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EZEKIEL 44: 1 Then he brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which looks toward the east; and it was shut.

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This chapter gives an account of the glory of God having returned to the temple, Eze 44:14. The Jews reproved for suffering idolatrous priests to pollute it with their ministrations, Eze 44:5-8. Ordinances respecting the conduct of the priests, and the maintenance due to them, vv. 9-31.

Verse 1

The outward sanctuary - In opposition to the temple itself, which was the inner sanctuary.

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EZEKIEL 44: 2 The LORD said to me, This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, neither shall any man enter in by it; for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut.

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Verse 2

This gate shall be shut - It was not to be opened on ordinary occasions, nor at all on the week days: but only on the Sabbaths and the new moons. See the account of the gates (4) in the explanation of the plan.

This verse has been adduced by the Roman Catholics to prove the perpetual virginity of the mother of our Lord; and it may be allowed to be as much to the purpose as any other that has been brought to prove this very precarious point, on which no stress should ever be laid by any man. Mary was a virgin when she brought forth Jesus.

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EZEKIEL 44: 3 As for the prince, he shall sit therein as prince to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by the way of the porch of the gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.

EZEKIEL 44: 4 Then he brought me by the way of the north gate before the house; and I looked, and behold, the LORD's glory filled the LORD's house: and I fell on my face.

EZEKIEL 44: 5 The LORD said to me, Son of man, mark well, and see with your eyes, and hear with your ears all that I tell you concerning all the ordinances of the LORD's house, and all its laws; and mark well the entrance of the house, with every exit of the sanctuary.

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Verse 5

Mark well, and behold - Take notice of every thing; register all so fully that thou shalt be able to give the most minute information to the children of Israel.

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EZEKIEL 44: 6 You shall tell the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: you house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations,

EZEKIEL 44: 7 in that you have brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to profane it, even my house, when you offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant, to add to all your abominations.

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Verse 7

The fat and the blood - These never went into common use; they were wholly offered to God. The blood was poured out; the fat consumed.

Because of all your abominations - Several MSS. of Kennicott's and De Rossi's read their abominations, referring to the strangers mentioned before.

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EZEKIEL 44: 8 You have not performed the duty of my holy things; but you have set performers of my duty in my sanctuary for yourselves.

EZEKIEL 44: 9 Thus says the Lord GOD, No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any foreigners who are among the children of Israel.

EZEKIEL 44: 10 But the Levites who went far from me, when Israel went astray, who went astray from me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity.

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Verse 10

And the Levites that are gone away far from me - This refers to the schism of Jeroboam, who, when he set up a new worship, got as many of the priests and Levites to join him in his idolatry as he could. These, on the return from the captivity, should not be permitted to perform the functions of priests in the new temple; but they might be continued as keepers of all the charge of the house - be treasurers, guards of the temple, porters, etc.; see Eze 44:11-15. The whole of these passages refer to the period of time when the second temple was built.

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EZEKIEL 44: 11 Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the house, and ministering in the house: they shall kill the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them.

EZEKIEL 44: 12 Because they ministered to them before their idols, and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel; therefore have I lifted up my hand against them, says the Lord GOD, and they shall bear their iniquity.

EZEKIEL 44: 13 They shall not come near to me, to execute the office of priest to me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, to the things that are most holy; but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed.

EZEKIEL 44: 14 Yet will I make them performers of the duty of the house, for all its service, and for all that shall be done therein.

EZEKIEL 44: 15 But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who performed the duty of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister to me; and they shall stand before me to offer to me the fat and the blood, says the Lord GOD:

EZEKIEL 44: 16 they shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister to me, and they shall keep my instruction.

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Verse 16

Come near to my table - To place the shew-bread there, and to burn incense on the golden altar in the holy of holies.

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EZEKIEL 44: 17 It shall be that, when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come on them, while they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within.

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Verse 17

No wool shall come upon them - The reason is plain; wool is more apt than linen to contract dirt and breed insects; linen breeds none; besides, this is a vegetable, and the other an animal substance. It was an ancient maxim, that whatever was taken from a dead body was impure in matters of religion, and should not be permitted to enter into the temple. The Egyptian priests always wore linen on their bodies, and shoes of matting or rushes on their feet. The Mohammedans never write the Koran upon vellum or skin of any kind, as they would consider that as a defilement.

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EZEKIEL 44: 18 They shall have linen tires on their heads, and shall have linen breeches on their waists; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that makes them sweat.

EZEKIEL 44: 19 When they go out into the outer court, even into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments in which they minister, and lay them in the holy rooms; and they shall put on other garments, that they not sanctify the people with their garments.

EZEKIEL 44: 20 Neither shall they shave their heads, nor allow their locks to grow long; they shall only cut off the hair of their heads.

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Verse 20

Neither shall they shave their heads - The priests of Isis shaved their heads close to the skin; the priests of Budhoo do so still, their ordinances oblige them to shave their heads every tenth day. To let the hair grow long would have been improper; therefore the Lord commands them to poll - cut the hair short, but not to shave.

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EZEKIEL 44: 21 Neither shall any of the priests drink wine, when they enter into the inner court.

EZEKIEL 44: 22 Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her who is put away; but they shall take virgins of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest.

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Verse 22

Neither shall they take for their wives a widow - This was prohibited to the high priest only, by Moses, Lev 21:13, Lev 21:14.

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EZEKIEL 44: 23 They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

EZEKIEL 44: 24 In a controversy they shall stand to judge; according to my ordinances shall they judge it: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all my appointed feasts; and they shall make my Sabbaths holy.

EZEKIEL 44: 25 They shall go in to no dead person to defile themselves; but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister who has had no husband, they may defile themselves.

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Verse 25

And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves - Touching the dead defiles a Hindoo now, as it formerly did a Jew; and they must bathe to become clean again.

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EZEKIEL 44: 26 After he is cleansed, they shall reckon to him seven days.

EZEKIEL 44: 27 In the day that he goes into the sanctuary, into the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering, says the Lord GOD.

EZEKIEL 44: 28 They shall have an inheritance: I am their inheritance; and you shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession.

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Verse 28

I am their inheritance - Those who affect to form their ecclesiastical matters on the model of the Jewish Church have with one consent left this out of the question. They will not live on the free-will offerings of the people; but must have vast revenues, and these secured to them by law. That every minister of God should be supported by the altar I grant; but I think, instead of that method of paying the parochial clergy which I see is so much objected to, and breeds so much dissension between the pastors and their flocks, it would be better, on these accounts, to assign them a portion of land adequate to their supply, or let the state maintain them as it does its other officers. In Israel God was their inheritance and their possession; but they had the breast and shoulder of all sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, and all dedicated things were theirs; and they had a portion of all the dough that was prepared for bread. These were considered as the Lord's property, and these he

gave to them; and this is always implied in the Lord's being their inheritance and their possession. They had a plentiful support.

Hitherto tithes have been thought the best mode of paying the clergy, and providing for the poor of each parish; but these matters have undergone such alterations since the time of their institution, that some emendation of the system is at present absolutely necessary.

There should be a public acknowledgment of God in every nation, and this should be provided for by the state in a way the least burdensome to the people, that all may rejoice in the benefit. Happy the nations that have a Bible so correct, and a Liturgy so pure, as those in the British empire! In such cases, a religion established by the state is an unutterable blessing to the nation; only keep it to the Bible, and to the Liturgy, and all, under God, will be well; but when the sermon is against these, all is bad.

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EZEKIEL 44: 29 They shall eat the meal offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; and every devoted thing in Israel shall be theirs.

EZEKIEL 44: 30 The first of all the first fruits of every thing, and every offering of everything, of all your offerings, shall be for the priest: you shall also give to the priests the first of your dough, to cause a blessing to rest on your house.

EZEKIEL 44: 31 The priests shall not eat of anything that dies of itself, or is torn, whether it be bird or animal.

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