).
H	46:21–24	The temple “kitchens,” one in each corner of the outer court.
I	40:17	The 30 outer chambers.
J	46:2	The “prince’s gate”: from its threshold he worships on each Sabbath while the priests bring the offerings into the inner court.
K	43:1	The main east gate, through which “the glory of the God of Israel” returns to his temple (cf. 10:19; 11:22–23).

Used by Permission of Crosswalk.

prohibitions about priests not sweating in the Mosaic Law. So, this is a unique regulation in the millennial kingdom.

Verse 19 gives a regulation that says the people of Israel must not see the Levitical priest's holy garments during the millennial kingdom. Therefore, these priests must dress and undress inside the holy chambers (Ezekiel 42:13) on the north and south sides of the temple (E and F). Notice two things. First, the word "holy" occurs two more times. Second, the last part of verse 19 says,

... then they shall put on other garments so that they will not transmit holiness to the people with their garments. Ezekiel 44:19b (NASB)

This verse raises a question. How can a priestly garment transmit holiness to a person? It is obvious that the priest himself does not make anyone holy because he is still a sinner. So, how does the garment make someone holy? The answer is that it does not. The Hebrew word, *qadas*, that the NASB translates as "transmit holiness" more correctly refers to a separation between the holy and the profane or evil. So, the average person is not to touch the garment because the garment symbolizes holiness. When the priests wear these garments, they symbolize his holy position and ministry before Yahweh. The temple will be holy. The Altar of Sacrifice will be holy. Everything about the temple complex will be holy (Ezekiel 42:13;), but not the people. This reminds me of Acts 23:1-5 where we are told that the apostle Paul rebuked the high priest named Ananias. In response, a bystander struck Paul and told him that Ananias was the high priest. Then Paul quoted Exodus 22:28 where it says no one is allowed to speak evil of their leader. That is, the position of the high priest is sacred. So, I believe the garments symbolize ceremonial holiness. We are to show respect to our pastors and leaders because they are in the position of sacred ministry before the Lord. So, if someone saw the garments, they would have failed to show respect by mixing the holy and profane. This applies to us in our churches today.

Verses 20-27 now give us a series of regulations. Verse 20 states that the Zadok priests could not shave their heads

bald. It says,

Also they shall not shave their heads, yet they shall not let their locks grow long; they shall only trim the hair of their heads. Ezekiel 44:20 (NASB)

Not only must they not shave their heads bald, but their hair could not be long. It must be neatly trimmed. I find this to be important. Of all the different types of hair styles that Yahweh could have required, He only says to keep the hair trimmed neatly, not long and not shaved. Therefore, I do not believe that Jesus had long hair. Maybe the barbers in Jesus' day had different names for men's hair styles such as flat top, crew cut, and the priestly style! For me, I want my hair to be cut according to the style that Yahweh desires for His priests. The Mosaic Law also prohibited the priests from being bald (Leviticus 21:5). We should notice that nothing is said about priests trimming their hair in the Mosaic Law.

In addition, the Zadok priests will not be allowed to drink wine before they enter the inner court to perform their ministry according to v. 21. Just imagine a drunk priest offering your sacrifice to the Lord! Also, the priest would miss the importance of his ministry if he was under the influence of alcohol. The Mosaic Law contains the same regulation (Leviticus 10:8).

Verse 22 records another regulation for the priests. They will only be allowed to marry virgins who are Israelites or the widows of a priest. The reason for this requirement is not clear. But the Mosaic Law only permitted the high priests to marry a virgin (Leviticus 21:7, 13-15). But in the millennial kingdom all of the priests can only marry virgins, or a widow of a priest.

Verses 25-26 state that the Zadok priests will not be allowed to go near a dead person, unless they are an immediate family member. Then, if he does go near a dead person from his immediate family, he must wait seven days to be cleansed. On that seventh day he must offer a sin offering to the Lord. This requirement is similar to the Mosaic law for the priests who are not high priests (Leviticus 21:1-4, 11).

Verse 23 gives us the second major privilege and

responsibility of these priests. They are to teach the people the difference between what is holy and profane or evil. They are also to teach the people what is clean and unclean. The Mosaic Law also reveals the priests taught the law (Deuteronomy 27:11-26; 2 Chronicles 15:3; 31:4; Nehemiah 8:7).

A third major privilege or responsibility of these priests is that they were to function as judges regarding the correct interpretation and application of the Word by accurately interpreting the Word (v. 24). This responsibility was also given in the Mosaic Law for the priests (Deuteronomy 17:9; 21:5).

Verses 28-31 state that all of the priests are to regard Yahweh as their inheritance. He will provide for them in a variety of ways. These verses explain the different ways. We should notice that they are not to eat any bird or beast that has died a natural death or has been torn in pieces. This is a change in the food laws listed in Leviticus 11:13-19 and Deuteronomy 14:12-20 where they could not eat certain birds. Here they can eat any bird, just as long as it will not have died a natural death or been torn in pieces. This is another passage that supports Jesus' statement in Mark 7:19 and Luke 11:41 that all foods are now clean.

Conclusion. Once again holiness will be the reality and theme of the millennial kingdom. We will see God's Shekinah glory. Holiness will be everywhere. Holiness is the key to everything. When someone becomes a believer, they become a saint. They are declared to be a holy one. That is why we can go to heaven when we die. Holiness brings satisfaction in this life. Holiness frees us from guilt. Holiness gives God glory and communicates to others that He is holy. In eternity, everything will be holy for God Himself is supremely holy, with no shadow of turning. I trust that you are not becoming accustomed or bored with God's passion for holiness. I pray that you are more desirous to be completely holy to please Him.