

Ezekiel Chapters 47 and 48 – John Karmelich

1. Well, we have made it to the final lesson in Ezekiel. This final lesson covers the last two chapters. Before I begin, let me say I've learned a lot and it has been a pleasure to go through the book.
 - a) Let's be honest, Ezekiel is a strange book. Even with a good understanding of the major themes of the bible, there are a lot of just plain "weird things" that occur in this book. I've done my best to explain the images and visions in this book and hopefully, have tied these images and visions well to what we need to know to live the Christian life.
 - b) With that said, thanks for sticking it out through all of these lessons, and thanks for putting up with my bad jokes. ☺ As always, I ask and thank you for prayer support. Even if you forget my name, just remember to pray occasionally for the "guy who writes those bible studies". Those prayers help and I can tell people are praying for me.
2. This leads us to this final lesson. I call this lesson, "What's in it for me for eternity"?
 - a) Before I discuss that title, let's remember what we are describing here in Ezekiel: The last nine chapters of this book cover a period of time called the "millennium". This is a 1,000-year period of time where Satan is bound up and Jesus rules the world from Israel.
 - b) There are many Christians who "spiritualize" the concept of the 1,000-year millennium, and there are many people like me who take it literally.
 - c) Also understand that this period of time may go on longer than the 1,000-year millennium period. That specific time frame is the length of time Satan is bound up, but not yet condemned to eternal punishment. It is possible that this time span as described here in Ezekiel may go on a lot longer than just the 1,000 year "millennium".
 - d) Now let's get back to the lesson title. For the religious Jewish person reading Ezekiel, this section of the book so far (Chapters 40-46), pretty much focus on what God requires of them. In other words, the focus of this section up to this chapter has been on what the Jewish people living at that time have to do for God. The shift changes in these last two chapters in effect to the "what's in it for me" question. With that said, there are lessons in this text for Christians in the present time as well.
 - e) Chapter 47 opens with a description of a flow of water that starts at the temple. This water becomes a river and it leads to the "Dead Sea". We will discuss in detail why this water flow is significant and why it is discussed in these chapters.
 - i) One has to remember that Israel is a dry, desert like climate. For a new source of water to come from this temple would mean one would never have to worry anymore about having enough rain for the crops and animals. At that time, God will provide for their physical needs while the Israelites spend their lives showing gratitude to God for their salvation.
 - f) The second half of Chapter 47 and all of Chapter 48 focuses on the issue of where the Jewish people live at this time. The land of Israel will be divided up by tribe. Just as there were originally 12 tribes of Israel, so the "final" lifestyle of Israel will also have the land divided up into 12 sections for each of the 12 tribes, not including a special section of land associated with the temple as we discussed in the last lesson.
 - g) Again, my title is "What's in it for me"? The Israelites living at this time will inherit not only the land of Israel, but it will be well-watered land that will be equally divided by tribe. There will be no more arguing about who owns Israel or who rules over that land.
 - i) These chapters get into the concepts of living a life based on rewards for service. It also teaches that all the saved are "saved" in the land that is equally divided by tribe. At the same time, there are special benefits for those are fully loyal to God.

3. Chapter 47, Verse 1: The man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar.
 - a) The first thing to catch is Ezekiel was not told to look for the water, but Ezekiel just noticed it all on his own. I don't know if it was the intention of Ezekiel's tour guide for him to look at the water, but he makes the point he saw it on his own.
 - b) Notice that along with Ezekiel, we have the "man" who has been guiding with Ezekiel ever since this vision section started back in Chapter 40. Yes, it's the guy (or angel) who has the measuring devices. He's back for one final set of measurements for our benefit. ☺
 - c) With all that said, Ezekiel sees a stream of water coming out from the entrance to the temple. We get the initial flow of the water from the east gate and then to the south side of the Temple. The reason for the water flow chart will be stated in the next set of verses.
4. Verse 2: He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was flowing from the south side.
 - a) We have a "trickle of water" that started from the "east gate", which is the gate that God used to enter this temple. The water then flowed to the south. The path of the water is mentioned as we are leading up to the point where it leads to the "Dead Sea".
5. Verse 3: As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. ⁴ He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. ⁵ He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in--a river that no one could cross.
 - a) Let me describe this water flow in "English". If you recall from a few lessons back, I stated that a "cubit" is roughly two feet. Therefore, the man with the measuring instruments measured exactly 1,000 cubits from the temple. The water that was a little trickle at the temple is now ankle deep. The "measuring man" measured off another 1,000 cubits and the water is now knee deep. After another 1,000 cubits, the water was waist deep. After another 1,000 cubits, it was now a river with a current so strong, it cannot be crossed.
 - b) I've stated a number of times in the last few lessons that there are a lot of bible scholars who only take the last nine chapters of Ezekiel figuratively. For example, they will argue, "How can a drip of water grow so fast so quickly?" They argue it must be figurative and mean something else. Before I give you my literal response, let me give the most common illustration associated with this passage:
 - i) The Christian "non-literalists" will argue that this water flow refers to the "Holy Spirit" flowing out of us. The water that starts from "God's entrance" at the temple's east gate is associated with the spirit of God flowing out of us.
 - ii) The illustration will go on to say when we can become "ankle deep" in water when we let the Spirit of God affect our lives, as it affects our walk with God. When we are "knee deep in water" means we are trusting God even more. The idea of "waste deep" is that the spirit causes us "to reproduce". The idea here is we are "reproducing growth for God". We are letting the Spirit flow through us to lead others to God. The final analogy is a "roaring river" and the association is the spirit "overflows through us".
 - iii) Ezekiel never connects this passage with the "Spirit of God". A possible support for this view is when Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." (John 7:38, NIV). Therefore, Jesus could be connecting this passage in Ezekiel with the fact that whoever has the spirit of God "in him" produces "living water" in the sense that the Spirit of God flows through believers in ways that grow as we mature as believers.

- iv) I am not saying the Holy Spirit coming upon believers is a separate event from when one first gets saved. What I am saying is that there is a significant difference between having the Holy Spirit live within us and "letting" the Holy Spirit take control of our lives to make a difference for God. As we mature as Christians, we trust God "more and more" with our lives and in that sense, we are letting the Holy Spirit lead us in ways God wants us to go.
 - a) Let me put it another way: If one is living a life where one is "involved" for God in some manner, than one is trusting God more than when one is first saved. In that sense we have grown in trusting God in the same way this water flow has "grown" as one gets further away from the Temple.
- c) With all of that said, do I believe this is a literal flow of water? Yes I do. At the same time, do I believe this flow of water is symbolic of the Holy Spirit "flowing" in our lives? Yes, I believe that as well. How can both be true? Think of it this way: Do I believe Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were real people that existed several thousand years ago? Yes I do. At the same time, lessons from their lives were recorded for us to learn from. The bible is full of stories that actually happened and at the same time, those stories are designed to teach us lessons about life.
 - i) My point is when describing this flow of water let's not forget that the source of the water is from the throne of God!
- d) This leads me back to the literalness of the water flow. How can a small trickle of water become ankle deep after 1,000 cubits (again, roughly 2,000 feet)? How can water rise to "knee" deep after another 1,000 cubits and "so on"?
 - i) Personally, I've never had trouble with miracles when God is the one doing the miracle. If God can make the world as we know it, than He is more than capable of making a stream of water grow this fast.
 - ii) Maybe the water stops to accumulate at each point and then flows to another point where it stops to accumulate more etc. That is a possibility as well.
 - iii) I do believe this whole section of Ezekiel (Chapters 40 to 48) is literal. Why would God go to all the time and trouble to give us ever measurement of every aspect of this new temple and all other measurements in these chapters if it was not some sort of literal thing we will see in the future?
 - iv) Let me put this another way: Those of us living today have the privilege of seeing the nation of Israel be a united, independent country again for the first time in about 2,500 years. For centuries, bible scholars debated about the predictions of Israel being an independent country again were "literal or spiritual". You would think those debates would have ended in 1948 when Israel was formed again. The point is if God can resurrect the nation of Israel after 2,500 years, than I believe God is more than capable of literally (that's the key word) fulfilling His promises to the nation of Israel as literally as we are reading it in this text. In other words, I don't have a problem with a literal water flow in this text.
 - v) Ezekiel's "rising water" story in this chapter is one of the more famous passages in this book. It has been used for lots of illustrations in bible sermons. Like most of the bible, it is literal and at the same time, is designed to teach us lessons.
- 6. Verse 6: He asked me, "Son of man, do you see this?" Then he led me back to the bank of the river.
 - a) With all of this talk of the "rising river", don't forget about the fact that Ezekiel's tour guide for Chapters 40 to 48 is still standing next to Ezekiel and he is still showing Ezekiel specific things for Ezekiel to write down for our learning about life in this time era.
 - b) We are done for the moment describing the size of the water flow. The focus is going to change to the results of this new river that flows from the Temple.

7. Verse 7: When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. ¹² Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing."
- a) For the moment, I'm skipping verses 8 through 11. Verse 7 has a "special tie" to Verse 12 and it is interesting to read Verses 7 and 12 tied together.
 - b) One "byproduct" of this new river is it causes fruit trees to grow along its banks.
 - c) These trees are special in that the leaves do not fade. In other words, these trees don't have the normal "one year leaf cycle". These leaves are blooming all year around.
 - d) At the same time, these trees produce fruit all year round.
 - e) Verse 12 says the "fruit is for food" and the "leaves for healing".
 - i) That last sentence in Verse 12 teaches us a little about what life is like during this millennial period. Remember my title for this lesson is "what's in it for me?" It is about understanding what life is like during the Millennium "outside" of just worshipping God.
 - ii) The first thing we learn is that the fruit will be edible. That teaches us that during the millennium people still need to eat food and will eat of these trees.
 - iii) The second thing we learn is that people will still get sick. Somehow the leaves of this tree will be used for healing of sick people. I don't know how people figure out the leaves help whatever disease they have, but I suspect the leaves will eliminate the need for a lot of doctor visits and pharmacy visits. ☺
 - iv) In the same way the river is "supernatural", so these trees are "supernatural" in how they grow. Many scholars believe it is a return to a Garden of Eden setting during this millennial period. Note that life will not be perfect as again, the text says that there is still sickness. At the same time there is a cure for sickness available. The point is God is providing a cure for "whatever ails you".
 - v) Note that there are other references to these trees and life during this time frame. Revelation Chapters 22, Verses 1 and 2 are describing the same river.
 - f) OK John, this is all wonderful for people living during the Millennium. How does all of this affect my life today? Remember that Christians rule and reign with Jesus. (See 2nd Timothy 2:12 and Revelation 5:10.) Somehow we help Jesus who is in charge of all of this. It is important to learn if for no other reason, than this is part of our future.
 - i) Next understand that whatever we are going through right now, understand that God still has a wonderful long-term plan for our eternal lives. If God is going through all of this trouble to fulfill His promises to the nation of Israel, think about "how much more" God is going through to prepare for "His church" for those who are called to spend eternity to reign and rule with Jesus.
 - ii) Now back to the question of "What about today"? The bible never promises life will be wonderful and "always full of good moments" during this lifetime. The bible teaches us how to have peace during whatever we are going through and further, a promise is made to the believer that everything we go through is ultimately designed for "God's good". (See Romans 8:28 on that point.)
 - a) I take the view that when we get to heaven, the only response word we can get out of our mouth is "Oh!" In other words, we ask God "Why did you allow this to happen and that to happen? After we hear God's response, all we can say is "Oh, that's why."
 - iii) This leads me back to these verses. Remember the original audience for this passage is the Jewish people who were kicked out of their homeland. God is promising them that one day, the Jewish people would return to Israel and God would "make everything right again". Along the same lines of thinking, when all is falling apart, God promises us that one day "all will be made right again!"

8. Verse 7: When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Sea. When it empties into the Sea, the water there becomes fresh.⁹ Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live.¹⁰ Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds--like the fish of the Great Sea.¹¹ But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt.
- a) In case you've forgotten, we skipped verses 8 through 11, so I'm bring them up here.
 - b) Verse 12 focused on a byproduct of the river, which are "special" trees. Verses 8 through 11 focus back on the river itself and the other changes due to that river.
 - c) Verse 8 says the river flows to the "Sea". We can pretty much figure out that the word "Sea" refers to the Dead Sea. That is because the Dead Sea has that name as it is "so salty" that fish do not exist there. The Dead Sea is "dead" of fish. If one travels to Israel today, there are no fishermen "working" the Dead Sea, as there are no fish in that sea.
 - d) Because this future river flows to the Dead Sea, the effect is that the Dead Sea will change so that fish can exist in this sea. That means that the Dead Sea will become either a fresh water lake or a salt-water lake that supports life.
 - e) Time for a quick water geography review of Israel: Water flows from mountains to the Sea of Galilee, then down the Jordan River to the Dead Sea. Somehow this new river flowing to the Dead Sea cures that Sea of its high salt content.
 - i) Verse 8 mentions "Arabah". This is a location adjacent to the Dead Sea. Verse 10 mentions "En Gedi to En Eglaim". Listing these two cities is like saying "from one end (of the Dead Sea) to the other".
 - ii) These locations will be used to spread fishnets.
 - f) Verse 11 says the fish will be like the "Fish of the Great Sea". That term "Great Sea" refers to the Mediterranean Sea. It says the Dead Sea will have fish of many kinds just like the Mediterranean Sea has fish of many kinds. Does that mean the Dead Sea will still be "salty enough" to be a salt-water source or does it just mean the Dead Sea will have a wide variety of fish just like the Mediterranean Sea? One can read it either way.
 - g) The final bit of this new geography lesson is that there will be some marshes around the Dead Sea that will still be salty as they are today. The text does not say why, just that it is true. Maybe there is some benefit to the salty water that God wants to keep it as is.
 - h) OK, why is all of this important? It is for us to understand that people still "fish" during this time era. For those that like fishing, one can still fish in the millennium. ☺ I believe it is to show that fish is still part of people's diet during this millennium period.
 - i) It also shows that "all of Israel" will be a desirable place to live during the millennium and even the "bad parts" of Israel will become fruitful.
 - i) Since we already covered Verse 12 (the stuff about the fruit and the leaves), I can now move on to Verse 13.
9. Verse 13: This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "These are the boundaries by which you are to divide the land for an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel, with two portions for Joseph.¹⁴ You are to divide it equally among them. Because I swore with uplifted hand to give it to your forefathers, this land will become your inheritance.
- a) From Verse 13 to the end of Ezekiel (next chapter), the focus will be on dividing up the land of Israel by tribes. Way back in the book of Numbers (Chapter 34), Moses was told to divide up the land of Israel by tribe, even before the Israelites conquered the land.
 - b) There are some key differences between how God told Moses to divide the land and how the land will be divided in the future. A key difference is that with Moses, the larger tribes were to get larger pieces of land and the smaller tribes were to get smaller pieces. (See Numbers 26:54.) Under Ezekiel, each tribe gets an equal share.

- c) It's time for a quick review of just who are the 12 tribes of Israel. The word Israel is also another name for Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. Jacob was renamed "Israel" by God. Jacob had 12 sons through 4 different women. Jacob had 2 wives and 2 concubines that produced these 12 sons. Each son was the founder of one of the 12 tribes of Israel.
 - i) It's a little more confusing in that there are actually 13 names to choose from. One of Jacob's sons was named Joseph. Joseph had two sons named Ephraim and Mannasah. Jacob adopted Joseph's two sons, so that now instead of Jacob having 12 sons, Jacob had "13" as Joseph's two sons were now equal with the "12".
 - ii) Surprisingly enough, this does tie to the text in Ezekiel. Chapter 47, Verse 13 says, "Two portions are to be given to Joseph". That refers to Joseph's two sons, again named Ephraim and Mannasah. In other words, when God divides up the Promised Land, every son of Jacob get "one section" of land, but Joseph gets "two sections of land", one for each son.
 - iii) Why did God do it this way? Part of the reason is the tribe of Levi does not get "one share" as they God's priests and "God alone" is their inheritance. Under Moses' plan, the Levites were to be scattered all through Israel. Under Ezekiel's plan, the Levites get a section of land right by the temple. The idea at this time is that all of Israel will "know God" so the priests can live close to God's temple.
 - a) The other reason God did it this way is so there are still "12 tribes" to divide up the land even if the Levites don't get an equal share with the others.
- d) This leads us to another problem. At the time of Ezekiel's writing, much of the 12 tribes were lost. Prior to Ezekiel's time, the northern kingdom was lost to the Assyrians. The Jews who lived in the northern kingdom were scattered all over the Assyrian empire. Further, the Israelites no longer lived in their "allotted territory". Again, Moses divided up the land by tribe, but after many centuries, many of the Jewish people had moved to different locations within the country and by the time of Ezekiel, not all Jewish people were living in their allotted territory.
 - i) The point is here we are, now 2,500 years later. We have no records as to which Jewish person belongs to "what tribe". In 70AD, when the Jewish temple was destroyed, all the Jewish family records were destroyed with it. With the minor exception of some priests, we have no records of any tribal divisions.
 - ii) So like the "growing water mystery" of the water flowing from the temple, we don't know how the Jews in this future time will know what tribe they belong to. It may be a case of God "just telling people" that "You go here and you go there" based on their tribal ancestry. The other possibility is with our growing knowledge of genes, maybe there will be some discovery in the future that allows Jewish people to learn of their particular ancestry. I don't know for sure, I just trust God to work that out.
 - iii) OK, enough of my genealogy discussion, its time to divide up the land. ☺

10. Verse 15: "This is to be the boundary of the land: "On the north side it will run from the Great Sea by the Hethlon road past Lebo Hamath to Zedad,¹⁶ Berothah and Sibram (which lies on the border between Damascus and Hamath), as far as Hazer Hatticon, which is on the border of Hauran.¹⁷ The boundary will extend from the sea to Hazar Enan, along the northern border of Damascus, with the border of Hamath to the north. This will be the north boundary.
- a) Before God can divide up the land by tribes, first God needs to describe what "is" the land of Israel in terms of where it starts and where it ends.
 - b) Note that scholars debate over the names and locations of some of these places. Most of these places are "roughly known", but there is some debate over exact locations.
 - c) Notice the word "Damascus" in Verses 16 and again in Verse 17. For those familiar with the Middle East, the city of Damascus is in the middle of modern Syria. My point here is the "New Israel" will be bigger in size than the present Israel.

- d) Given all the politics and history of the Middle East, how will Israel be allowed to be "bigger" in the future? That is one reason why the seven-year "tribulation" period is necessary despite all the bad things that happen. The death and damage will be so bad, that people figure out God Himself is involved and Israel will be allowed to be a bigger country simply because Jesus, who will be ruling from Israel "says so".
 - i) How will the traditional enemies of Israel put up with this? Note that several times the bible says Jesus will rule the world "with an iron scepter". (Psalm 2:9, Revelation 12:5 and 19:15). The point is Jesus will enforce this and people have to accept it whether they like it or not.
 - e) This gets us back the big picture of the final nine chapters of Ezekiel. It is a time frame different than life as we know it right now. It is about God fulfilling His promises to the nation of Israel in that the Messiah will rule the world from Israel. As part of that millennial reign, Israel will be bigger than it is today.
 - f) Meanwhile, I believe we are still describing the future borders of Israel. The last set of verses focused on the northern boundaries. We now move to the eastern boundaries.
11. Verse 18: "On the east side the boundary will run between Hauran and Damascus, along the Jordan between Gilead and the land of Israel, to the eastern sea and as far as Tamar. This will be the east boundary.
- a) The traditional eastern boundary of Israel has been the Jordan River. That will still be true for the southern part of the new Israel. Since the new land of Israel will go as far north as Damascus, also understand the eastern border will extend "further east" than it does today in the region north of the Jordan river and north of the Sea of Galilee.
 - b) Does this mean that Syria and other countries should just surrender their land today to Israel since this is going to happen? No. The answer is we let God work it out on His timing and according to His plan.
12. Verse 19: "On the south side it will run from Tamar as far as the waters of Meribah Kadesh, then along the Wadi of Egypt to the Great Sea. This will be the south boundary.
- a) The southern boundary does not change significantly. The southern border has always been Egypt and that doesn't change in the end times.
13. Verse 20: "On the west side, the Great Sea will be the boundary to a point opposite Lebo Hamath. This will be the west boundary.
- a) The western boundary is today and will be the "Great Sea", which is the Mediterranean.
14. Verse 21: "You are to distribute this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. ²² You are to allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who have settled among you and who have children. You are to consider them as native-born Israelites; along with you they are to be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. ²³ In whatever tribe the alien settles, there you are to give him his inheritance," declares the Sovereign LORD.
- a) Now that the size has been established, this leaves some other issues to work out. What about the Palestinian people and the "two state solution"? Apparently God believes in a "one-state" solution. ☺ In Verse 22, God talks about foreigners living among the Israelites at this time and how they get to share in the land. All I am saying is that when all of this happens, Israel will be the physical size as described in these verses.
 - b) I believe a lot of the problems of the Middle East will get worse (is that possible?) due to whenever this seven year Tribulation Period takes place. It then gets better for the Israelites once God Himself intervenes in a dramatic way and then Jesus comes down to start this 1,000 year period of world wide peace.
 - c) So why does God "bless" the aliens who live among the Jewish people? The answer is they choose to live among the Jewish people and be a part of that society. Jewish people have never had a problem with foreigners living among them. The problem occurs when those foreigners want to kill Jewish people and want an end to the Jewish state.

15. Chapter 48, Verse 1: "These are the tribes, listed by name: At the northern frontier, Dan will have one portion; it will follow the Hethlon road to Lebo Hamath; Hazar Enan and the northern border of Damascus next to Hamath will be part of its border from the east side to the west side.
- a) In Chapter 48, we begin the actual distribution of the land by tribe. The first tribe listed is "Dan". When the land was first divided, the tribal area of Dan was part of the territory that was lost to the Assyrians a long time before Ezekiel was written.
 - i) In other words, Ezekiel must have known that "God had a problem" in that being able to prove who was from Dan would be a "trick" since family records were lost.
 - ii) My view is that when all of this occurs, God will somehow make it known to all Jews living today what tribe they were from. Again, it maybe some sort of future scientific discovery about genealogical records or it may just be some sort of God ordained miracle. We will have to wait and see on that issue.
 - b) If one is a student of the book of Revelation, it is interesting to note that the descendants of Dan are not listed among the "144,000" witnesses for Jesus. There are a number of references in the book of Revelation to 144,000 "saved Jews" who are witnesses for Jesus. These 144,000 come from all the tribes of Israel (listed by name in Revelation Chapter 7), except for anybody from the tribe of Dan. The classical question of Revelation Chapter 7 is "Why was Dan excluded"?
 - i) The classical answer to that question is because the tribe of Dan was guilty of first letting idolatry into the land of Israel. (Ref. Judges 18:30.) God gave this tribe a "subtle putdown" by saying no one from that tribe will be part of the 144,000.
 - ii) At the same time, notice that God is not done with the tribe of Dan. Just because they had to suffer at the time of seven year tribulation period, (which again is the main topic of the book of Revelation), this tribe will still exists during the 1,000 year millennial period as stated here in Verse 1 of Chapter 48.
16. Verse 2: "Asher will have one portion; it will border the territory of Dan from east to west.
³ "Naphtali will have one portion; it will border the territory of Asher from east to west.
⁴ "Manasseh will have one portion; it will border the territory of Naphtali from east to west.
⁵ "Ephraim will have one portion; it will border the territory of Manasseh from east to west.
⁶ "Reuben will have one portion; it will border the territory of Ephraim from east to west.
⁷ "Judah will have one portion; it will border the territory of Reuben from east to west.
- a) If you recall from the last lesson, there is a key piece of land that is allocated around the New Temple. This land is for the priests who work that temple. What Verses 1 through 7 describe is the allotment of land north of that key piece of land. There are seven tribal allotments north of the temple area. Later we will read of five tribes getting allotments of land south of the Temple area.
 - b) Every tribe gets a strip of land that runs from "east to west". Each piece of land is equal in size. Given the fact the new borders of Israel extend east of the Jordan River only "north of" that river, indicates that the size of Israel is not consistent on an east to west basis. My only point here is that in order for every tribe to have an equal share of land, the north to south borders may vary as some of the northern area tribes have more land to the east.
 - c) An interesting bit of trivia is the fact that the tribes are not listed in birth order. If you recall from early in this lesson, I mentioned that the common ancestor of the twelve tribes is Jacob. I also mentioned he had two wives and two concubines. The tribes that were born to the actual wives are closer to the center and the tribes that were born to the concubines are on the outskirts of the land.
 - d) OK, why does God give higher status to those born of these two wives? We don't know, but I suspect it has something to do with God "honoring the marriage commitment".
 - i) That reminds me of another point: Whenever a man has more than one wife in the bible, it always causes trouble and division. That was the case for Jacob. While God blesses the children, He still desires a one man and woman relationship.

17. Verse 8: "Bordering the territory of Judah from east to west will be the portion you are to present as a special gift. It will be 25,000 cubits wide, and its length from east to west will equal one of the tribal portions; the sanctuary will be in the center of it.
- a) Now we are back to describing the area of land where this new temple is located.
 - b) Think of Verses 8 through 22 as an "encore description" of the same area of land as described in Chapters 45 and 46. This land is for the temple, the prince and the priests.
 - c) The point so far is that the size of land is equal to that of each area given to other tribes.
18. Verse 9: "The special portion you are to offer to the LORD will be 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide. ¹⁰ This will be the sacred portion for the priests. It will be 25,000 cubits long on the north side, 10,000 cubits wide on the west side, 10,000 cubits wide on the east side and 25,000 cubits long on the south side. In the center of it will be the sanctuary of the LORD. ¹¹ This will be for the consecrated priests, the Zadokites, who were faithful in serving me and did not go astray as the Levites did when the Israelites went astray. ¹² It will be a special gift to them from the sacred portion of the land, a most holy portion, bordering the territory of the Levites.
- a) Again, we are focusing on the special section of land to be used for the temple, the priests and for the prince. One thing to notice is that there are more verses focusing on this special section of land than the verses describing the rest of the land going to all the tribes. It is as if God wants us and them to focus on the "key portion", which is this area here.
 - b) These verses here focus on the land for the "Sons of Zadokites." This is the family of the high priest who are in charge. Let's suppose a short time from now we forget all about the details of the new temple. All we remember is there was a lot of measuring and there was a special section of land given to the priests to work the temple.
 - i) Here is the key part to remember: God divided the land for the priests between the family that was in charge of the temple and the "rest of the Levites". The guys in charge get a reward for faithful service to God when there was a lot of idolatry.
 - ii) The lesson for us is that God rewards faithful service in ways we don't always appreciate. Yes, the bible describes rewards in heaven for faithful service. I also believe strongly there are rewards "here and now" for faithful service. That is the long term benefit with the "Sons of Zadok" used as an example.
 - iii) Think of it this way: Let's suppose God calls us to work in a Sunday school ministry so the parents of the children we are watching have the time to go to church and focus on God. The long-term benefits may be a combination of the parents growing closer to God as well as "seeds" being planted in the children we are working with. My point is like the Sons of Zadok, there are benefits to others being performed when we show loyalty to God.
 - c) Meanwhile, we're still talking about the land for the priests. Notice in Verse 10 the phrase "The sanctuary of the LORD". A point to catch here is that the area of land given to this group (The descendants of Zadok) includes the area where this temple is to be located. The point is the "reward for good service" is that this group has the privilege of living and working next to God's temple. Now think about my Sunday school service example: The reward is one gets to draw close to God and help others draw close to God!
 - i) Am I saying our reward in heaven for service is "more service"? No. I'm saying we will be blessed for serving God and somehow rewarded for that privilege.
19. Verse 13: "Alongside the territory of the priests, the Levites will have an allotment 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide. Its total length will be 25,000 cubits and its width 10,000 cubits. ¹⁴ They must not sell or exchange any of it. This is the best of the land and must not pass into other hands, because it is holy to the LORD.
- a) We are still describing the section of land around the Temple that has a special allotment.
 - b) The previous set of verses focused on the land for the "Sons of Zadok". Now we are describing another section of land, equal in size for the rest of the tribe of Levi. A point being made here is this land must always remain in their hands and cannot be sold.

- c) The rest of the Levites, who are being rewarded here in Verse 13 get a warning not to sell their land. This land must always be their possession. Their land is near the temple, as opposed to the land of the "Sons of Zadok" that includes the temple.
 - d) I believe this is also symbolic of who are called to service, but somehow mess up. They still get a reward in heaven, but due to a failure to perform, they get a lower status than those who are fully loyal to God.
 - i) The issue here is not about making mistakes when serving God. We all do that. The issue is one of loyalty. The lesson here is when we "slack off" in terms of lack of loyalty, but still believe in God, we still get saved, but we get "less rewards".
 - ii) The same principal about Christian service applies here. Let me get back to my example about serving in a Sunday school ministry. Let's say we don't show up every now and then. That means that another family that wants to spend time hearing God's word can't, because they have to fill in and serve that ministry themselves. I'm not saying one has to be perfect in conduct. I'm saying one has to stick to commitments as best we can and serve as we are called to serve. When we commit idolatry (in that we skip our time for God to do other things), there are not only long-term consequences for ourselves, but consequences for those who would have been blessed by our service.
 - a) That is what is to be learned by the "lower reward" given to the Levites.
20. Verse 15: "The remaining area, 5,000 cubits wide and 25,000 cubits long, will be for the common use of the city, for houses and for pastureland. The city will be in the center of it¹⁶ and will have these measurements: the north side 4,500 cubits, the south side 4,500 cubits, the east side 4,500 cubits, and the west side 4,500 cubits.¹⁷ The pastureland for the city will be 250 cubits on the north, 250 cubits on the south, 250 cubits on the east, and 250 cubits on the west.¹⁸ What remains of the area, bordering on the sacred portion and running the length of it, will be 10,000 cubits on the east side and 10,000 cubits on the west side. Its produce will supply food for the workers of the city.¹⁹ The workers from the city who farm it will come from all the tribes of Israel.²⁰ The entire portion will be a square, 25,000 cubits on each side. As a special gift you will set aside the sacred portion, along with the property of the city.
- a) The next section of land within this "holy section" is for the "common use of the city".
 - b) Besides the new temple in this land area, there is also a new city. So what is this new city and what is its purpose? The text gives us the size of the city, which is 4,500 cubits on each side. Around this city is another 250 cubits on each side for pastureland. Therefore, the total area of this city is 5,000 cubits on each side. In "English", this city is about one and one half miles on each side.
 - i) We will discover later in this chapter that the city has 12 gates. The names of the tribes of Israel are inscribed on the gates. This city is for all of Israel to use.
 - ii) As best we can tell, the purpose of this city is that it is a place to live whenever anybody from the 12 tribes of Israel wants to come to the temple area. It becomes a place to live during one's visit to the temple. I'm guessing there are permanent residences of this city who supply things to visitors. The text only gives us the size of the city and the size of the "farmlands" just outside this city to support it.
 - c) OK John, so there is a city not far from the temple I can "hang out at" when I come to visit the temple on holidays. How does that affect my life now?
 - i) The idea is that when people come to spend time with God, we are to make a place for them to come to God. It is a place for the non-locals to stay when they want to be near to God. Let's suppose we have a church where people regularly travel a long ways to go there. Accommodations needed to set up for such people. Think about the people at our church who open up their homes to visitors and travels to our area. That is an application that ties to these verses.
 - ii) The idea is to make space available for those who travel to see God.

- iii) Think about when Paul traveled on the road as a missionary. The book of Acts never described Paul as staying in "inn's" (which did exist back then). Paul always looked for Christians for accommodations. One of the ways that God encourages "fellowship" with other Christians is that He wants us to open our homes to such guests. He wants us to provide places of temporary residence so others can spend time with God. This is taught in the New Testament as well. (See Hebrews 13:2.)
 - d) This leads us back to Ezekiel. God provides a new city for visitors to the temple. In a similar way God wants us to make accommodations so others who are seeking God have a place where they can stay. OK, enough home visiting. Time to move on. ☺
- 21. Verse 21: "What remains on both sides of the area formed by the sacred portion and the city property will belong to the prince. It will extend eastward from the 25,000 cubits of the sacred portion to the eastern border, and westward from the 25,000 cubits to the western border. Both these areas running the length of the tribal portions will belong to the prince, and the sacred portion with the temple sanctuary will be in the center of them. ²² So the property of the Levites and the property of the city will lie in the center of the area that belongs to the prince. The area belonging to the prince will lie between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin.
 - a) Here is how to envision this section of land: In the northern portion is the temple building surrounded by an area for the use of the "head priests", i.e. the Sons of Zadok. To the south of that is another section for the rest of the Levites. In the middle of the Levite section is a city for the use of any and all visitors. To the right (east) and left (west) of all this land are two other sections of land to be used by the prince.
 - b) So what does this one prince need two sections of land for? As I argued in the last lesson, I believe the prince represents Jesus Himself. Many good scholars disagree with the view that the prince is the Messiah, but for the sake of space, let me just argue for the prince being the Messiah and I'll let it go at that.
 - i) So, what does the prince need two sections of land for? Earlier in Ezekiel, it talked about how the prince can give gifts to his servants and his sons. (See Ezekiel 46:17). I argued that the "sons" represent saved Christians. In the New Testament, Christians are called the "Sons of God" (e.g. Romans 8:14). The "servants" are a separate group of people and represent those who are saved out of the tribulation. (See Revelation 7:3 as an example). My point here is I believe a possible reward for Christians and those saved out of the tribulation is we get to be "close" to God and get to have or use a piece of land in this "prince territory".
 - ii) My point is just as the Levites are close to God in their service, so there are rewards for the believers to be "close to God" and get to have some of this land. I believe this area of land is for the prince so he can decide who can use this land. It is describing an aspect of eternal rewards.
 - iii) Does that mean we Christians have to "fight" to see who is the best so we get to have some of this land? Wrong attitude. ☺ The idea is those of us Christians who are saved and want to be near God, will get that opportunity for eternity. Just as the resurrected Jesus could enter locked rooms (see John 20:19 and 20:26), I do believe we as resurrected people can exist in more than three dimensions so the issue of "enough space" is never going to be a problem in this new life.
 - c) This leads me back to my lesson theme of "what's in it for us?" The focus of the Christian life should be on God. It should affect every aspect of our lives. It does not mean we are mentally focusing on God around the clock. It means besides taking time off to pray and learn of God's desire for our lives we desire that every aspect of our lives is pleasing to Him. Our reward in heaven does not mean we lie around all day and ignore God. To go to heaven means we want to be with Him forever. It means we enjoy spending time with God and we want that to continue forever. That is why all of this description of future rewards in heaven tie to our "performance and loyalty" to God in this lifetime.

22. Verse 23: "As for the rest of the tribes: Benjamin will have one portion; it will extend from the east side to the west side. ²⁴ "Simeon will have one portion; it will border the territory of Benjamin from east to west. ²⁵ "Issachar will have one portion; it will border the territory of Simeon from east to west. ²⁶ "Zebulun will have one portion; it will border the territory of Issachar from east to west. ²⁷ "Gad will have one portion; it will border the territory of Zebulun from east to west. ²⁸ "The southern boundary of Gad will run south from Tamar to the waters of Meribah Kadesh, then along the Wadi of Egypt to the Great Sea.
- Now we stop to allocate the rest of the land. Note that there were seven allotments of land to the north of the temple section and five to the south in this text. Therefore, the temple area is not in the geological center of Israel, just the "spiritual center".
 - So why isn't the land evenly divided "six above and six below" the temple area? Why seven and five? This is another mystery, but I do have a theory. ☺ Scholars who have drawn out these areas on maps end up "notice something": The new temple is not in Jerusalem. The temple ends up being at the same location of the original tabernacle (from Exodus) location which is a place called Shiloh. (See Joshua 18:1 as an example.)
23. Verse 29: "This is the land you are to allot as an inheritance to the tribes of Israel, and these will be their portions," declares the Sovereign LORD.
- Each tribe of Israel gets a section of land. Again, the tribes are not listed in birth order. The order listed is based on the different tribal mother's. The two wives of Jacob have their children's tribes the closest to the center with the concubines' children further out.
 - The more I read this section, the more I realize the "real focus" is on the holy area near the Temple with a "matter of fact" record of each tribe getting their own section of land. What is to be noticed is that people from any tribe can make trips to the temple whenever they want and have a place to stay in this new city located close to the temple. I don't think where one is in the Promised Land is as important as the fact that one can travel at any time to get "close to God" and have a place to stay.
 - Think of it this way: Everyone living there at that time is saved. Those that want to get close to God can travel to the temple at any time. It is God's way of saying "all saved are saved". However, some will enjoy heaven more than others as we all get the opportunity to draw close to God and travel "close to Him" whenever we want to.
24. Verse 30: "These will be the exits of the city: Beginning on the north side, which is 4,500 cubits long, ³¹ the gates of the city will be named after the tribes of Israel. The three gates on the north side will be the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah and the gate of Levi. ³² "On the east side, which is 4,500 cubits long, will be three gates: the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin and the gate of Dan. ³³ "On the south side, which measures 4,500 cubits, will be three gates: the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar and the gate of Zebulun. ³⁴ "On the west side, which is 4,500 cubits long, will be three gates: the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher and the gate of Naphtali.
- As we get close to wrapping up Ezekiel, the emphasis now comes back to this city that is located close to the temple. We learn here of twelve exits of the city. Each exit has the name of one of the 12 tribes. Notice "Levi" is among the 12. This gets back to the idea that there were actually 13 "tribes" of Israel as the tribe of Joseph is often split into two (based on the two sons of Joseph). Here "Joseph" is combined as one tribe and Levi is listed.
 - Does this mean that when someone from that tribe enters that city, they must leave through their specified gate? That is possible.
 - Remember the temple is north of this city. Therefore, the three gates closest to the new temple are the ones on the north. Those three gates are for Reuben (the oldest brother), for Judah (the tribe of the Messiah) and for Levi (the priests). That may or may not be significant, but I wanted to throw that in. ☺
 - When I think of a gate, I think of an entrance and an exit. The emphasis here is on the gates being an exit. (Notice that in Verse 30). I believe the idea is God wants people to be close to Him and are welcome there anytime. Only the "exits" are marked.

25. Verse 35: "The distance all around will be 18,000 cubits. "And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE."
- a) That is the end of Ezekiel. The final words are about this city and says in all capitals for emphasis, "THE LORD IS THERE". It means God is in this city as well as the Temple. Remember that one can leave this temple at any time as the "exits" are clearly marked. At the same time God wants to be close to us so He is "there" at this location.
 - b) Before I wrap this up, I want to make one other point. Revelation speaks of a new city that is called the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:2. On the gates of New Jerusalem is inscribed the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. I don't believe the Revelation city is the same one as being described here. The city here in Ezekiel is about 1.5 miles square. The city in Revelation 21 is 1,500 hundred miles square. Is it possible one of the dimensions is wrong and both are the same? Yes, but I'll argue they are separate "things" for separate believers. The Revelation City is the "Christian home of believers". I believe we rule and reign with Jesus and can travel from one location to the other. Just how those two separate cities "intertwine" is what we will discover in the next life.
 - c) Coming back to Ezekiel, the essential idea is God is encouraging us to be where He is. God wants to spend eternity with us, but he wants to do it on His terms, not ours. God wants us to be perfect and we can only do that by being "perfectly forgiven". God wants to be with us for all eternity.
26. OK John, suppose you are wrong about the literal aspects of Chapters 40-48? What if these chapters are to be taken "spiritually" and not literally? How would that affect our lives?
- a) Even if that were true, it would not affect our relationship with Jesus Christ or deny the Gospel message. Personally, when it comes interpreting the bible, if I had to error on either being too literal or not being literal enough, I would much rather error on the side of being too literal. I don't think God could hold that against us.
 - b) Again, think about the first "half" of the book of Ezekiel. The attack upon the nation of Israel was very literal and the way Ezekiel described it was exactly true in a literal description. The details given in the first half of Ezekiel were "amazingly accurate" which is impressive given when and where it was written. If I can take the first half of Ezekiel literally, then I want to take the second half literally, which includes these detailed descriptions of the temple.
 - c) That's a good "wrap up" note about Ezekiel. Yes, it is a strange book with a lot of unusual visions that have to unraveled and explained. If the first half of the book (that focused on events historical to us) have come literally true as written, then it should not be surprising if the second half of Ezekiel comes literally true as written. If it turns out the second half is more figurative than literal, then I will still believe in God and trust His word to be true.
 - d) As I've demonstrated through these studies, all of Ezekiel does have lessons to apply to our lives today as well as visions for our future in heaven. As I've worked my way through this book, I am reminded of a lot of the principals that run all through the bible as well as to learn of new things that helped me grow in my relationship with God. That is my desire for you the reader as well: It is not that you remember all of the strange visions of Ezekiel, but that the principals that run all through the bible "sink in" and it draws you and me closer to God and have a closer relationship with Him.
27. Heavenly Father, we thank You for what You have taught us in these verses and through all of Ezekiel. Help us to apply them to our lives today so that we can draw close to You. Help us to avoid idolatry for the sake of our rewards in heaven and for the sake of the lives that our affected by our actions. Help us to make a difference for Your kingdom in all that we do, now and forever. We ask this in Jesus name we pray, Amen.

On the next page is a bibliography of my sources for this study:

Supplement: Bibliography

“If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.” (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted me to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to further commentaries as listed below. Sometimes I quote other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in this study. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) and The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All the bible text is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over the past lessons. The specific commentaries on Ezekiel are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to “audio” commentary means the information was gathered via the MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated. The PDF® reference means it is written text in Adobe PDF format.

1. Ezekiel (Volumes 1 and 2) as part of the New International Commentary on the Old Testament by Daniel I. Block, Copyright 1997 and 1998 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E. Grand Rapids Michigan 49503 ISBN 0-8028-2534-4 and 0-8028-2536-2
2. Commentary on Ezekiel Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at <http://joncourson.com>
3. Commentary on Ezekiel by Bob Davies. They are available in MP3® format at http://www.northcountrychapel.com/audio_studies/index.php
4. Commentary on Leviticus by Chuck Missler, available in MP3® format at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>.
5. Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 9: By C.F. Keil & F. Delitzsch; Accessed electronically via QuickVerse® Software, from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 2000, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved. Omaha, Nebraska
6. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur via Thomas Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229
7. The Defender's Study Bible by Dr. Henry Morris. This is a King James Bible bundled with notes from Dr. Morris. It is published by Thomas Nelson (1995). ISBN: 0529104482 and 978-0529104489.
8. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm
9. The Expositor's Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every verse of the Bible. (It is available at some Christian bookstores.)
10. I also refer to Greg Koukl's apologetic ministry which is Stand to Reason at www.str.org.