



Sermon Series Weekly Devotionals

Week of March 25

READ ch. 45, Priests and Princes before God

REVIEW. Ch. 44-46 address the two great spheres of life—the “church and the state.”

Priestly Concerns, ch. 44

44:5-8 * *past offenses*
44:9-27 * *new responsibilities*
44:28-31 * *inheritance & possession*

Princely Concerns, ch. 45

45:8-12
45:13-46:15
46:16-18

MEDITATE. We live in two “worlds” at the same time—the church and the state. Each has different rules and different authority, as Jesus declared when he referred to some things as Caesar’s and others as God’s (Matthew 22:1). He did not mean that Caesar is not under God, or that God’s people should stay out of civil affairs. Chapters 44-46 of Ezekiel remind us of the fact that—whether it is the church or the state--God is our authority.

The entirety of the Christian life is captured in the Latin phrase *coram Deo*: “before the face of God.” Whether as church-goers and Sunday School teachers, or as voters and legislators, we live “in the presence of God”—before his gaze, under his authority, in his honor, for his glory. To live all of life *coram Deo* is to live a life of integrity, both in the church (44:5-13) and in the marketplace (45:10-11).

Do not compartmentalize your life into two separate spheres, church-spiritual and work-secular. Either all your life is spiritual--“under God”--or none of it is. Let us live each and every day of our lives *coram Deo*.

PRAY. “Lord, help me live my life—all of it--*coram Deo*—in your presence.”

READ ch. 46, Abuse of Power

REVIEW. After laying down the rules for worship on special days (Sabbaths, festivals) in vv. 1-15, God directly addresses an abuse common in political leaders.

When powerful rulers see that they have the ability to take the land they want from their citizens, they sometimes give in to that temptation (16-18). Even the best kings in Israel's past abused their power through taxes, "drafting" young men as unpaid servants, and by the use of "eminent domain," confiscating the best fields, vineyards, and olive groves of their people (see 1 Kings 21, Ahab and Naboth's vineyard).

But Israel's real estate laws were founded upon the reality that Yahweh was the owner of the land. And because he doled it out to his people as their private property, no prince had the right to take it for his own. The position of leadership is a privilege to be used to serve the people, not exploit them.

MEDITATE. America's founders forged an entirely unique document in the Constitution, which recognized private property as essential to human happiness, and limited the power of rulers. But these great political ideas were not original with them; they originated from God, and were found by them in the Bible.

Most of the Third World today is poor precisely because of tyrants who use their power to steal the private property of their people to enrich themselves. God's word to all who aspire to rule is: "By justice a ruler builds up the land" (Proverbs 29:4). A godly ruler is fair and just, a model of integrity, impartiality, and compassion.

PRAY: "Dear Lord, help me be the kind of person who, when people speak of their years under my leadership, is praised as having been a leader of integrity, impartiality, and compassion."

READ ch. 47, The River of Life

REVIEW. Tom Constable introduces the climactic final two chapters this way:

God promised Abraham that He would give a particular piece of real estate to his descendants (Gen. 12:7). Later He reiterated this promise and became more specific about its boundaries (Gen. 15:7, 18-21; 17:8; Num. 34:1-12). He also told the Israelites that they would only be able to occupy the land to the extent that they followed Him faithfully (Deut. 7:12; 8:2). If they proved unfaithful, He would not only limit their possession of the land but even drive them out of it (Deut. 28). Ezekiel prophesied that God would bring the Israelites back into the land (36:24-30). He would give them a different attitude, and they would follow Him faithfully. Then they would finally, as never before, enjoy the full extent of the land He had promised their forefathers (Dt. 30). He also promised that they would never lose possession of the land, because they would remain faithful to Him (ch. 39). The assurance of the fulfillment of these ancient promises ...concludes Ezekiel.
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The River of Life starts out no bigger than a gurgle from a bottle's mouth. But as Ezekiel's guide wades downstream, pausing to measure the distance from the temple every 1000 cubits (1/3 mile), there's a miraculous increase in the size and depth of the river. When it becomes too deep to wade, Ezekiel sees that both sides of the river are lined with dense groves of trees that seem to have come from the Garden of Eden, for they're ever green, ever producing fruit. The river keeps going over the horizon, down to the Dead Sea. And it turns that Salt Sea fresh, full of fish! The Dead Sea is the lowest spot on earth (1412 ft. below sea level) with a salinity of 34%, nearly ten times that of the ocean! It is lifeless, barren, desolate. But one day...

The prophet Zechariah records that the water flowing from Jerusalem will divide with half of it going west to the Mediterranean Sea and half east to the Dead Sea (Zech. 14:8). Ezekiel describes only the branch that flowed east.

MEDITATE. This is exciting stuff--the land promises fulfilled, the land of Israel healed and transformed. But there's more, and deeper. For when Jesus said that would be a "risen temple" (John 2:19) from whom water thirsty people could drink living water (John 7:37), was he not thinking of Ezekiel 47. And dear Christian, you can find yourself here too, for Jesus said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." When you share the gospel's "wonderful words of life," you are a "river of life" that brings people from death to life and heals the nations!

PRAY. *Lord, in my words, in my actions, let me be a river of life today. Let me bring life and healing to people who are lifeless, barren, or desolate.*

READ ch. 48, The New Land

REVIEW. The land belongs to God, so he has the authority to distribute it as he chooses among his people (1-7, 23-29). And as the king, he is entitled to “royal lands” (8-22). In fact, his residence the sanctuary is the geographic center of gravity for the nation. And every detail proclaims his holiness and the “sacred space” of his land. God may condescend to reside among his people, but he does so without sacrificing any of his holiness. And the last verse leaves us with a surprise: the “oldest city in the world,” Jerusalem, will be given a new name during the Millennium: *Yahweh Shammah* (“*The Lord is There*”).

MEDITATE. One of the central themes of the Bible is the ever-presence of the Lord with us. “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” Jesus promised us. And even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we need not fear, “for God is with me.” So, as strange as this book has been at times, it closes with this familiar, happy message: Jesus the Messiah, the Glory of Israel, will come to dwell with us! And on that day we will call him Immanuel: “God with us!” And his hometown Jerusalem? In that glorious future we will call it “The Lord is there!”

How soon might this be? As I write this I read that some of Israel’s orthodox are conducting a Passover sacrifice next to steps just outside of the Temple Mount! Can it be long now?

PRAY. *Even so come, Lord Jesus. I know You are with me right now, and will be with me forever, my Savior, my Lord, my Immanuel.*