

THE NEW WORSHIP IN THE MESSIAH'S KINGDOM: A PICTURE OF THE PURE WORSHIP GOD DEMANDS

EZEKIEL 45:18–25

Introduction

There is a right way and wrong way to approach and worship God. The right way to approach God is through faith in the promises of God, which included the coming of the promised Messiah and the great gift of the promise land (a symbol of heaven). The right way to worship God is *in spirit* and *in truth* (John 4:24), seeking Him with sincere hearts and active minds.

Down through history the people of Israel had approached and worshipped God in the wrong way. They had not trusted the promise of God, but trusted their own good works to make them acceptable to God. Most of them had even offered their worship to false gods, not to the only living and true God.

Remember that Ezekiel is preaching to the exiles in Babylon. They are deeply discouraged, distressed and gripped by a sense of utter hopelessness. Their nation had been destroyed with all their cities, homes, businesses, worship centres, temple and properties. Most of their families and relatives had been killed in the invasion by Babylon. Even if they were set free to return home, in the minds of many there was no reason to return, for nothing was left but bare land and rubble. The messages of Ezekiel 40:1-48:35 are being preached to lift the spirits of the exiles. Perhaps the promise of a new temple, new worship and a new land someday in the future would encourage the exiles and renew great hope within them.

Having described the temple that God showed him in a vision, the prophet tells them how the Jews will worship in the end time of human history. Restrictions will govern worship in the temple to make absolutely sure that worshippers approach God in a spirit of true faith and humility and honour Him by following His instructions. The new worship in the new temple will be acceptable to God. At long last, the Jews will worship Him in the right way — approaching God through faith in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is, *The New Worship in the Messiah's Kingdom (Part 2): A Picture of the Pure Worship God Demands*, Ezekiel 44:1-46:24.

- I. The restrictions governing access to the Messiah's Temple: a reminder of the importance of church discipline (vv. 44:1-31).
 - II. The sacred district of the promised land: a reminder that the church is holy ground (vv. 45:1-7).
 - III. The establishment of a righteous and just society (vv. 45:8-12).
 - IV. The future offerings: a reminder of the duty to give (vv. 45:13-17).
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- V. The feasts: a reminder that Christ died to save us from sin and death and to give us eternal life (vv. 45:18-25).
- VI. The future worship procedures: a reminder that we must worship exactly as God prescribes (vv. 46:1-15).
- VII. The inheritance of property: a reminder of the believer's inheritance (vv. 46:16-18).
- VIII. The temple's kitchens: a reminder of the need for Christ-centred fellowship (vv. 46:19-24).

Ezekiel 45: 18–25 The Feasts:

A Reminder that Christ Died to Save Us from Sin and Death and to Give us Eternal Life

Three annual services, or festivals, will be observed in the Messiah's kingdom (See notes, Lev 23:1-44 for a full discussion of the seven feasts or festivals celebrated by the Jews.)

The first annual festival will be a New Year's Day service to purify the temple (vv. 18-20). Despite their holy calling, priests will still be sinful human beings whose presence will contaminate the temple (the symbol of God's presence). Cleansing the temple annually will remind them of their own sinful nature and their need for cleansing. The outline and Scripture below give the details of how the temple is to be cleansed.

The second annual festival will be the Passover (vv. 21-24). This will be observed as it was under the law of Moses (See notes, Exo 12:1-3, 12:14-20; Lev 23:4-8; Num 28:16-25). It will last seven days and include the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Note that the prince is to make a sin offering for himself as well as for all the people (v. 22). This clearly shows that this prince is not Christ, but rather some appointed official.

The third annual festival will be the Feast of Tabernacles (v. 25. See notes, Lev 23:33-44; Num 29:12-38). The offerings will be the same one made at the Passover. The details are given in the Scripture and outline below.

Thought 1. These special festivals and offerings *symbolize the atonement* that Jesus Christ made for us to reconcile us with God. By bringing their special offerings, the people will *celebrate* the fact that He died for their sins (see note, Eze 43:13-27).

The cleansing of the temple on New Year's Day will celebrate the power of Christ's blood to cleanse the priests and the worship centres. The Passover sacrifices will celebrate not only Christ's power to deliver His people from Egyptian slavery, but also His power to deliver them from the enslavement of sin and death. And Tabernacles will celebrate Christ's power to bring them safely into the promised land of heaven, where they will live forever.

Jesus Christ died to save us from the bondage of sin and death and to give us eternal life. Listen to the promises of these wonderful Scriptures:

John 1:29 *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

Rom 5:6 *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*

Rom 5:8-9 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

Rev 1:5 *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

Gal 1:4 *Who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*

Gal 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."*

Heb 2:9 *But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

Heb 9:14 *How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

1 Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

1 Pet 3:18 *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

Rev 1:5 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

Isa 53:5 *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ■*