

Ezekiel 48:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It shall be for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok; which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray.

Analysis

It shall be for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok; which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray. This verse identifies the specific priests receiving the sacred inheritance: the bĕnē-Tsādōq (בְּנֵי-צָדָק), "sons of Zadok"). The name Zadok (צָדָק) means "righteous," and these priests demonstrated righteousness through faithfulness during Israel's apostasy.

"Which have kept my charge" translates šāmērū mišmartî (שָׁמַרְוּ מִשְׁמַרְתִּי), literally "kept my keeping"—they guarded what God entrusted to them. **This distinguishes Zadokite priests from other Levites who "went astray"** (tā'û, עָוָן), likely referring to priests who officiated at illegitimate shrines or participated in idolatry during the monarchic period. The contrast is severe: faithfulness versus apostasy among the priestly class itself.

Zadok served David and Solomon faithfully (2 Samuel 15:24-29, 1 Kings 1:32-40), while other priests supported Adonijah's rebellion or served at high places. **Ezekiel's vision rewards faithfulness under pressure—those who maintained integrity when apostasy was widespread receive the privileged position near God's sanctuary.** This anticipates Jesus' teaching that faithfulness in little leads to greater responsibility (Luke 19:17) and Revelation's promise that

overcomers will serve as priests before God's throne (Revelation 20:6). Zadokite fidelity becomes the prototype for Christian perseverance.

Historical Context

Zadok descended from Eleazar, Aaron's son, representing the legitimate high priestly line (1 Chronicles 6:50-53). During David's reign, both Zadok (Eleazarite) and Abiathar (Ithamarite) served as priests, but Abiathar supported Adonijah's coup and was banished (1 Kings 2:26-27), fulfilling the prophecy against Eli's house (1 Samuel 2:31-35). From Solomon onward, Zadokites held the high priesthood.

By Ezekiel's time, the priesthood was corrupted. Jeremiah condemned priests who handled the law without knowing God (Jeremiah 2:8), and Ezekiel himself witnessed priestly abominations in the temple (Ezekiel 8:11-16). The Zadokite restriction functioned as both reward for past faithfulness and reform measure ensuring future purity. Post-exilic high priests claimed Zadokite descent to legitimize their office. The Qumran community (Dead Sea Scrolls) expected a Zadokite priesthood in the messianic age, showing this passage's ongoing influence in Jewish eschatological hope.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's rewarding of Zadokite faithfulness during widespread apostasy encourage perseverance when surrounded by compromise?
2. What specific "charge" has God entrusted to you that requires faithfulness regardless of others' behavior?

Interlinear Text

לְכָהֶן יְמִ	בְּמִקְדָּשׁ	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי זָדוֹק	אֲשֶׁר צָדִיקָה
It shall be for the priests	that are sanctified	of the sons	of Zadok	H834
H3548	H6942	H1121	H6659	
שָׁמַר וְ	לֹא אֲשֶׁר מִשְׁמְרָת	תָּפֻעַת	תָּפֻעַת	בְּנֵי
which have kept	my charge	H3808	went astray	went astray
H8104	H4931	H8582	H8582	H1121
כָּלִים	כָּאֵשׁ רָאשָׁא לְ			
of Israel	H834	went astray	as the Levites	
H3478	H8582	H3881		

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 40:46 (Parallel theme): And the chamber whose prospect is toward the north is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadok among the sons of Levi, which come near to the LORD to minister unto him.

Ezekiel 44:10 (References Israel): And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity.