

245 Mark well

(Suggested: Copy, paste and read in Subfolder: Practical Discipleship)

Ezekiel was a prophet and a priest, frequently used by the Lord to speak to His wayward covenant people in the years before and during their exile in Babylon. Through such prophets the Lord repeatedly warned His people of His impending judgement over them for their iniquities, urging them to repent and return to Him while there was still time. The people did not listen: in 597 BC King Jehoiachin surrendered Jerusalem to the army of Babylon, and he, along with thousands of the leading citizens of Judah, including Ezekiel, were carried off into exile (II Kings 24.10-16).

Towards the end of the Book of Ezekiel, we read in Chapter 40 verse 1, after a heavily marked date, “the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither” (AV). There follows a lengthy, meticulous description of the new temple to be built in Jerusalem, including the lovely vision of the waters (Chapter 47) – in all, surely a source of tremendous comfort and encouragement to God’s people when still in exile, as well as to His Christ-redeemed people of today – people such as us: God knows what He is doing, and by His grace and mercy outpoured through His Son Jesus Christ, all shall be well.

We know that this new temple explained in such detail to Ezekiel has a “multi-fulfilment”, as is so often the case with biblical prophecy: partially so after the people did indeed return from exile; more fully so in the still-future-for-us millennial reign of Christ; and ultimately so in the “new heaven and a new earth”, those wonderful scenes made known to us in Revelation Chapters 21 and 22, (the final temple of them all being explained in just one verse, 21.22!).

Let us focus now on a small but significant instruction given by the Lord to Ezekiel within this great vision: “And the Lord said unto me, Son of man, mark well all the ordinances of the house of the Lord, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house”, literally, the entrance to the house (Ezekiel 44.5, AV).

“Mark well” – a timely word for all of us today. First, Ezekiel was to realise that the details, all those small, apparently unimportant minor things he had been shown in the vision, matter to the Lord just as much as do the great and obvious things, and so they are to matter to us too.

This vision given to Ezekiel was in the context of the people’s wanton sinfulness, as contrasted with the love, grace and forgiveness of Almighty God towards His covenant people. So we are to “mark well” the possible presence in our lives of those “little sins” we may like to assume do not really matter, but in God’s sight of course they do matter. We need to acknowledge these in confession and repentance before Him, and then seek the help of the Holy Spirit in enabling us to set them aside (eg., I John 1.8-10). Such “little sins” (quite apart from the more major ones) will also exist in church and nation, which need to be addressed honestly and appropriately before the Lord.

God hates sin, whatever its nature or scale, and has never accepted that “a few little naughties don’t really matter”. We must not forget that it is only because of original and continuing human sin that this world is in such a mess (Genesis 3.17b-19 / Romans 8.19-22), and that the Father asked His Son to go through all those horrors so as to open the way back (eg., James 2.10 / Luke 22.42 / Ephesians 1.3-12 / Romans Chapter 5 /).

Next, we, like Ezekiel, are also to mark well “the ordinances and laws of the house of the Lord” (44.5a), words which in our context today can be summarised by the Ten Commandments. Even though we now live by grace and under grace, these moral laws retain their place (eg., Matthew 5.17-20), and are to be “marked well”.

And thirdly we, still like Ezekiel, are to mark well “the entering in of the house” (44.5b), which in this Christian era we can apply to the Christian Gospel itself: the entering, by faith alone in Christ alone, into a glorious place of redemption and salvation (eg., II Corinthians 4.3-4 / I Timothy 1.11).

Dire events causing deep suffering are becoming more common-place around the world, and those who accept the Bible as truly “God’s Word written” can see in such events clear warnings from the living God, just as in the days of Ezekiel and the other prophets: the divine clock is ticking, the way of salvation through Christ remains open, but judgement looms. What is happening around us is plainly foretold within God’s Word.

So may we indeed “mark well” those little sins, those moral laws and that entering-in to the house of the Gospel, always remembering with thankful hearts that our labour in the Lord is not in vain.

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