

Ezekiel 46:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But when the people of the land shall come before the LORD in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it.

Analysis

The worship flow regulation—'he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in'—prevents congestion and maintains order. This seemingly minor detail teaches that worship requires organization, not chaos. The Hebrew סֵדֶר (seder, 'order') characterizes God's nature (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40). Worshipers must follow prescribed patterns, not individual preference. The one-way flow also symbolizes transformation—those who truly encounter God exit differently than they entered, moving forward in sanctification rather than circular stagnation. Reformed theology emphasizes the regulative principle: worship according to God's prescription, and 'let all things be done decently and in order' (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Historical Context

Ancient temple traffic management prevented chaos during major feasts when thousands gathered. Archaeological evidence from large ancient Near Eastern temples shows similar traffic flow patterns. Solomon's temple featured multiple gates and courts accommodating large crowds (2 Chronicles 4:9). The requirement to exit through a different gate than entry prevented bottlenecks and maintained crowd flow. This practical detail demonstrates that God cares about worship logistics, not just theology. When Nehemiah organized post-exilic worship, he assigned gatekeepers and organized processions (Nehemiah 12:27-43). Paul's instructions for orderly worship (1 Corinthians 11-14) continue this principle—Spirit-filled worship maintains order, not confusion. The early church's growth required organizational structure (Acts 6:1-7), balancing spiritual vitality with practical administration.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do you balance Spirit-led spontaneity with biblical order in corporate worship?
2. Do you exit worship services transformed (different gate) or unchanged, merely fulfilling religious routine?
3. What practical details in your church's worship logistics honor God through excellence and order versus sloppiness?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵלֶּכָּה and he that entereth H935	עַם But when the people H5971	הָאָרֶץ of the land H776	לִפְנֵי י' before H6440	יְהוָה the LORD H3068
בַּמִּוִּעֲדִים in the solemn feasts H4150	וְאֵלֶּכָּה and he that entereth H935	דֶּרֶךְ by the way H1870	הַשַּׁעַר gate H8179	צָפֹן וְנֹהַם of the north H6828
לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת to worship H7812	יֵצְאוּ: but shall go forth H3318	דֶּרֶךְ by the way H1870	הַשַּׁעַר gate H8179	נָגֵב of the south H5045
וְאֵלֶּכָּה and he that entereth H935	דֶּרֶךְ by the way H1870	הַשַּׁעַר gate H8179	נָגֵב of the south H5045	יֵצְאוּ: but shall go forth H3318
דֶּרֶךְ by the way H1870	הַשַּׁעַר gate H8179	צָפֹן וְנֹהַם of the north H6828	לֹא H3808	יֵשׁ וְיָשׁוּב he shall not return H7725
דֶּרֶךְ by the way H1870	הַשַּׁעַר gate H8179	אֲשֶׁר H834	וְאֵלֶּכָּה and he that entereth H935	כִּי יִבֹּחַ over against H5226
יֵצְאוּ: but shall go forth H3318				

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 16:16 (References Lord): Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:

Psalms 84:7 (Parallel theme): They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

Exodus 34:23 (References Lord): Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.

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