Ezekiel 44

The Shut Gate: Who May Come Near

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

In God's house, nearness is the reward of faithfulness. The Levites who led Israel into idolatry are forgiven enough to keep serving, but not trusted to stand at the altar. The sons of Zadok, who stayed true when everyone else drifted, get the best thing God can give: God Himself. Faithfulness in the dark seasons shapes what my service looks like later.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

EZEKIEL 44 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions | Green Command / instruction | ⇄ Sky Key repeated word
⚠ Rose Sin / warning | ★ Violet Promise / blessing | ◷ Amber Time / place / contrast

1 Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; ◷ and it was shut.

2 Then said the LORD unto me; ◷ This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; ▲ because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.

3 It is for the prince; the prince, ★ he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.

4 Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and I looked, and, behold, ▲ the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD: and I fell upon my face.

5 And the LORD said unto me, Son of man, Green mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the LORD, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary.

6 And thou shalt say to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; O ye house of Israel, ⚠ let it suffice you of all your abominations,

7 In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers , ⚠ uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and ⚠ they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations.

8 And ⚠ ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my ⇄ charge in my sanctuary for yourselves.

9 Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger , uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.

10 And ⚠ the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; ⚠ they shall even bear their iniquity.

11 Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having ⇄ charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them.

12 Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and ⚠ caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord GOD, and they shall bear their iniquity.

13 And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place: but ⚠ they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed.

14 But I will make them keepers of the ⇄ charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein.

15 But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the ⇄ charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, ★ they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD:

16 They shall enter into my sanctuary, and ★ they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my ⇄ charge.

17 And it shall come to pass, that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, whiles they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within.

18 They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with any thing that causeth sweat.

19 And when they go forth into the utter court, even into the utter court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments.

20 Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads.

21 Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court.

22 Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before.

23 And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

24 And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths.

25 And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves.

26 And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days.

27 And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering, saith the Lord GOD.

28 And it shall be unto them for an inheritance: ★ I am their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: ★ I am their possession.

29 They shall eat the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs.

30 And the first of all the firstfruits of all things, and every oblation of all, of every sort of your oblations, shall be the priest's: ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, ★ that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house.

31 The priests shall not eat of any thing that is dead of itself, or torn, whether it be fowl or beast.

Marked in the text

- **v1** and it was shut
- **v2** This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened
- **v2** ▲ because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it
- **v3** ★ he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD
- **v4** ▲ the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD
- **v5** mark well
- **v6** ⚠ let it suffice you of all your abominations
- **v7** ⚠ uncircumcised in heart
- **v7** ⚠ they have broken my covenant
- **v8** ⚠ ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things
- **v8** ⇄ charge *(every occurrence)*
- **v10** ⚠ the Levites that are gone away far from me
- **v10** ⚠ they shall even bear their iniquity
- **v12** ⚠ caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity
- **v13** ⚠ they shall bear their shame
- **v14** ★ I will make them keepers of the charge of the house
- **v15** ★ the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary
- **v15** ★ they shall come near to me to minister unto me
- **v16** ★ they shall come near to my table
- **v17** they shall be clothed with linen garments
- **v21** Neither shall any priest drink wine
- **v23** they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane
- **v28** ★ I am their inheritance

- **v28** ★ I am their possession
- **v30** ★ that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 44:2 (KJV)

2 Then said the LORD unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; ▲ because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.

Setting

The vision of the new temple continues (chs 40–48; dated 573 BC, 40:1). In chapter 43 the glory of the LORD came back through the east gate and filled the house. Now Ezekiel is led back to that gate and finds it shut. The rest of the chapter answers the question "Who may come near?" — and it answers by looking back at who failed in Ezekiel's day and who stayed faithful.

Structure

- vv1–3 — **the shut gate:** Ezekiel is brought to the outer gate of the sanctuary "which faces the east; and it was shut" (v1). "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the LORD God of Israel has entered by it" (v2). Only the prince "shall sit in it as prince to eat bread before the LORD," entering and leaving by the porch (v3).
- vv4–9 — **foreigners in God's house:** by the north gate Ezekiel sees "the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD, and I fell on my face" (v4). God tells him to "mark well, see with your eyes and hear with your ears" (v5). "Enough of all your abominations, O house of Israel" (v6): they brought in foreigners "uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh" to serve in His sanctuary, and "they made My covenant void" (v7). "You have not kept charge of My holy things yourselves" (v8). No such foreigner will enter (v9).
- vv10–14 — **the Levites who strayed:** "the Levites who went far from Me when Israel went astray … shall bear the punishment for their iniquity" (v10). "Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary" as gatekeepers and servants (v11). They "became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel" (v12), so they will not serve as priests, "but they will bear their shame" (v13). "Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the house" (v14).
- vv15–16 — **the sons of Zadok:** the priests "who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me" (v15). "They shall come near to My table" (v16).
- vv17–27 — **how the priests live:** linen, not wool, nothing "which makes them sweat" (vv17–18); a change of clothes before going out to the people (v19); trimmed hair (v20); "Nor shall any of the priests drink wine" in the inner court (v21); marriage rules (v22). They "teach My people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (v23). They

judge disputes and keep God's feasts and sabbaths (v24). Rules for touching the dead and for cleansing (vv25–27).

- vv28–31 — **God is their portion:** "I am their inheritance; and you shall give them no possession in Israel — I am their possession" (v28). They eat the offerings and receive the firstfruits, "to cause a blessing to rest on your house" (vv29–30). No meat that died on its own or was torn (v31).

Repeated words

sanctuary (vv1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 16, 27); charge (vv8, 14, 15, 16); went astray (vv10, 15); iniquity (vv10, 12); come near (vv13, 15, 16); minister (vv11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 27); inner court (vv17, 21, 27); linen (vv17, 18); declares the Lord GOD (vv12, 15, 27).

Contrasts

a gate shut to everyone (v2) ⟷ a gate the LORD has entered (v2). Foreigners set to keep charge of the sanctuary (v8) ⟷ priests who kept charge themselves (v15). Levites who went astray and bear their shame (vv10, 13) ⟷ Zadokites who stayed faithful and come near (v15). Serving the people before idols (v12) ⟷ standing before God (v15). No possession in Israel ⟷ "I am their possession" (v28).

Chapter theme (my words)

In God's house, nearness is the reward of faithfulness. The Levites who led Israel into idolatry are forgiven enough to keep serving, but not trusted to stand at the altar. The sons of Zadok, who stayed true when everyone else drifted, get the best thing God can give: God Himself. Faithfulness in the dark seasons shapes what my service looks like later.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 44:4 (KJV)

4 Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and I looked, and, behold, ▲ the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD: and I fell upon my face.

The shut gate (vv1–3)

Guzik says the gate is shut because it is "a gate especially reserved for God Himself." The King came home through it, and no one else walks where He walked. Vawter and Hoppe, in Guzik: "Since God will never leave the temple again, the gate will remain closed." Guzik notes that this gate belongs to "a temple compound yet to come" — the sealed Golden Gate in today's Jerusalem wall is not its fulfillment. He also mentions that some have used this verse to argue for Mary's perpetual virginity, a reading Clarke called precarious.

Who is the prince? (v3)

The prince (*nasi*) appears often in chapters 44–48. Christians hold different views:

- **The Messiah Himself.** But the prince offers a sin offering "for himself" (45:22) and has sons (46:16), which is hard to say of Christ.

- **David raised up** to rule under the Messiah (34:23–24; 37:24–25; Jer 30:9; Hos 3:5). Guzik says, "This ruler is likely David."
- **A human ruler or civil leader** in Israel, distinct from the priests.

Whoever he is, the prince does not walk through the gate; Guzik notes that he may sit in the gate's vestibule in fellowship with the LORD and eat bread there.

Foreigners and a broken covenant (vv4–9)

Seeing the glory again, Ezekiel falls on his face (v4). Then God names the sin: Israel's priests let uncovenanted outsiders — uncircumcised in flesh and heart — do the work of God's house. Wright, in Guzik, suggests laziness or bribery as the motive; Alexander notes the old Near Eastern habit of using foreign captives as temple servants. The issue is not ethnicity but covenant. A heart that is uncircumcised — untouched by God — has no place serving in His house (Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4). Guzik connects God's command to "mark well" who enters with Revelation's picture of who may enter the holy city (Rev 21:7–8; 22:14–15; compare 21:27).

The Levites demoted (vv10–14)

These Levites led the people in idol worship — likely at the high places Josiah later shut down, where priests were not allowed to serve at the altar in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23:8–9). God swore an oath against them (v12). They will bear their shame, yet God still gives them a place: guarding gates, slaughtering sacrifices, serving the people. Guzik says this discipline shows the vision "does not belong to the eternal realm, but to the millennial period." Mercy and consequences stand side by side.

The sons of Zadok (vv15–16)

Zadok was the priest who stood with David and with Solomon when Adonijah tried to take the throne, and Solomon made him chief priest (2 Sam 15:24; 1 Kgs 1:32–39; 2:35). His line kept charge of the sanctuary when others wandered. Wright, in Guzik: "The new priesthood is confined to the line of Zadok." Guzik applies it: believers are now a priesthood (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6), and service must be first to God — "to minister to Me" — before it is to people.

Holy living for holy service (vv17–27)

Linen keeps the priests from sweating — nothing of human labor and strain in God's presence. Holy garments stay inside so holiness is not carried out as a show (v19). No wine before ministry recalls Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1–11). The heart of the job is teaching: helping people see the difference between holy and common, clean and unclean (v23; Lev 10:10–11; Mal 2:7). Alexander, in Guzik, notes that people enter the Millennium in natural bodies, so rules about the dead fit a setting where people still die (Isa 65:20).

God as their inheritance (vv28–31)

Like Aaron and the Levites in the Law (Num 18:20), the priests own no land. God Himself is their share, and the people's offerings feed them. On the firstfruits that bring "a blessing to rest on your house" (v30), Guzik quotes Trapp: "Tithe and be rich. See Malachi 3:10."

Word study (Hebrew)

- **shut — *sagar* (H5462):** to close, shut up.
- **prince — *nasi* (H5387):** one lifted up; a chief, leader, prince.
- **foreigner — *nekar* (H5236):** foreignness; *ben-nekar*, a son of a foreign land.
- **uncircumcised — *ʿarel* (H6189):** uncircumcised; figuratively, closed off, unresponsive to God.

- **charge — *mishmereth* (H4931):** a watch, guard, duty, obligation.
- **went astray — *taʿah* (H8582):** to wander, err, go astray.
- **iniquity — *ʿavon* (H5771):** perversity, guilt, the punishment of guilt.
- **stumbling block — *mikshol* (H4383):** a cause of stumbling, an offense.
- **shame — *kelimmah* (H3639):** disgrace, reproach, humiliation.
- **minister — *sharath* (H8334):** to serve, attend, minister.
- **linen — *pishteh* (H6593):** flax, linen.
- **profane — *chol* (H2455):** common, unholy.
- **inheritance — *nachalah* (H5159):** a possession, heritage, portion.
- **possession — *ʾachuzzah* (H272):** a holding, property.
- **blessing — *berakah* (H1293):** a blessing, gift, benefit.

Cross-references

Lev 10:1–11; Lev 21:1–15; Num 18:20; Deut 10:8–9, 16; 1 Sam 2:35; 2 Sam 15:24; 1 Kgs 1:32–39; 1 Kgs 2:35; 2 Kgs 23:8–9; Ps 16:5; Ps 73:26; Jer 4:4; Lam 3:24; Ezek 34:23–24; Ezek 37:24–25; Ezek 43:1–5; Hos 3:5; Mal 2:7; Mal 3:10; Rom 2:29; 1 Cor 9:13; 1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; Rev 21:27; Rev 22:14–15.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 44:15 (KJV)

15 But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the ⇄ charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, ★ they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD:

Command to obey — "Mark well, see with your eyes and hear with your ears"

(v5). God told Ezekiel to pay close attention to who could come near and how. I want to pay that kind of attention to holiness — not skim it. In my own study and in the men I teach, I want to help us "discern between the unclean and the clean" (v23), because a lot of what we call harmless isn't.

Sin to confess — letting others keep my charge

Israel handed the work of God's house to people who didn't know Him (v8). I can hand off what God gave me to guard — my own walk with Him, the spiritual leadership of my home — to someone else, or to nobody. I confess where I've let others carry what was mine to keep.

Warning to heed — a stumbling block to others

The Levites didn't just sin; they "became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel" (v12). When a leader falls, people fall with him. The men I disciple are watching me. My compromise would never stay private.

Promise to trust — "I am their inheritance … I am their possession"

(v28). The priests had no land, but they had God. Many of the men I work with walk out of prison with nothing — no house, no car, sometimes no family willing to take them. God's word to them is the same one He gave the priests: He is their portion (Ps 16:5; Lam 3:24). When everything else is gone, a man who has God is not poor.

Example to follow — the sons of Zadok

They "kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray" (v15). They stayed faithful when it wasn't popular, and God remembered it for generations. I want to be that man in the dark season, not just the good one.

Worship

The LORD God of Israel has entered His house, and no one else walks through that gate. He fills His house with glory. He is the inheritance of His people, and He is enough.

Prayer

Lord GOD, You alone came through that gate. Teach me to mark well what You call holy. Forgive me where I've been careless with what You trusted me to keep, or where I've made it easier for others to stumble. Make me faithful when others drift, and let me find in You my inheritance and my possession. Give the men I love that same treasure. Amen.