

Ezekiel Part 51 (Ezekiel 44)

1. **44:1–3** Again Ezekiel is brought back to the eastern gate of the inner court of the sanctuary.
2. When they arrived, the gate was shut. The prophet heard the voice of the Lord declare that the gate is to remain shut.
3. These verses raise several questions.
4. Why was the gate shut? When was the gate shut? Who is the prince of the gate?
5. The answer to the first question is suggested in the text. God returned to the temple through the east gate just as he had departed through the east gate. (10:1–22; 11:22–25)
6. When God returned, he promised never again to depart the city or temple. (37:28; cf. 14:11; 34:30–31; 37:24–28)
7. Closing the east gate was a way of providing an affirming sign of his intention to remain in permanent residence.
8. The time of the gate's closure is more difficult. Ezekiel was not told when the gate was closed.
9. There is no evidence to suggest that the eastern gate of either Zerubbabel's temple or Herod's temple was permanently closed.
10. The eastern gate that overlooks the Kidron Valley today is closed as it has been since the Crusades, nearly a thousand years ago.
11. Crusaders walled up the gate because they believed that Jesus entered the temple mount by this gate on Palm Sunday and that it should be closed until He returns to reenter the temple mount.
12. Zechariah 14:4–5 presents the Messiah coming to the valley on the eastern side of the temple in preparation for His entry into the temple area.
13. Today the eastern gate, also called the Golden Gate, is a significant holy site for three major world religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
14. Jews believe that when the Messiah comes, He will open the east gate and enter the temple mount first and then enter the city of Jerusalem.
15. Muslims believe that the gate is the site of final judgment and call it the gate of heaven and hell.
16. They believe the final judgment of humanity will take place before the eastern gate and the redeemed are those who will be allowed to enter the temple mount; all others will be outcasts.

17. The gate was open in Jesus' day, and perhaps He did use it on Palm Sunday and at other times.
18. For the last thousand years there has been no gate of access to the temple on the eastern side.
19. Any future opening and closing of this gate awaits the events of the end time and millennium.
20. Because of the messianic associations with the eastern gate, some have identified the "prince" as the Messiah or even a resurrected David. (Ezekiel 34:23, 24; 37:24)
21. However, there are two important details suggesting that the "prince" of 44:3 is not the Messiah.
22. First, the prince is not a priest but has priests who minister for him.
23. The Messiah is portrayed in O.T. prophecy as the coming Priest-King. (Zechariah 6:13)
24. The offices of priest and king are always kept separate because the Messiah is to be the only one in whom these two offices are combined. (2 Chronicles 26:16–21)
25. Second, the prince is required to offer a sin offering for himself every day for seven days during feasts. (Ezekiel 45:22-23)
26. And using Scripture - the Messiah was the sinless sacrifice for all people and a perfect High Priest. (Hebrews 9:22–28)
27. If the prince is not the Messiah, then who is he?
28. Some have also identified the prince as David resurrected and serving in the temple during the millennium.
29. More likely the prince is a special representative of the Messiah who will serve as an administrator of the temple and temple area.
30. The prince of Ezekiel's temple is a godly representative of the messianic King. He will sit in the gate, commune with God, and serve as a guarantor of mercy, justice, and righteousness.
31. **44:4–14** Since the east gate was shut, Ezekiel's guide brought him into the temple court through the north gate.
32. As he stood in front of the temple, the glory of God rested in the sanctuary. (v. 4)
33. Ezekiel's reaction was predictable. He fell on his face at the sight of the glory of God out of fear and reverence. (v. 4)
34. The reference to the glory of God again here in chapter 44 affirms that it will remain.
35. Again the prophet is instructed to pay close attention to what he sees and hears concerning all the statutes of the house of the Lord. (v. 5)

36. Furthermore, for their faithfulness the priesthood is entrusted to the Zadokites, who are enjoined to protect the holiness of the temple (44:15).
37. In spite of their sin the Levites were allowed to have a part in the temple service but only as ministers in charge of the temple. (v. 10; cf. 40:45–46).
38. The Levites' responsibilities would be similar to those given in the wilderness. (vv. 11–12)
39. The principles for service to the Lord are based on high moral and spiritual standards.
40. A holy God demands no less.
41. The Levites compromised their convictions and became immoral and idolatrous. (Malachi 1:6–14; 3:1–4)
42. The Zadokite Priesthood (44:15–31)
43. **44:15–31** The line of Zadok is to be the only legitimate line of priests allowed to minister in the inner court and in the sanctuary before the Lord (v. 15).
44. They were rewarded for their faithfulness to David and his descendants (v. 16) and for standing against idolatry.
45. Several regulations for the Zadokite priests are described in vv. 17–21.
46. Linen was a symbol of purity.
47. These rules were to insure that the priests were examples of holiness, faithfulness, and had unblemished characters.
48. Those who are called to leadership roles must make whatever personal sacrifices necessary to maintain their moral purity.

Both the character and conduct of those in leadership roles should demonstrate an obedience of and conformity to the physical, moral, and spiritual principles of the Word of God (44:15–31).