

What is the proper order of God's things?

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Basics

There are many portions or parts of the bible which are full of immense detail in ways that might surprise a new reader who imagines the bible is only full of stories about "playing a harp while singing on the clouds" to one extreme and "hell fire and brimstone" on the other.

They would then be surprised to come to a book like Ezekiel where in this prophetic book they find 8 whole chapters (Ezekiel 40.1 – 48. 35) dedicated to measurements and details including on the length, width and height of buildings!

An example is here:

What I saw was the Temple, and there was a wall around it. The man took his measuring rod, which was 10 feet long, and measured the wall. It was 10 feet high and 10 feet thick.

Then he went to the gateway that faced east. He went up the steps, and at the top he measured the entrance; it was 10 feet deep. Beyond it there was a passageway, which had three guardrooms on each side. Each of the rooms was square, 10 feet on each side, and the walls between them were 8 feet thick. Beyond the guardrooms there was a passageway 10 feet long that led to an entrance room which faced the Temple.i

Why would God go to great lengths to spend 8 whole chapters getting someone to write seemingly boring descriptions of measurements?

Examples from the bible

This emphasis on order is infact common throughout the bible.

God has always been interested in the proper order and pattern of things. He for example twice warned Moses when he was going to build a tent (tabernacle) and related furnishings for God:

At the beginning of the instructions: *You must make the tabernacle and design, all its furnishings according to the pattern I will show you.ii*

And at the end: *"Take care to make them according to the plan that I showed you on the mountain."iii*

Why is God particular about these things?

The clue is this: God is Holy and if we want his presence, then it must be on his terms and per his specifications. He must dwell in a Holy place – whether that place is the new temple of your body, your heart or as it was in the Old Testament - in a temple or tent (tabernacle). God explains the purpose for example of all those measurements of a building:

Write all this down for them so that they can see how everything is arranged and can carry out all the rules. This is the law of the Temple: All the area surrounding it on the top of the mountain is sacred and holy."iv

Start



Grow



Mature

Today's perspective

Earthly rulers (kings, prime ministers, presidents) have members of their team in charge of protocol and follow usual customs and patterns commonly known to all. As an example, when an American president is hosting visitors during state visits, there is a normal protocol followed. This often includes, in proper order, the following:^v

- Both the President and First Lady receiving the guest at the South Lawn (of the White House);
- National anthems are played – but no one is supposed to clap;
- Troops are inspected – a ceremony intended to invoke pageantry;
- Speeches are made – focussing on the relationship between the two countries;
- Gifts are exchanged – focussing on meaning over cost;
- At the formal dinner later that evening, guests are expected to wear formal white or black tie attire – women in cocktail dresses or formal gowns and men in tuxedos; and
- The meal is a four or five course meal which the first lady meticulously selects with staff.

Even if the visiting guest is the best of friends with the American host or the countries have had a long cordial relationship (for example the US and the UK), this protocol is followed.

If we being humans, follow the proper order of things when we encounter leaders here, how about when it's God's things? Why does our generation seem to want to "barge in" or grow without following due process?

More importantly, how do you ensure you follow the proper order of things in your day to day encounter with God?

1. **You recognise that you are encountering a Holy God.** A Royal King. Who has rules of protocol. Rules we should be aware of. If we don't, we risk a rebuke. His first rule of protocol is that when you come to "visit him" (in prayer) – put away evil and come clean. He says so himself in a very candid passage:

Who asked you to bring me all this when you come to worship me? Who asked you to do all this tramping around in my Temple? It's useless to bring your offerings. I am disgusted with the smell of the incense you burn. I cannot stand your New Moon Festivals, your Sabbaths, and your religious gatherings; they are all corrupted by your sins. I hate your New Moon Festivals and holy days; they are a burden that I am tired of bearing.

"When you lift your hands in prayer, I will not look at you. No matter how much you pray, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with blood. Wash yourselves clean. Stop all this evil that I see you doing. Yes, stop doing evil and learn to do right. vi

2. **You recognise who is laying the path on which your feet walk.** The ideal path of your life (the order of your life) is not laid out by you but has been laid out by God. So the default setting is that, you are on exactly the path which the Lord has set you upon. Default settings can be changed but for now let's agree – God sets your path. How do we know this? God himself says so in Psalms 37: 23-24:

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand."

In other versions, it says:

The Lord directs the steps of the godly (NLT)

The Lord guides us in the way we should go (GNT)

The steps of a good and righteous man are directed and established by the Lord (AMP)

What does this mean? Rejecting or resisting the path a Christian is on could mean you are resisting God himself. This is especially during periods of suffering when we want to turn aside from the path laid out for us and yet God is instead telling us to walk “through the valley of the shadow of death” (not past or besides it).

3. **You follow the proper order of things to mature in your Christian walk.** That is you move on, in proper order from being a “baby needing milk” to maturity. You move on from the basics as follows^{vii}
 - a. You repent from your evil deeds; then
 - b. You place your faith in God; then
 - c. You get two baptisms – baptism of water and baptism of the Holy Spirit; then
 - d. You hold on to the hope of the resurrection from the dead unto eternal life. If you walked righteously or expect eternal judgment in the second death if you walked an evil path; and then
 - e. You teach others these things (the Christian doctrine).
4. **Remember! no plant ever bore fruit unless it was done in the proper order of things – often with much sweat.**

As an example, a mango tree takes about 8 years to grow and produce that juicy fruit we all love, the process requires patience.^{viii}

- First you must have suitable climate (typically temperatures of 80–100 °F (27–38 °C) and rain not exceeding 12 inches (30.5 cm) per year.
- The already right soils are then made ready (e.g ploughing, putting manure/peat).
- Then you plant the seed.
- Then Regularly you: Fertilise, water, weed and prune the tree.
- After doing all the above, then you can expect a harvest.

Similarly, you must be committed to the process of bearing Christian fruit – which involves the right conditions, the right seed and regular maintenance. This is the premise behind which Jesus told the parable of the sower told in Luke 8: 11-15.^{ix}

- **Some people don’t have the right conditions in their life** (so the devil steals the message); or
- **Some don’t have the right seed in their life** (seed mixed with worries of this life – so they don’t bear fruit); or
- **Some don’t have the right patience** to fertilise, water, prune growing seeds – and so the message is like falling on rocky soil, it doesn’t sink deep.

It is only those who: “Retain the message in a good and obedient heart and who persist who bear fruit.” In other words, only when things are done in the proper order, will you bear fruit in Christ.

Your turn

What will you now do differently? Examples to think about include:

- What have you now learnt about the Holy God – a God of friendship but also of order/pattern and Protocol?
- Have you followed the proper order of things and moved beyond basics in your own Christian walk?

Write here

Notes

ⁱ Ezekiel 40: 5 – 7 (GNT)

ⁱⁱ Exodus 25: 9 (BSB)

ⁱⁱⁱ Exodus 25: 40 (GNT)

^{iv} Ezekiel 43: 11 – 12 (GNT)

^v <https://www.businessinsider.com/state-visit-white-house-melania-trump-formal-protocol-2018-4#the-president-and-guest-receive-the-rest-of-the-state-dinner-attendees-every-single-one-10>

^{vi} Isaiah 1: 12 – 17 (GNT)

^{vii} Hebrews 5: 12 – 6: 3.

^{viii} <https://www.wikihow.com/Grow-a-Mango-Tree>

^{ix} Luke 8: 11- 15 (GNT)