

## CRYSTALLIZATION STUDY - Ezekiel, Book 4, Week 21 (Verses with excerpts in the red box)

**Ministering to the Lord to Enjoy Him as the Hidden Manna,  
the Budding Rod, and the Law of Life**

- Ezekiel 43:10 But the **Levites** who **went far from Me**, when Israel **went astray**, who went astray from Me after their idols, shall bear their iniquity.
- Ezekiel 43:11 Yet they shall **minister in My sanctuary**, having oversight at the gates of the house and ministering in the house. They shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them.
- Ezekiel 43:15 But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept the charge 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 present to **Me** the fat and the blood, declares the Lord Jehovah,
- Ezekiel 43:16 It is they who will enter My sanctuary, and it is they who will come near to My table to **minister to Me**, and they will keep My charge.
- Ezekiel 43:17 And when they enter the gates of the inner court they shall be clothed with **linen garments**, and no wool will come upon them while they minister in the gates of the inner court and inside it.
- Ezekiel 43:18 They shall have linen turbans on their heads and have linen trousers over their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything that causes sweat.

- I. “The **Levites** who **went far from Me**, when Israel **went astray**, who went astray from Me after their idols, shall bear their iniquity. Yet they shall **minister in My sanctuary**, having oversight at the gates of the house and ministering in the house. They shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them... But the **Levitical priests**, the sons of Zadok, who **kept the charge 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 present to Me the fat and the blood, declares the Lord Jehovah. It is they who will **enter My sanctuary**, and it is they who will come near to My table to minister to Me, and they will keep My charge”—Ezek. 44:10-11, 15-16:

In God's eyes, not only is there **the ministry to the house**; there is also a better ministry, **the ministry to the Lord**. God has only one goal: to have men who belong absolutely to “**Me**”; in other words, He wants us to be before “**My**” presence and minister to “**Me**”; God's unique goal is not in so many things; rather, it is in “**Me**”. **To minister to the Lord** does not mean that we neglect the house; those who minister to the Lord will also preach the gospel to save sinners and help the brothers and sisters to make progress, but their **one goal** is to be for the Lord, and their **focus** is the Lord Himself; they **treasure** men absolutely for the Lord's sake. If we come to the Lord's presence, focusing only on Him, we will spontaneously be able to minister to the brothers and sisters also; the question of whether or not we are ministering to the Lord hinges on whether or not the Lord occupies the first place in our heart. Whatever we do in the Lord's service should be **for the Lord's sake**; it should be for His satisfaction, His heart's desire, His happiness, His goal, His pleasure, and His glory.

2 Corinthians 4:5, “For we do **not preach ourselves** but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.”

In the Lord's work there are areas that are appealing and attractive to our flesh because they are solely for the pleasure and glory of our self—cf. 2 Cor. 4:5.

Psalms 19:13, “Also keep back Your servant from **presumptuous sins**; Do not let them have dominion over me; Then I will be blameless and cleared Of great transgression.”

No one can minister to the Lord without drawing near to Him, approaching Him in prayer; spiritual power is not in the power of preaching but in the power of praying; how much we pray indicates how much inner strength we really possess. **If we want to minister to the Lord in the Holy of Holies, we must spend time before the Lord and pray more; we need to draw near to Him, stand before Him, and wait for His will.** To pray is to stand before God (Ezek. 44:15); it is to seek His will before Him in order to be saved from the **sin of presumption** (Psa. 19:13).

Matthew 11:28 - 30, “Come to Me all who toil and are burdened, and **I will give you rest**. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and **you will find rest** for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Isaiah 30:15, “For thus says the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and **rest you will be saved**; In **quietness** and in **trust** will be **your strength**; But you were not willing.”

**Acts 13:1-2**, “Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers...As they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”

This is the **work** of the New Testament and the unique **principle** for the work of the New Testament—the work of the Holy Spirit can be revealed only at the time of ministering to the Lord. **Only at the time of ministering to the Lord will the Holy Spirit send some forth**; if we do not place ministering to the Lord as the top priority, everything will be out of order; only the Holy Spirit has the authority to commission men to work. To minister to the Lord is not to forsake all the work on the outside; instead, all the work on the outside should be based on our ministry to the Lord. **We go forth, out from our ministry to the Lord**, rather than out from our own desires, which have no basis in the ministry to the Lord.

THE MINISTERING PRIEST	SIGNIFICANCE
Ezekiel 44:9 <b>Being Circumcised</b>	Uncircumcised persons are not qualified to serve in God’s house. <b>Circumcision</b> typifies <b>dealing</b> with the flesh, the natural man, and the old man by the cross. If our flesh, natural man, and old man have not been dealt with by the cross, we are not qualified to serve in the church life. Although these ones were circumcised, they <b>went astray</b> from God to idols by following those who went astray. Because these circumcised ones went astray, we may say that they were only half qualified to serve the Lord. Some of the saints in the church life today are also half qualified. In a sense they are circumcised, but in another sense they have gone astray with the majority of the people. To follow the majority is awful. Consider today’s situation: Most Christians have gone astray from the Lord to idols, and some of the saints in the church have followed the majority in going astray from the Lord. Because the majority of Christians have gone astray, they have <b>lost their qualification and position to serve the Lord in a direct way</b> . They may still have a part of the church service, but it is an indirect service to the Lord.
Ezekiel 44:10, 13-15 <b>Being like the Sons of Zadok</b>	We all need to be like the sons of Zadok, who were circumcised and <b>absolutely faithful to the Lord</b> . They never went astray, following the majority of the people. They were circumcised and they were always honest and faithful to the Lord. Therefore, they could serve the Lord in a direct way. The Lord said that they could <b>come near to Him and serve Him directly</b> . They were not limited merely to serve the people; they could serve the Lord Himself.
Ezekiel 44:15 <b>Offering the Fat and the Blood</b>	Whereas the <b>fat</b> typifies <b>the preciousness of the person of Christ</b> , the <b>blood</b> signifies <b>the redemptive work of Christ</b> . The fat signifies the person of Christ and the blood signifies the work of Christ. In our service to God, we must present to Him the precious person of Christ and the redemptive work of Christ.
Ezekiel 44:17 <b>Not Wearing Any Woolen Garment</b>	<b>Linen</b> garments signify a daily living and walk in the life-giving Spirit by the life of Christ. The priests were not allowed to wear <b>woolen</b> garments because it would make the priests too warm and cause them to sweat. According to Genesis 3:19 sweat is a sign of being under God’s curse. Because fallen man is under God’s curse, he must labor and sweat. In the Lord’s service there is no need for us to use our own strength. When we use our own strength to endeavor and struggle, this proves that we are not under the Lord’s blessing but rather are under the Lord’s curse. In the church service in the Lord’s recovery, we need to avoid and even escape from any kind of self-energy, self-struggle, and self-endeavor. <b>We should not push anything. If a certain matter is of the Lord, the Lord will surely grant His abundant blessing upon it and work that matter out.</b> If we spend an adequate amount of time in God’s presence and deal properly with Him, there is no need to sweat before man; we can accomplish the most amount of work with the least amount of strength—cf. Matt. 11:28-30.
Ezekiel 44:19 <b>Putting Off the Garments Wherein They Minister and Laying Them in the Holy Chambers</b>	Here we see that when the priests go forth into the outer court to the people, they must <b>put off their garments</b> wherein they ministered and lay them in the holy chambers and then <b>put on other garments</b> . This indicates that the priests are <b>not allowed to mix what is holy with what is profane</b> but <b>maintain a separation between the holy and the profane</b> . If we today would stand in the position of a priest, we must maintain this kind of separation. God does not allow mixture; He requires us to be separated unto Him.
Ezekiel 44:20 <b>Their Hair Being Cut Short</b>	Spiritually speaking, to have long hair in the church life, signifying self-glory, is to desire and seek to be a leader. One problem in the church life is the lack of submission, and another is the desire for position and leadership. To seek a position in the church is to seek self-glory and self-dignity. It is a shame to seek after leadership or any kind of self-glory. This kills us spiritually and disqualifies us from serving the Lord properly. If we want to be qualified to serve the Lord, we should <b>not shave our head</b> , meaning that we should have a <b>proper submission</b> , and we should <b>not let our hair grow long</b> , meaning that we should <b>not seek self-glory, self-dignity, position, and leadership</b> . We need to keep a moderate cut of hair. We need to poll our hair, that is, to have a moderate cut. On the one hand, we submit to the Lord’s authority. On the other hand, we do not seek to be a leader. We should simply minister life to others and support the church life by His grace.
Ezekiel 44:21 <b>Not Drinking Wine</b>	Wine signifies worldly, physical pleasure and joy. Those who serve the Lord in a direct way should have <b>nothing to do with the “wine” of worldly pleasures</b> .

Ezekiel 44:22 <b>Not Taking for Their Wives a Widow or One Who Has Been Put Away</b>	“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.” This signifies that in our contact and relationships with others, <b>we need to be pure</b> and uncomplicated. However, if we contact others in a way that is not pure, we will be defiled with an impure element.
Ezekiel 44:23 <b>Teaching God’s People the Difference between the Holy and the Profane</b>	“They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.” A priest must be <b>able to teach God’s people</b> what is holy and what is profane and what is clean and what is unclean. One who draws near to God as a priest must be able to discern these things and also be able to teach others to discern.
Ezekiel 44:24a <b>Standing before God to Judge in Controversy</b>	When there was a controversy, the parties involved would appear before the priest. The priest would then render a judgment, not according to his own opinion but according to God’s judgments. If, as those who fear God and approach Him, we are asked to settle a controversy, <b>we need to ask God</b> what He would say about this matter and then we should judge according to God’s will. This means that in helping to solve difficult matters, <b>we need to stand before the Lord with a fearing heart</b> . Then we need to touch the Lord’s feeling and judge accordingly.
Ezekiel 44:24b <b>Keeping God’s Laws and Statutes in God’s Feasts</b>	All the feasts, or “assemblies,” are related to the gracious story of God’s salvation. Thus, if we would serve God as priests, we need to <b>remember the gracious story of God’s salvation</b> , including His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
Ezekiel 44:24c <b>Hallowing God’s Sabbaths</b>	The Sabbath indicates that God has done everything; therefore, God rests. To keep, or hallow, the Sabbath means that we accept all that God has done and take rest in all that God has accomplished. Instead of trying to do something in addition to what God has done, we should <b>simply enjoy what God has done</b> and take what He has accomplished as our satisfaction and rest. This means that we depend not on what we do but on what God has done.
Ezekiel 44:25 <b>Not Being Defiled by Dead Persons</b>	Spiritually speaking, many Christians are dead. If you contact them and listen to them, they will cause you to become dead, partially if not wholly. Having nothing positive to say, they will speak only negative things to you, perhaps criticizing the elders, the co-workers, or various saints. When we realize that we are in the presence of this kind of person, <b>we should avoid contact with him</b> . Otherwise, we will be defiled by his death. Stay away from him! To be <b>defiled by death</b> is more serious than to be <b>defiled by something sinful</b> . If we are defiled by something sinful, we can confess, receive the application of the blood of Christ, and immediately be cleansed. However, if we are defiled by death, it will take a period of time before we can be cleansed and purified from this defilement.
Ezekiel 44:27 <b>Offering the Sin Offering</b>	Whenever we approach God, we need to offer the sin offering, even if we are not conscious of any uncleanness. Every time we draw near to God, <b>we need to apply the Lord’s redemption and receive the cleansing of His precious blood</b> .
Ezekiel 44:28b <b>Having Only God as Their Possession</b>	The priests have no possession besides God. Their <b>possession is God Himself</b> , and they enjoy God as their supply. All these serving ones have only God Himself as their inheritance, their possession. This indicates that as today’s priests <b>we should not expect to be rich in physical, material possessions</b> . Instead, we need to realize that our <b>God, whom we serve, is our possession, our inheritance</b> .
Ezekiel 44:29-30 <b>Enjoying the Riches of Christ</b>	All the priests enjoyed the riches of Christ. All the heave offerings, all the firstfruits, and all the top produce of the people of the Lord <b>belonged to these serving ones</b> . This indicates that the riches of Christ were for their enjoyment. They had God as their possession, and they had <b>Christ in all His rich aspects as their enjoyment</b> . May we all serve the Lord in this way.

II. “After the second veil, a tabernacle, which is called the **Holy of Holies**, having...the Ark of the Covenant covered about everywhere with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the **manna** and Aaron’s **rod that budded** and the tablets of the **covenant**”—Heb. 9:3-4:

The **hidden manna** is the portion of Christ that we enjoy in the **presence** of God when there is **no distance between us and Him**; when there is no distance between us and the Lord, we enjoy Christ in the most intimate and hidden way; this is the enjoyment of the hidden manna, the hidden portion of Christ—Exo. 16:31-36:

To overcome the condition of the church in Pergamos is to **separate** ourselves from the general practice of today’s Christianity and to remain in the presence of God ministering directly to Him, not to anything else; here we enjoy something of Christ that all those who are far off from His presence cannot taste—Rev. 2:17.

If we want to enjoy the hidden manna, there must be **no distance between us and God**; all the distance between us and the Lord must be eliminated—Ezek. 1:22, 26. When we are **ministering to the Lord** and enjoying Him as the hidden manna, we have direct fellowship with Him and know His heart and His intention; it is in the presence of the Lord that we can be charged with Him, with His intention, and with all that He wants us to do. When we are ministering to the Lord, we will have God’s commitment because we are in His presence, realizing that there is no distance between us and God.

What is the **hidden manna**? It is Christ as our special portion of food **hidden** in the divine nature. When we are in the place where we touch the golden pot, **we are absolutely outside the world, our self, and our natural man**. We are touching the divine nature, and in the divine nature we partake of the hidden manna.

Numbers 17:2 “Speak to the children of Israel, and **take from them rods**, one for each father's house, **twelve rods** from all their leaders according to their fathers' houses; you shall write everyone's name upon his rod.”

Numbers 17:3 “And you shall write **Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi**, for there shall be one rod for the head of each of their fathers' houses.”

Numbers 17:4 “And you shall place them in the Tent of Meeting before the testimony, where I meet with you

Numbers 17:5 “And **the rod of the man whom I choose shall bud**, and I will put a stop to the murmurings of the children of Israel against Me, which they murmur against you.”

The **budding rod** signifies that Christ, the resurrected One, should be **our life, our living**, and the resurrection life within us and that this life should bud, blossom, and bear fruit to maturity—Num. 17:8:

After the children of Israel **rebelled**, as recorded in Numbers 16, God **commanded** the twelve leaders to take twelve rods according to the twelve tribes of Israel and put them in the Tent of Meeting before the Testimony; then He said, “*The rod of the man whom I choose shall bud*”—17:5. All twelve rods were leafless, rootless, dry, and dead; whichever one budded was the one chosen by God; here we see that resurrection is the basis of God's selection and that the basis of service is something apart from our natural life; thus, the **budding rod** signifies **our experience of Christ in His resurrection as our acceptance by God for authority in the God-given ministry**.

The principle to every service lies in the budding rod; God returned all the eleven rods to the leaders but kept Aaron's rod inside the Ark as an eternal memorial; this means that resurrection is an eternal principle in our service to God—vv. 9-10: **Resurrection** means that everything is of God and not of us; it means that God alone is able and that we are not able. **Resurrection** means that everything is done by God, not by ourselves; all those who know resurrection have given up hope in themselves; they know that they cannot make it.

As long as the natural strength remains, the power of resurrection has no ground for manifestation; as long as Sarah could conceive a child, Isaac would not come—Gen. 18:10-15; 21:1-3, 6-7. What we can do belongs to the natural realm, and what is impossible for us to do belongs to the realm of resurrection; a man must come to the end of himself before he will be convinced of his utter uselessness—Matt. 19:26; Mark 10:27; Luke 18:27. If a man has never realized his own inability, he can never experience God's ability; resurrection means that we cannot make it and that God is the One who has done everything—cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-9; 4:7.

Jeremiah 31:33 “But this is the **covenant** which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Jehovah: I will **put** My law within them and write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.”

Hebrews 8:10 “For this is the **covenant** which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will **impart** My laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them; and I will be God to them, and they will be a people to Me.”

The **tablets of the covenant**, which are the tablets of the law, signify the **law of the divine life**, which is the spontaneous **power**, automatic **function**, innate **ability**, and divine **capacity** of the divine life—Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; cf. Rom. 8:10, 6, 11; 10:12-13:

The law, this divine capacity, of life can do everything in us for the carrying out of God's economy: According to this capacity, we can **know God, live God**, and be **constituted with God** in His life and nature so that we may become His increase, His enlargement, to be His fullness for His eternal expression—Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19-21. Furthermore, the capacity of the inner law of life constitutes us to be the members of the Body of Christ with all kinds of functions—4:11, 16.

While the divine life **grows** in us, the law of life **functions** to **shape us**, to **conform us**, to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God—Rom. 8:2, 29: The law of life does not regulate us from doing wrong; it regulates the shape of life. The law of life does not primarily function in the negative sense of telling us what not to do; rather, while life grows, the law of life functions in the positive sense of shaping us, that is, conforming us, to the image of Christ. Through the function of the law of life, we all shall **become the mature sons of God**, and God will have His universal expression.

**In the outer court** were the bronze altar and the bronze laver. This signifies that our experience of Christ begins, in an **outward sense**, with His redemption, which was accomplished on the cross, and the cleansing of the Holy Spirit, which is based on Christ's redemption.

**In the Holy Place** were the showbread table and the lampstand, with the incense altar located close to the Holy of Holies, in front of the ark of the testimony. The showbread table signifies our experience of Christ as our life supply, and the lampstand, our experience of Christ as the shining light. These experiences are rather **inward**, in the intellect and consciousness of our being. The incense altar signifies our experience of Christ as the sweet incense ascending to God. This experience is deeper and more inward, leading to the deepest and most inward experiences, in the Holy of Holies.

**In the Holy of Holies** was the ark of the testimony, in which were the golden pot containing the hidden manna; Aaron's budding rod; and the tablets of the covenant. The **hidden manna** in the golden pot signifies our experience of Christ as our life supply in the **deepest way**, an experience much deeper than that signified by the showbread table in the Holy Place. The **budding rod** signifies our experience of Christ in His resurrection as our acceptance by God for authority in the God-given ministry. This is deeper than the experience of Christ as the incense for our acceptance by God. The **tablets of the covenant**, which are the tablets of the ten commandments, signify our experience of Christ as the enlightening inner law, which regulates us according to God's divine nature. This is deeper than the experience of Christ as the shining lampstand in the Holy Place. All these **deepest** experiences of Christ take place in our spirit, signified by the Holy of Holies.