

CHAPTER 45

In this chapter is further represented to the prophet, in vision,

I. The division of the holy land, so much for the temple, and the priests that attended the service of it (v. 1-4), so much for the Levites (v. 5), so much for the city (v. 6), so much for the prince, and the residue to the people (v. 7, 8).

II. The ordinances of justice that were given both to prince and people (v. 9-12).

III. The oblations they were to offer, and the prince's part in those oblations (v. 13-17). Particularly in the beginning of the year (v. 18-20) and in the passover, and the feast of tabernacles (v. 21-25). And all this seems to point at the new church-state that should be set up under the gospel, which, both for extent and for purity, should far exceed that of the Old Testament.

⤵ EZEKIEL 45:1-8

THE DIVISION OF THE HOLY LAND

Directions are here given for the dividing of the land after their return to it; and, God having warranted them to do it, would be an act of faith, and not of folly, thus to divide it before they had it. And it would be welcome news to the captives to hear that they should not only return to their own land, but that, whereas they were now but few in number, they should *increase and multiply*, so as to *replenish* it. But this never had its accomplishment in the Jewish state after the return out of captivity, but was to be fulfilled in the model of the Christian church, which was perfectly new (as this division of the land was quite different from that in Joshua's time) and much enlarged by the accession of the Gentiles to it; and it will be perfected in the heavenly kingdom, of which the land of Canaan had always been a type. Now,

1. Here is the portion of land assigned to *the sanctuary*, in the midst of which the temple was to be built, with all its courts and purlieus; the rest round about it was for the priests. This is called (v. 1) *an oblation to the*

Lord; for what is given in works of piety, for the maintenance and support of the worship of God and the advancement of religion, God accepts as given to him, if it be done with a single eye. It is a *holy portion of the land*, which is to be set out first, as the *first-fruits* that sanctify the lump. The appropriating of lands for the support of religion and the ministry is an act of piety that bids as fair for perpetuity, and the benefit of posterity, as any. This *holy portion of the land* was to be measured, and the borders of it fixed, that the sanctuary itself might not have more than its share and in time engross the whole land. So far the lands of the church shall extend and no further; as in our own kingdom donations to the church were of old limited by the *statute of mortmain*. The lands here allotted to the sanctuary were 25,000 *reeds* (so our translation makes it, though some make them only *cubits*) in length, and 10,000 in breadth — about eighty miles one way and thirty miles another way (say some); twenty-five miles one way and ten miles the other way, so others. The priests and Levites that were to come near to minister were to have their dwellings in this *portion of the land* that was round about the sanctuary, that they might be near their work; whereas by the distribution of land in Joshua's time the cities of the priests and Levites were dispersed all the nation over. This intimates that gospel ministers should reside upon their charge; where their service lies there must they live.

2. Next to the lands of the sanctuary the city-lands are assigned, in which the holy city was to be built, and with the issues and profits of which the citizens were to be maintained (v. 6): *It shall be for the whole house of Israel*, not appropriated, as before, to one tribe or two, but some of all the tribes shall dwell in the city, as we find they did, ^{chii}Nehemiah 11:1, 2. The portion for the city was fully as long, but only half as broad, as that for the sanctuary; for the city was enriched by trade and therefore had the less need of lands.

3. The next allotment after the church-lands and the city-lands is of the crown-lands, v. 7, 8. Here is no admeasurement of these, but they are said to lie *on the one side and on the other side* of the church-lands and city-lands, to intimate that the prince with his wealth and power was to be a protection to both. Some make the prince's share equal to the church's and city's share both together; others make it to be a thirteenth part of the rest of the land, the other twelve parts being for the twelve tribes. The prince that attends continually to the administration of public affairs must have wherewithal to support his dignity, and have abundance, that he may not

be in temptation to oppress the people, which yet with many does not prevent that; but the grace of God shall prevent it, for it is promised here, *My princes shall no more oppress my people*; for God will make the *officers peace* and the *extractors righteousness*. Notwithstanding this, we find that after the return of the Jews to their own land the princes were complained of for their exactions. But Nehemiah was one that did not do as the *former governors*, and yet kept a handsome court, ^{<4615>}Nehemiah 5:15, 18. But so much is said of the prince in this mystical holy state, to intimate that in the gospel-church magistrates should be as *nursing fathers* to it and Christian princes its patrons and protectors; and the holy religion they profess, as far as they are subject to the power of it, will restrain them from oppressing God's people, because they are more his people than theirs.

4. The rest of the lands were to be distributed to the people *according to their tribes*, who had reason to think themselves well settled, when they had both the *testimony of Israel* and the *throne of judgment* so near them.

^{<2619>}EZEKIEL 45:9-12

RULES OF JUSTICE

We have here some general rules of justice laid down both for prince and people, the rules of distributive and commutative justice; for godliness without honesty is but a form of godliness, will neither please God nor avail to the benefit of any people. Be it therefore enacted, by the authority of the church's King and God,

1. That *princes do not oppress their subjects*, but duly and faithfully administer justice among them (v. 9): "*Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel! that you have been oppressive to the people and have enriched yourselves by spoil and violence, that you have so long fleeced the flock instead of feeding them, and henceforward do so no more.*" Note, Even princes and great men that have long done amiss must at length think it time, high time, to reform and amend; for no prescription will justify a wrong. Instead of saying that they have been long accustomed to oppress, and therefore may persist in it, for the custom will bear them out, they should say that they have been long accustomed to it and therefore, as here, *Let the time pass suffice*, and let them now remove *violence and*

spoil; let them drop wrongful demands, cancel wrongful usages, and turn out those from employments under them that do violence. Let them *take away their exactions*, ease their subjects of those taxes which they find lie heavily upon them, and let them *execute judgment and justice* according to the law, as the duty of their place requires. Note, All princes, but especially the princes of Israel, are concerned to do justice; for of their people God says, They are my people, and they in a special manner *rule for God*.

2. That one neighbour do not cheat another in commerce (v. 10): *You shall have just balances*, in which to weigh both money and goods, a *just ephah* for dry measure of corn and flour, a *just bath* for the measure of liquids, wine, and oil; and the *ephah* and *bath* shall be *one measure*, the tenth part of a *chomer*, or *cor*, v. 11. So that the ephah and bath contained (as the learned Dr. Cumberland has computed) seven wine gallons and four pints, and something more. An omer was but the tenth part of an ephah (^{<1066>}Exodus 16:36) and the one hundredth part of a *chomer*, or *homer*, and contained about six pints. The *shekel* is here settled (v. 13); it is twenty *jerahs*, just half a *Roman* ounce, in our money 2s. 4 1/4d. and almost the eighth part of a farthing, as the aforesaid learned man exactly computes it. By the shekels the *maneh*, or pound, was reckoned, which, when it was set for a mere weight (says bishop Cumberland), without respect to coinage, contained just 100 shekels, as appears by comparing ^{<1007>}1 Kings 10:17, where it is said three *manehs*, or *pounds*, of gold, went to one shield, with the parallel place, ^{<496>}2 Chronicles 9:16, where it is said 300 *shekels of gold* went to one shield. But when the *maneh* is set for a sum of money or coin it contains but sixty shekels, as appears here, where twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, and fifteen shekels, which in all make sixty, shall be the *maneh*. But it is thus reckoned because they had one piece of money that weighed twenty shekels, another twenty-five, another fifteen, all of which made up one pound, as a learned writer here observes. Note, It concerns God's Israel to be very honest and just in all their dealings, very punctual and exact in rendering to all their due, and very cautious to do wrong to none, because otherwise they spoil the acceptableness of their profession with God and the reputation of it before men.

OBLATIONS ENJOINED

Having laid down the rules of the righteousness toward men, which is really a branch off true religion, he comes next to give some directions for their religion towards God, which is a branch of universal righteousness.

I. It is required that they offer an oblation to the Lord out of what they have (v. 13): *All the people of the land* must give an oblation, v. 16. As God's tenants, they must pay a quitrent to their great landlord. They had offered an oblation out of their real estates (v. 1), *a holy portion of their land*; now they are directed to offer an oblation out of their personal estates, their goods and chattels, as an acknowledgement of their receivings from him, their dependence on him, and their obligations to him. Note, Whatever our substance is we must honour God with it, by giving him his dues out of it. Not that God has need of or may be benefited by any thing that we can give him, ~~1809~~ Psalm 50:9. No; it is but an *oblation*; we only *offer it* to him; the benefit of it returns back to ourselves, to his poor, who, as our neighbours, are ourselves, or to his ministers who serve continually for our good.

II. The proportion of this oblation is here determined, which was not done by the law of Moses. No mention is made of the title, but only of this oblation. And the *quantum* of this is thus settled: —

1. Out of their corn they were to offer a sixtieth part; out of every *homer of wheat and barley*, which contained ten ephahs, they were to offer the sixth part of one ephah, which was a sixtieth part of the whole, v. 13.

2. Out of their oil (and probably their wine too) they were to offer a hundredth part, for this oblation; out of every cor, or homer, which contained ten baths they were to offer the tenth part of one bath, v. 14. This was given to the altar; for in every meat-offering there was *flour mingled with oil*.

3. Out of their flocks they were to give *one lamb* out of 200; that was the smallest proportion of all, v. 15. But it must be *out of the fat pastures of Israel*. They must not offer to God that which was taken up from the common, but the fattest and best they had, for *burnt-offerings* and *peace-*

offerings: the former were offered for the giving of glory to God, the latter for the fetching in of mercy, grace, and peace, from God, and in our spiritual sacrifices these are our two great errands at the throne of grace; but, in order to the acceptance of both, these sacrifices were to *make reconciliation* for them. Christ is our sacrifice of atonement, by whom reconciliation is made, and to him we must have an eye in our sacrifices of acknowledgment.

III. This oblation must be given *for the prince in Israel*, v. 16. Some read it *to* the prince, and understand it of Christ, who is indeed the prince in Israel, to whom we must offer our oblations, and into whose hands we must put them, to be presented to the Father. Or, They shall give it *with* the prince; every private person shall bring his oblation, to be offered with that of the prince; for it follows (v. 17). *It shall be the prince's part to provide all the offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel.* The people were to bring their oblations to him according to the foregoing rules, and he was to bring them to the sanctuary, and to make up what fell short out of his own. Note, It is the duty of rulers to take care of religion, and to see that the duties of it be regularly and carefully performed by those under their charge, and that nothing be wanting that is requisite thereto: the magistrate is the keeper of both tables; and it is a happy thing when those that are above others in power and dignity go before them in the service of God.

IV. Some particular solemnities are here appointed.

1. Here is one in the beginning of the year, which seems to be altogether new, and not instituted by the law of Moses; it is the annual solemnity of cleansing the sanctuary.

(1.) *On the first day of the first month* (upon new-year's day) they were to offer a sacrifice for the *cleansing of the sanctuary* (v. 18), that is, to make atonement for the iniquity of the holy things the year past, that they might bring none of the guilt of them into the services of the new year, and to implore grace for the preventing of that iniquity, and for the better performance of the service of the sanctuary the ensuing year. And, in token of this, the blood of this *sin-offering* was to be put upon the *posts of the gate of the inner court* (v. 19), to signify that by it atonement was intended to be made for the sins of all the servants that attended that house, priests, Levites, and people, even the sins that were found in all

their services. Note, Even sanctuaries on earth need cleansing, frequent cleansing; that above needs none. Those what worship God together should often join in renewing their repentance for their manifold defects, and applying the blood of Christ for the pardon of them, and in renewing their covenants to be more careful for the future; and it is very seasonable to begin the year with this work, as Hezekiah did when it had been long neglected, ^{<427>}2 Chronicles 29:17. They were here appointed to *cleanse the sanctuary* upon the first day of the month, because on the fourteenth day of the month they were to eat the *passover*, an ordinance which, of all Old-Testament institutions, had most in it of Christ and gospel grace, and therefore it was very fit that they should begin to prepare for it a fortnight before by cleansing the sanctuary.

(2.) This sacrifice was to be repeated *on the seventh day of the first month*, v. 20. And then it was intended to make atonement *for every one that errs, and for him that is simple*. Note, He that sins *errs and is simple*; he mistakes, he goes out of the way, and shows himself to be foolish and unwise. But here it is spoken of those sins which are committed through ignorance, mistake, or inadvertency, whether by any of the priests, or of the Levites, or of the people. Sacrifices were appointed to atone for such sins as men were surprised into, or did before they were aware, which they would not have done if they had known and remembered aright, which they were overtaken in, and for which, afterwards, they condemn themselves. But for presumptuous sins, committed with a high hand, there was no sacrifice appointed, ^{<450>}Numbers 15:30. By these repeated sacrifices you shall *reconcile the house*, that is, God will be reconciled to it, and continue the tokens of his presence in it, and will *let it alone this year also*.

2. The passover was to be religiously observed at the time appointed, v. 21. Christ is *our passover*, that is *sacrificed for us*. We celebrate the memorial of that sacrifice and feast upon it, triumphing in our deliverance out of the Egyptian slavery of sin and our preservation from the sword of the destroying angel, the sword of divine justice, in the Lord's supper, which is our passover-feast, as the whole Christian life is, and must be, the feast of unleavened bread. It is here appointed that the prince shall prepare a *sin-offering*, to be offered *for himself and the people*, a bullock on the *first day* (v. 22) and a *kid of the goats* every other day (v. 23), to teach us, in all our attendance upon God for communion with him, to have an eye to the great sin-offering, by which *transgression was finished* and an

everlasting righteousness brought in. On every day of the feast there was to be a *burnt-offering*, purely for the honour of God, of no less than seven bullocks and seven rams, with their meat-offering, which were wholly consumed upon the altar, and yet *no waste*, v. 23, 24.

3. The feast of tabernacles; that is spoken of next (v. 25), and there is no mention of the feast of pentecost, which came between that of the passover and that of tabernacles. Orders are here given (above what were given by the law of Moses) for the same sacrifices to be offered during the seven days of the passover. See the deficiency of the legal sacrifices for sin; they were therefore often repeated, not only every year, but every feast, every day of the feast, because *they could not make the comers thereunto perfect*, ~~580~~ Hebrews 10:1, 3. See the necessity of our frequently repeating the same religious exercises. Though the sacrifice of atonement is offered *once for all*, yet the sacrifices of acknowledgement, that of a broken heart, that of a thankful heart, those spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God through Christ Jesus, must be every day offered. We should, as here, fall into a method of holy duties, and keep to it.