

Ezekiel 46:1-24 - Worship during the Millennium - Part 2

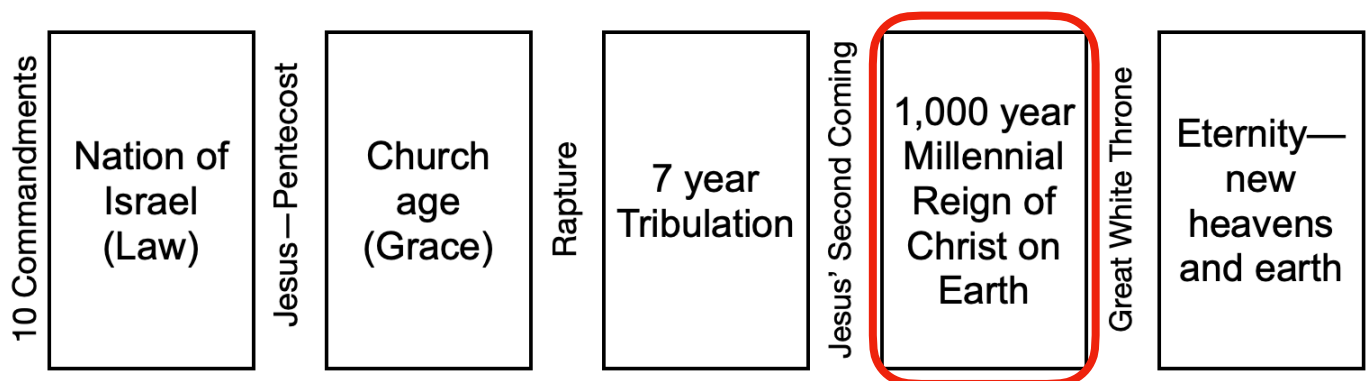
Memory Verse

Ezekiel 36:26-27 NKJV

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Introduction

Ezekiel chapters 40-48 describe places, buildings, land allocations, and worship that are a part of Jesus' Millennial Kingdom, when He comes back to earth from heaven and He reigns for a thousand years on a beautifully renovated earth. The chart below shows when this fits in God's plan of the ages (red outline). The vertical writing represents the events that mark the transition from one time period (or dispensation) to the next.



Outline of Ezekiel 40-48

Chapter 40—The measurement of the courts of the temple

Chapter 41—The measurements of the temple

Chapter 42—The outer court being described

Chapter 43—The glory of God returns to the temple and the altar described.

Chapter 44—Only the sons of Zadok will be allowed to go into the inner court; the other priests were not faithful.

Chapter 45—Describes how the land around the temple/city is divided up, and that the Passover will be one of the feasts observed each year.

Chapter 46—Describes the sacrificial offerings that will be made, and how the temple will be closed throughout the week and only open on the sabbath.

Chapter 47—Describes the river of living water that flows from the temple, and the boundaries of the Land of Israel.

Chapter 48—Describes the divisions of the lands given to each of the 12 tribes of Israel, and the gates of the city of Jerusalem.

Revision

So far we have seen in Ezekiel chapters 40-45:25

- The angel give the measurements and pattern for the Millennial Temple to Ezekiel (40-42)
- Jesus comes to take His rightful place on the throne which is inside the temple, which He calls "My Throne". The throne represents authority over all creation. (43:1-12)

- The altar for burnt offerings and the instructions for its consecration including animal sacrifices (43:13-27)
- The shut eastern gate and the prince. The outer eastern gate of the temple complex will be shut forever because Jesus went in there, *and He will never leave—a picture of our eternal security*. The prince (very likely king David) will have access to the chamber of the gate where he will eat before the LORD. (44:1-3)
- Only the family of priests who had been faithful in Ezekiel's day, the sons of Zadok (whose name means righteous), would be allowed to serve in the temple itself. They would enjoy the glorious, delightful, heavenly, and extraordinary privilege of ministering and fellowshiping in the direct presence of the LORD Jesus in the temple itself. The other priests who had followed the rest of the nation into idolatry in Ezekiel's day would be limited to serving the people, as they loved to do when they offered sacrifices to the idols on behalf of the people. Each of us must choose—*will I be a man pleaser or a God pleaser—will I be motivated by what pleases God, or by what pleases man*. (44:4-16)
- Real holiness starts in the heart and is expressed in; who we marry, our appearance, teaching and doing what is right from the Word of God, and most importantly total surrender to the LORD God so that we are trusting and walking in His strength (rest) and not our own (sweat). (44:17-27)
- God promised that He would be the priest's inheritance, that He would provide for them. The same is true for the believer today. Will I trust that God will provide for all my needs, and that what He has waiting for me is far greater and far more glorious than anything that this world can offer me. (44:28-31)
- Worship is willing obedience motivated by gratitude and love for God (see Genesis 22). For my life to be an acceptable act of worship (see Romans 12:1), I must be:
 1. Just and righteous (godly and not worldly) in thought, word, and deed (45:8-12)
 2. Willing to Sacrifice - it must cost me something, the cost being giving up what I want so I can do what God wants (45:13-17)
 3. Contrite (penitent, repentant) - keep short accounts with God and others (45:18-20)
 4. Full of gratitude as I remember all that God has done and will do for me (45:21-25)

Worship during the Millennium - Part 2 (46:1-24)

This week we will continue to see how we will be worshipping God throughout the Millennial Reign of Christ on earth (Jesus will rule from the temple in Israel, making Israel the world superpower). There are some similarities to the Old Covenant (the Mosaic law), but many differences. Overall, the rituals, feasts, and sacrifices that are a part of the New Covenant are much more simplified, with many of the feasts already fulfilled and therefore no longer required.

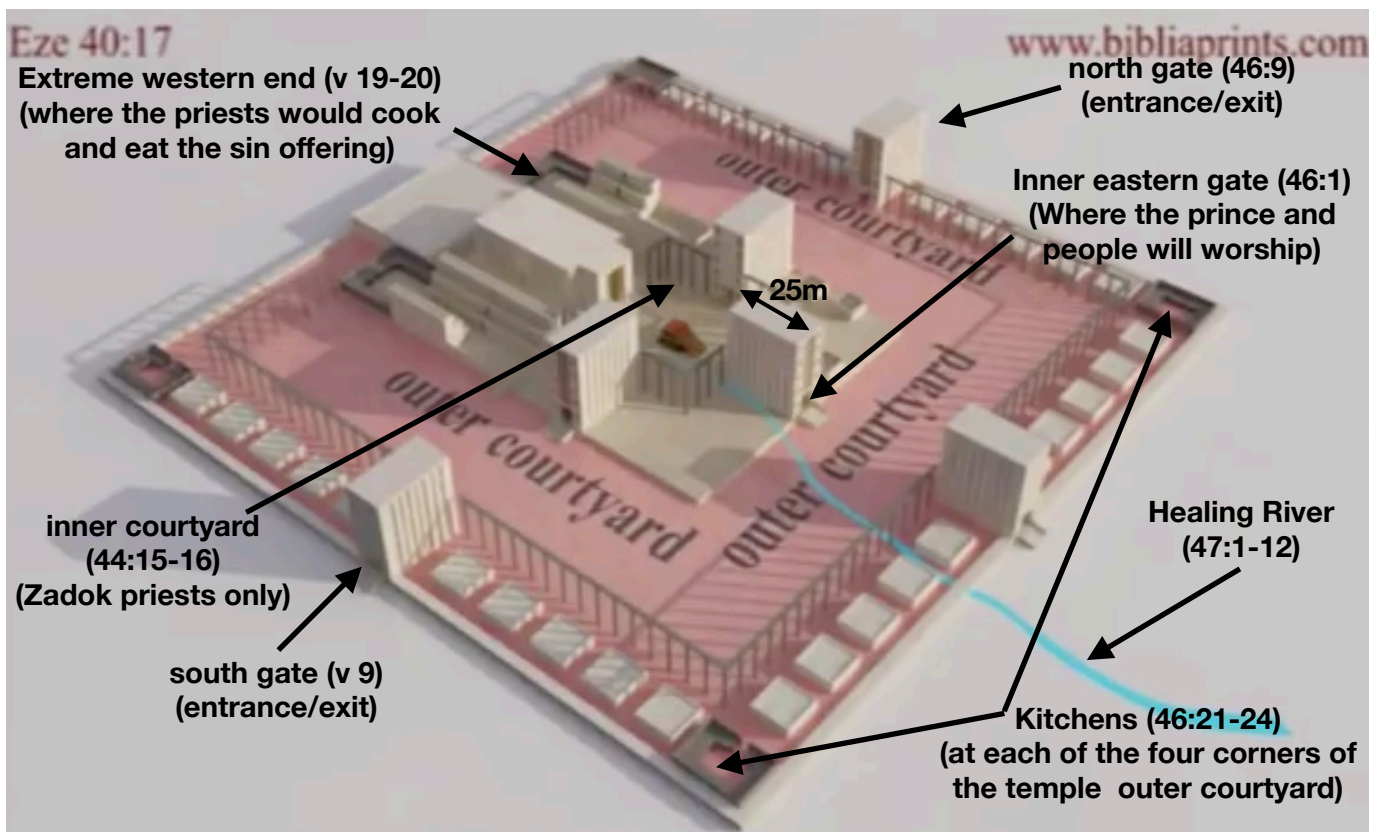
This section of Scripture can be broken down into several parts (continued):

5. **Worship happens naturally as I rest in the Lord**—keeping the Sabbath and New Moon Feasts during the Millennium (46:1-11)
6. **Worship requires feeding on God's Word daily so I don't forget**—the importance of me feeding daily on God's Word as well as spontaneous worship (46:12-15)
7. **Worship requires that I must first be set free**—The year of Jubilee or Liberty as a picture of Christ setting me free from the bondage of sin (46:16-18)
8. **Worship requires that I must be in fellowship with God and others**—private and public worship (46:19-24)

5. Worship happens naturally as we rest in the Lord—keeping the Sabbath and New Moon Feasts during the Millennium

Ezekiel 46:1-8 NKJV—Instructions for the Sabbath day feast

‘Thus says the Lord God: “The gateway of the inner court that faces toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, and on the day of the New Moon it shall be opened. ² The prince shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway from the outside, and stand by the gatepost. The priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings. He shall worship at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not be shut until evening. ³ Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the entrance to this gateway before the Lord on the Sabbaths and the New Moons. ⁴ The burnt offering that the prince offers to the Lord on the Sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish; ⁵ and the grain offering shall be one ephah for a ram, and the grain offering for the lambs, as much as he wants to give, as well as a hin of oil with every ephah. ⁶ On the day of the New Moon it shall be a young bull without blemish, six lambs, and a ram; they shall be without blemish. ⁷ He shall prepare a grain offering of an ephah for a bull, an ephah for a ram, as much as he wants to give for the lambs, and a hin of oil with every ephah. ⁸ When the prince enters, he shall go in by way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way.



v 1 The gateway of the inner court that faces toward the east shall be shut six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, and on the day of the New Moon it shall be opened: During the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ on earth, at least Israel will be keeping the Sabbath. Here we see that in Israel there will be a seven day working week, with Saturday being the rest day when the **people of the land** (v 3) will come to the temple and worship God. In addition to the bringing sacrifices and bowing down they would also worship by singing praises to God, with there being dedicated singers at the temple (see Ezekiel 40:41)

During the **Sabbath** and **New Moon** feast days the routine will be as follows:

- **The gateway of the inner court that faces toward the east** (v 1) will be opened.
- The prince will worship at the entrance (**gatepost**) of the inner eastern gate (the gate structure is 25m long/deep).
- Worship begins with the **prince** offering the prescribed sacrifices (see v 4-7).
“[The prince] will be allowed to come as far as the eastern gate but not to the altar in the inner court. He will present his sacrifices, watch the priests prepare them, and when they are offered, will prostrate himself before the Lord (v. 2). After the sacrifice, he will leave the sanctuary just as he came in.” (Warren W. Wiersbe)
- The rest of the people (v 3) will worship at the entrance of the inner eastern gate like the prince did, again prostrating themselves before the Lord—a picture of complete submission.
- Anyone who enters the outer courtyard via the south gate will exit by the northern gate, and anyone who enters by the northern gate will exit by the southern gate (v 9-11).
- In the evening the inner eastern gate will be shut and will remain shut until the next week.

The keeping of the Sabbath is evidence that this prophecy is for a future time, and not while the church exists. We'll come back to the Sabbath at the end for an application.

“The emphasis here is unmistakably on the Sabbath and the New Moon [feasts], which alone should indicate the Jewish setting of the passage, and that we are not here on Christian or New Testament ground.” (Feinberg)

What is required to keep the Sabbath? “Notice here that legalisers and seventh-day observance advocates always fail to realize that the Sabbath consisted in more than just abstinence from labor on the seventh day of the week, important as that was for the commandment, but included also specific sacrifices to be offered by an authorised priest in a designated place of God’s choosing. It is folly and worse to take one part of the observance and wholly discard or disregard another.” (Feinberg)

This is another reason why only Israel could keep the Sabbath—because only they had the temple and the priests to offer the prescribed sacrifices. The Bible is very clear that only Israel had to observe the Sabbath, and when they did, they also had to offer the prescribed sacrifices.

Exodus 31:16-17 NKJV (also see Ezekiel 20:12-20)

Therefore **the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath**, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. ¹⁷ **It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever**; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.’ ”

Numbers 28:9-10 NKJV

‘And on the Sabbath day two lambs in their first year, without blemish, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, with its drink offering—¹⁰ **this is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, besides the regular burnt offering with its drink offering.**

Here is another difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant described here. Under the Old Covenant (law of Moses) only two lambs were required compared to six lambs and one ram under the New Covenant (compare 46:4 with Numbers 28:9).

Ezekiel 46:9-11 NKJV—How the people enter and exit the temple compound

9 “But when the people of the land come before the Lord on the appointed feast days, whoever enters by way of the north gate to worship shall go out by way of the south gate; and whoever enters by way of the south gate shall go out by way of the north gate. He shall not return by way of the gate through which he came, but shall go out through the opposite gate. **10** The prince shall then be in their midst. When they go in, he shall go in; and when they go out, he shall go out. **11** At the festivals and the appointed feast days the grain offering shall be an ephah for a bull, an ephah for a ram, as much as he wants to give for the lambs, and a hin of oil with every ephah.

v **9 Whoever enters by way of the north gate to worship shall go out by way of the south gate:** “The people are either going to go in the north gate and out the south, or in the south gate and out the north. What is the reason for this? Some might say it’s for traffic flow—to keep the people moving. Perhaps part of that is true. But I believe it’s also a statement that whenever we come in to the place of worship, we never leave the same way. We’re always affected, always changed. Whenever we congregate in the name of the Lord, whenever we assemble to give praise to Him, whenever we desire to learn more of Him, we come in one way but go out yet another. We’re changed. That is why the author of the Book of Hebrews said, “Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together as is the manner of some” (Hebrews 10:25). Join us—and you’ll find yourself leaving a different way than you came in. (Jon Courson)

v **10 The prince shall be in their midst:** This is a picture of a good leader, one who doesn’t put himself above the people. This is also a good picture of Jesus. Although we will fall down before Him, we will also enjoy fellowship with Him.

Hebrews 2:11-12 NLT paraphrase

So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters. ¹² For He said to God, “I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters. **I will praise you among your assembled people.**”

6. Worship requires feeding on God’s Word daily so I don’t forget—the importance of me feeding daily on God’s Word as well as spontaneous worship

Ezekiel 46:12 NKJV—How the prince makes a spontaneous voluntary offering

12 “Now when the prince makes a voluntary burnt offering or voluntary peace offering to the Lord, the gate that faces toward the east shall then be opened for him; and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings as he did on the Sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and after he goes out the gate shall be shut.

Here we see that the prince has the opportunity to offer a sacrifice on any day of the week. The door to the inner eastern gate will be opened for him and it will be like it was on the Sabbath.

This speaks of the freedom we have to come to Christ at the Throne of Grace and worship Him whenever we want. It brings God great pleasure when we delight in spending time with Him outside of our normal spiritual routine. Does my relationship with God include both regular and spontaneous fellowship with God? Spontaneity, spending extra time with God just because I can is important as it keeps my relationship

with God from becoming dry and rigid—“I’ve spent my 30 minutes with God, now I can get on with the rest of my day.” Marriages and church life can also become like this; it called drudgery when these relationships becomes dull and boring. If they are then do something about it—seek to be a blessing to someone by going beyond what is normal or required.

Ezekiel 46:13-15 NKJV—*The daily burnt offerings*

13 “You shall daily make a burnt offering to the Lord of a lamb of the first year without blemish; you shall prepare it every morning. 14 And you shall prepare a grain offering with it every morning, a sixth of an ephah, and a third of a hin of oil to moisten the fine flour. This grain offering is a perpetual ordinance, to be made regularly to the Lord. 15 Thus they shall prepare the lamb, the grain offering, and the oil, as a regular burnt offering every morning.”

v 13 **You shall daily make a burnt offering to the Lord:** “In this day of restoration, the ceremonial offerings are observed, with this difference, that until Christ came they were prophetic and anticipatory, whereas now they are memorial.” (Morgan)

v 14 **A perpetual ordinance, to be made regularly to the Lord:** The daily offering will continue throughout the entirety of the 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth.

Application: Here we see the importance of daily fellowship with God. The Bible has much to say about the daily feasting on the Word of God.

John 15:7 NKJV

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

1 John 2:14 NKJV

I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

Psalms 119:92, 97, and 133 NKJV

⁹² Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction.

⁹⁷ Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

¹³³ Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.

Psalms 1:1-3 NKJV

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. ³ He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

7. Worship requires that I must first be set free—The year of Jubilee or Liberty as a picture of Christ setting me free from the bondage of sin

Ezekiel 46:16-18 NKJV

16 ‘Thus says the Lord God: “If the prince gives a gift of some of his inheritance to any of his sons, it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession by inheritance. **17** But if he gives a gift of some of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his until the year of liberty, after which it shall return to the prince. But his inheritance shall belong to his sons; it shall become theirs. **18** Moreover the prince shall not take any of the people’s inheritance by evicting them from their property; he shall provide an inheritance for his sons from his own property, so that none of My people may be scattered from his property.” ’

When the Prince is on the scene, He’s not going to bully the people. He will not take by force that which people possess. Rather, He will give from His own possessions. (Jon Courson)

v 16 **To any of his sons:** “The prince will be a married man and will have sons who can inherit his land (Ezekiel 46:16–18).” (Wiersbe)

Application: The year of liberty (v 17): Also called the year of Jubilee, every 50 years there was a general release. Debts were forgiven, property was restored to the original owners, and slaves were set free. Following is a summary of Jubilee by gotquestions.com

The word “jubilee”—literally, “the blast of a horn” in Hebrew—is defined in Leviticus 25:9 as the sabbatical year after seven cycles of seven years (49 years). The fiftieth year was to be a time of celebration and rejoicing for the Israelites. The ram’s horn was blown on the tenth day of the seventh month to start the fiftieth year of universal redemption.

The Year of the Jubilee involved a year of release from indebtedness (Leviticus 25:23-38) and all types of bondage (vv. 39-55). All prisoners and captives were set free, all slaves were released, all debts were forgiven, and all property was returned to its original owners. In addition, all labor was to cease for one year, and those bound by labor contracts were released from them. One of the benefits of the Jubilee was that both the land and the people were able to rest.

The Jubilee presents a beautiful picture of the New Testament themes of redemption and forgiveness. Christ is the Redeemer who came to set free those who are slaves and prisoners to sin (Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:1; 3:22). The debt of sin we owe to God was paid on the cross as Jesus died on our behalf (Colossians 2:13-14), and we are forgiven the debt forever. We are no longer in bondage, no longer slaves to sin, having been freed by Christ, and we can truly enter the rest God provides as we cease labouring to make ourselves acceptable to God by our own works (Hebrews 4:9-10).

8. Worship requires that I must be in fellowship with God and others—private and public worship (46:19-24)

“My relationship with God is in trouble if I spend more time praying in public than in private”

Ezekiel 46:19-21 NKJV—Preparation of the sin offering (private)

¹⁹ Now he brought me through the entrance, which was at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests which face toward the north; and there a place was situated at their extreme western end. ²⁰ And he said to me, “This is the place where the priests shall boil the trespass offering and the sin offering, and where they shall bake the grain offering, so that they do not bring them out into the outer court to sanctify the people.”

The meat of the sin offering was holy and had to remain in the inner court. The public were not allowed to see or partake of the sin offering—it was exclusively the priests.

Application: My relationship with God has it's foundation behind closed doors, where nobody sees

Public victory and spiritual growth is a result of private prayer and study of the Word of God

Like in marriage, there is an aspect of my relationship with God that is both private and intimate. Jesus both taught and modelled this.

Matthew 6:6 NKJV

But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Luke 5:16 NKJV

So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

Luke 6:12 NKJV

Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Ezekiel 46:21-24 NKJV—Fellowship with God and other believers

²¹ Then he brought me out into the outer court and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and in fact, in every corner of the court there was another court. ²² In the four corners of the court were enclosed courts, forty cubits long and thirty wide; all four corners were the same size. ²³ There was a row of building stones all around in them, all around the four of them; and cooking hearths were made under the rows of stones all around. ²⁴ And he said to me, “These are the kitchens where the ministers of the temple shall boil the sacrifices of the people.”

v 21 **In every corner of the court there was another court:** The diagram on the first page shows how there were kitchens with multiple stoves for boiling the meat of the people's peace offerings. These kitchens were each 20m by 15m, with the hearths or stoves all around the outside. You could cook a lot of meat with a combined bench length of 360m. This represented public fellowship with God and others—in that culture, eating a meal together represented unity, friendship, and acceptance.

“So the temple was a place for sacrificing, cooking and eating, as well as for prayer and so-called ‘spiritual’ activities. The Christian church has been the poorer when it has drawn a firm dividing line between spiritual life and social activities. In Ezekiel's temple, at any rate, there was envisaged a healthy fusion of the two elements, and this was typical of much in Old Testament worship.” (Taylor)

Application: If I am not enjoying the reality of God's Sabbath rest, then I am not worshipping God—my life cannot be pleasing to God if I am not, by faith, living by His power.

Hebrews 4:10 NKJV

For he who has entered [God's] rest has himself also ceased from his works [self-effort] as God did from His.

Here is a simple definition of what it means to cease from my works and enter into God's rest [the finished work of the Cross].

Resting in Christ: being submitted to God and depending on His strength and wisdom and not my own

The main message of the book of Ezekiel is that God wants us, by the power of the Spirit living in us, to become like Him: God changes us on the inside to love the things He loves and hate the things He hates, and our growing outward obedience results from a deepening love for and appreciation of both who God is and all He has done for us.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 NKJV

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; **I will** take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ **I will** put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and **you will** keep My judgments and do them.

Notice the unconditional “**I will**” promises in these verses. However, just like the children of Israel, we can be children of God, but not be living like His children. The reason is not that God is unable to empower and equip us to live for Him, but rather we are unwilling to trust and obey Him—there is a lack of submission.

There are two possible causes for the genuine believer to struggle and fail in their relationship with God—but they are really just two emanations or manifestations or by-products of the same root problem—a failure to rest in Christ, to enjoy the reality of the Sabbath rest that God intends for us—I rely on my own strength and not God's. The two possible outworkings or visible results of a person who is *not* habitually or consistently resting in Christ are *worldliness* and *legalism*.

• **Worldliness**: The worldly, immature, or backslidden believer loves sin more than God and keeps on deliberately and wilfully sinning. They also have very little appetite for the Word of God. Notice how Paul describes the worldly Corinthian believers.

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 NLT paraphrase

Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual [mature] people. **I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in Christ.** ² I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, ³ for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. **Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world?**

● **Legalism:** Spiritual pride, a false confidence in my own goodness, keeps me from fully surrendering to and depending on God; I try to obey God using my own strength and my motives are anything but love for God. Usually the false motive is pharisaical; like the pharisees I am trying to impress others, seeking the praise and applause of man more over that of God, and I seek to appear more spiritual or mature than I really am. I may spend a lot of time reading my Bible, but only for knowledge sake or boasting rights rather than seeking to know Christ more. My outward appearance may appear spiritual, but inside, I am “full of dead man’s bones” or uncleanness. *The scary thing here is that my spiritual pride blinds me to the reality of my sinful depravity: I am deceived to think that I am doing well in my walk with God, that my life is actually pleasing to God.*

Paul and Jesus both describe the legalism of the Jews. Paul in Romans describes the cause, and Jesus in the gospel of Matthew the outcome or result. This also applies to the legalistic Christian.

Romans 10:1-4 NKJV—**the cause of legalism**

Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ **For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.** ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Matthew 23:23-28 NLT paraphrase—**the result of legalism**

“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but **you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith.** You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things. ²⁴ Blind guides! You strain your water so you won’t accidentally swallow a gnat, but you swallow a camel!

²⁵ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! **First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too.**

²⁷ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people’s bones and all sorts of impurity. ²⁸ **Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.**

David Guzik says regarding Romans 8:12-13: “**By the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body:** When we **put to death the deeds of the body** (force the sinful flesh to submit to the Spirit), we must do it **by the Spirit.** Otherwise we will become like the Pharisees and [become] spiritually proud.

Paul tells us that not only are we saved by the work of the Spirit, but we also must walk by the Spirit if we want to grow and pursue holiness in the Lord. We cannot be like some among the Galatians who thought they could *begin* in the Spirit but then find spiritual perfection through the flesh [self-effort] (Galatians 3:3).”

Every Christian is characterised by one of two realities. Either they are habitually or consistently walking in the Spirit, resulting in a life that pleases God; their life is characterised by humility—genuine repentance and godly sorrow over sin which results in lasting change and turning from sin. Or they are habitually walking according to their flesh or sinful nature (either worldly or legalistic), and are therefore not living a life that pleases God—their life is characterised by pride and a lack of genuine repentance and godly sorrow over sin.

It is possible to go from habitually walking in the Spirit to habitually walking according to the sinful nature (and vice versa) at any time—it all depends on my willingness to genuinely repent, submit and draw near to God again when I sin. *Pride can creep in at any time: I can humble myself (repent) at any time.* The reality is that I am never trapped in any sin (I choose it), and that an intimate walk with God must be maintained daily and guarded vigilantly—it's so easy for some other person or thing to steal the affections of my heart away from God.

Let's look at five things we need to understand and accept as true in order to live a life that pleases God, a life of worship—obedience motivated by love.

1. On my own, by my own strength, I can never please God because by nature I am sinful—I have no power in and of myself to do anything perfectly

Romans 7:14-25 NLT paraphrase

So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. ¹⁶ But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ So I am not the one doing wrong; **it is sin living in me that does it.**

¹⁸ **And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't.** ¹⁹ I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. ²⁰ But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; **it is sin living in me that does it.**

²¹ I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. ²² **I love God's law with all my heart.** ²³ **But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.** ²⁴ *Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?* ²⁵ *Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.* **So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.**

Understanding what these verses reveal about the *total depravity* of man, or our *moral bankruptcy*, gives us much more insight into what Jesus said—**“the branch cannot bear fruit of itself ... neither can you, unless you abide in Me ... for without Me you can do nothing.”**

John 15:4-5 NKJV

Abide in Me, and I in you. As **the branch cannot bear fruit of itself**, unless it abides in the vine, **neither can you**, unless you abide in Me.

⁵ “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; **for without Me you can do nothing.**

Simply put, my sinful nature is the opposite of God. By nature God is: selfless, humble, honest, giving, loving, pure, holy, righteous, and gentle. By nature I am: selfish, proud, dishonest, greedy, hateful, impure, unholy, unrighteous and unkind. On my own, there is nothing that I can do that God will find acceptable in His sight—it will always be tainted by sin. It's like I'm covered in mud and everything I touch becomes dirty.

2. God is absolutely holy and absolutely perfect: *Therefore, He cannot look upon sin and considers anything or anyone who is sinful (anyone who sins) as absolutely abhorrent, loathsome, disgusting and repulsive.*

Habakkuk 1:13 NKJV

You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness.

Psalms 7:11 NKJV

God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

Because God by nature is a holy God, He is angry at and grieved by sin.

Deuteronomy 9:7-8 NKJV

“Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord. ⁸ Also in Horeb you provoked the Lord to wrath, so that the Lord was angry enough with you to have destroyed you.

Ephesians 4:30 NKJV

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God ...

3. God loves me—despite me being an abhorrent sinner in His eyes. *God loves me because it is His nature to love—“God is love ... We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:16, 19 NKJV). God is immutable, which means that He cannot change and therefore cannot stop loving me.*

Malachi 3:6 NKJV

“For I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

What an amazing insight into God’s character. God here is clearly saying that:

1. He loves them
2. He cannot change
3. Therefore can never stop loving them and will therefore always forgive them no matter how much they rebel against Him

God will always love His people—no matter how much they sin—they will always find forgiveness. Of course God will discipline His people as well, but that also is an evidence of God’s love towards us as He treats us as sons (see Hebrews 12:3-11).

Here is the tension—God is both angry with people, and He loves them. It’s like when a child is absolutely defiant and spitefully spits in the face of their parent; the parent at that moment both loves and is angry with their child—*love and anger and not mutually exclusive* (not just one or the other, but both at the same time).

One of the reasons King David had such a close relationship with God is that he understood that love and holiness are both attributes of God. Psalm 5:5-7 captures this understanding perfectly. After describing God’s holiness and hatred of sin—and knowing full well that he himself was a dirty rotten sinner—David immediately speaks of the greatness of God’s love that God would forgive and accept him. The result of David’s understanding of God’s perfection and his own sinfulness was **a deep sense of awe** at the magnitude of God’s love. *David’s love for God was directly proportional to his understanding of the holiness of God and his own sinful condition.*

Psalm 5:4-7 NLT paraphrase

O God, You take no pleasure in wickedness; You cannot tolerate the sins of the wicked.
5 Therefore, the proud may not stand in Your presence, for You hate all who do evil.
6 You will destroy those who tell lies. The Lord detests murderers and deceivers.
7 **Because of Your unfailing love, I can enter Your house; I will worship at your Temple with deepest awe.**

King David clearly knew that he was a sinner, and that he had deeply offended God. However, he was also confident that God's love, mercy, and grace were so great that they would always overcome God's fierce indignation and anger against him—David was certain that God would always forgive him when he repented and that no sin was unforgivable (except the rejection of God's offer of forgiveness, see John 16:8-9).

Romans 5:8 NKJV

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners [while He was angry with us and we were an abomination to Him], Christ died for us.

Romans 5:20b NKJV

But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more [literally superabounded]

1 John 1:9 NKJV

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

4. God's will for me is what is best for me, where I will find the greatest pleasure, satisfaction, contentment and fulfilment.

Psalm 16:11 NKJV

You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 37:3-4 NKJV

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. 4 Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

A part of one of Augustine's sermons on 1 John 4:4-12 has been paraphrased as, "**Love God and do whatever you please: for the soul trained in love to God will do nothing to offend the One who is Beloved.**" Don't fall for the lie that you need the things of this world to be happy.

5. God has already given me everything I need to live a godly life. Therefore, it is never true for me to say, "I can't help it, it's not my fault."

An important factor in whether my repentance is genuine or not is the acknowledgement that I am responsible for my own sins—they are always my own choice. Consider the following Scriptures.

2 Peter 1:3-5 NLT paraphrase

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, ... **These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.** 5 In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises.

Ephesians 3:16, 19-20 NLT paraphrase

I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit. ... ¹⁹ **May you experience the love of Christ**, though it is too great to understand fully. **Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.** ²⁰ Now all glory to God, who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

Here we are reminded that worship is obedience motivated by love. Without love **I am nothing** and can do nothing of eternal value—“**but have not love, it profits me nothing**” (see 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 NKJV). This is the main reason for being a student of the Word of God—I need reminding of just how much God loves me everyday so I will remain motivated to obey Him. The reason we take communion is to remember just how much Christ loves us; “And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19 NKJV).

Our freedom to choose to love and obey God, or rebel and disobey God, is clearly shown in the following verses.

Romans 8:13 NKJV

For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

David Guzik on Romans 8:13 “**By the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body:** When we **put to death the deeds of the body** (force the sinful flesh to submit to the Spirit), we must do it **by the Spirit**. Otherwise we will be like the Pharisees and become spiritually proud.

Paul tells us that not only are we saved by the work of the Spirit, but we also must walk by the Spirit if we want to grow and pursue holiness in the Lord. We cannot be like some among the Galatians who thought they could begin in the Spirit but then find spiritual perfection through the flesh (Galatians 3:3).”

1 Corinthians 10:12-13 NKJV

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

****Reality check: I only sin because I choose to—because I love my sin more than I love God. How much do I really love God.****

Conclusion: *When I sin, it is only because I choose to, because I choose to love my sin more than I love God and therefore have chosen to not utilise the power and resources that God has already given me.*

Hebrew 4:1-3, 10-11 NKJV

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. ² For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; **but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.** ³ **For we who have believed do enter that rest, ...**¹⁰ **For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.** ¹¹ **Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.**