

Ezekiel 47-48

- We've reached the final lesson of our study in Ezekiel
 - We've studied the Lord's condemnation of Israel for their failure to repent of their idolatry
 - And as He promised them, the nation would enter an extended time of exile as punishment for that sin
 - Their time in exile led Israel to turn away once and for all from worshipping other gods
 - But even as the nation entered into exile, the Lord instructed His prophet to reveal Israel's glorious distant future
 - The second half of the book provided a guided tour of the Millennial Kingdom temple
 - And it told us of the work of the priests, the religious life of the people and the nature of Christ's dwelling among the people
 - And ultimately, of the continuing requirement for faith for the unsaved among the nations of that day
 - In our final lesson, we look at some specific topographical changes in Israel and the tribal boundaries that mark the territory
 - I'm sure we would have preferred the Lord tell us much more about general life in the Kingdom
 - But not wanting to spoil the surprise, I guess, the Lord chose to only reveal a few features beyond the temple
 - And one of those details is a new river system extending out from Jerusalem

Ezek. 47:1 Then he brought me back to the door of the house; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced east. And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar.

Ezek. 47:2 He brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate by way of the gate that faces east. And behold, water was trickling from the south side.

[Ezek. 47:3](#) When the man went out toward the east with a line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he led me through the water, water reaching the ankles.

[Ezek. 47:4](#) Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, water reaching the knees. Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, water reaching the loins.

[Ezek. 47:5](#) Again he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not ford, for the water had risen, enough water to swim in, a river that could not be forded.

- As we look at the inner court with the temple door in front of us (we're facing west), Ezekiel says there is a stream of water flowing out of the temple

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- It flows under the threshold of the door and past the south side of the altar in the inner court before exiting the east inner gate
 - Ezekiel says he was then taken by way of the outer north gate outside the outer wall
 - He then made his way around the outer wall to the closed outer east gate
 - At that point Ezekiel found the trickle emerging from under the wall just south of the gate
- Then in v.3 Ezekiel and his heavenly escort begin to follow the stream and measure it as they go
 - They measure for a third of a mile and then take a depth reading of the water
 - At that point the water was now ankle deep and flowing
 - Then in v.4 he travels another third of a mile and measures the water at a depth up to his knees
 - After another thousand cubits, the water is at Ezekiel's waist
 - Apparently Ezekiel is wading through the water as he walks
- We know the temple mount of that day will be located in the same general location as the temple mount today
 - However, we also know that the land will be very different

- The temple will sit on a high mountain and no other mountains will be as high
- And since there be water flowing eastward from the temple, it must be flowing downhill, gaining volume as it goes
- Though Ezekiel doesn't mention it here, Zechariah says that this river splits and flows in two directions, not just one

Zech. 14:8 And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.

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- So apparently Ezekiel is describing only one side of the Temple's water system
 - Zechariah says it exits Jerusalem and then splits in half from there
 - So the river separates at some point outside the temple walls and flows toward the east and toward the west
 - The focus of Ezekiel's vision is the destination for the eastern half of the river, the Dead Sea as we call it today

Ezek. 47:6 He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he brought me back to the bank of the river.

Ezek. 47:7 Now when I had returned, behold, on the bank of the river there were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

Ezek. 47:8 Then he said to me, "These waters go out toward the eastern region and go down into the Arabah; then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea, and the waters of the sea become fresh.

Ezek. 47:9 "It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there and the others become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes.

Ezek. 47:10 "And it will come about that fishermen will stand beside it; from Engedi to Eneglaim there will be a place for the spreading of nets. Their fish will be according to their kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea, very many.

Ezek. 47:11 "But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt.

Ezek. 47:12 "By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing."

- As Ezekiel reached the point where the river was too high to continue walking, he moves to the bank
 - Then Ezekiel describes the bank as lined with many trees
 - The escort tells Ezekiel these waters (as opposed to the other waters of Zechariah) go to the eastern region, to the Arabah
 - The word Arabah means desert, and in this context it refers to the Jordan river valley, which is a desert valley today
 - In fact, if you were to retrace Ezekiel's steps today, you wouldn't see much water and hardly any trees

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- Today, you would descend from an alpine desert into a barren sandy desert
- Which makes this vision all the more incredible, and it also tells us that this cannot be a vision of past events
- Furthermore, they are made to flow into the sea, referring to the Dead Sea in the Jordan River valley
 - The Jordan River flows south from the Sea of Galilee into the Dead Sea, a salt water lake
 - The Dead Sea is salty because there is no outlet for this body of water
- Therefore sediment constantly flows in and water evaporates in the hot desert air, causing salt concentrations to increase
 - Today, the water is saturated with salt at around 35% – and at such high concentrations nothing can live in it
 - Hence its name, the Dead Sea
- But Ezekiel is told that when the Kingdom arrives, the water flowing east from the temple will reach this sea

- And when it does, the Temple river will transform the Dead Sea into fresh water
 - Ezekiel doesn't say if this happens miraculously (instantaneously) or naturally over time as fresh water dilutes the sea
 - The sense of the text, however, is a miraculous change; especially considering that the lake becomes filled with every kind of fish
 - So the Dead Sea comes to life as a beautiful Millennial picture of God's grace bringing life to the dead
- Ezekiel adds that fishermen will fish there, from Engedi which is in the south near Masada to Eneglaim (which is unknown but probably somewhere in the north)
 - They will fish according to their kinds, meaning there will be so much variety of fish that fishermen will specialize in their catch
 - And the fish will be bountiful
 - But salt marshes remain, probably as a testimony of how the Lord changed the water from salt to fresh
 - This is truly a miracle for all the world to see...in faith
- Furthermore, there will be fruit trees lining the Dead Sea according to v.12
 - This is very different than the land around the sea today
 - Very few trees grow and nothing grows on the banks of the Dead Sea
 - The mineral content is simply too high
 - These tree will not lose their leaves, and fruit will be ever present
 - Furthermore, the leaves will provide healing
 - These special properties are a consequence of the water flowing from the temple
 - The connection between the tree's sustaining power and the water from the temple communicates the life-giving power of Christ
 - The world can't see Jesus, but they can see the river of life flowing from the temple
 - This sign is to encourage faith, as Jesus said in John 7

[John 7:37](#) Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

[John 7:38](#) "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

- These details also draw a connection to the Garden of Eden and to the New Heavens and New Earth that follows the Kingdom period
 - In Revelation 22 we read

[Rev. 22:1](#) Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,

[Rev. 22:2](#) in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

- This is a different river and tree, but notice the similarities
 - This tree is living from water that comes from the throne of God
 - This tree is also yielding fruit constantly
 - And this tree also has the power to heal in its leaves
- Apparently there is a tree of life in the Kingdom as well, and those similarities suggest a common purpose
 - What is the purpose of the tree of life?
 - We see that in Genesis 3

[Gen. 3:22](#) Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" –

[Gen. 3:23](#) therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.

[Gen. 3:24](#) So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

- This tree had the power to keep Adam and Woman's physical bodies alive forever by sustaining and healing them continually
 - In fact the Lord had to drive them out of the Garden and station an angel to bar them from returning to ensure they would die
 - Obviously God has designed this tree to reflect our supply from Christ, Who upholds everything by the word of His power
 - So we see the water leaving the throne in the temple, sustaining the tree which sustains us
- Furthermore, the tree only appears on earth during periods when immortality exists
 - In the Garden Man and Woman were eternal prior to their expulsion from the Garden, and they had a tree
 - In the New Heavens and Earth everyone will be immortal, and we will have a tree there
 - And now we see in the Kingdom the tree of life exists, and of course there will be immortal human beings in the Kingdom
 - So the implication is that immortality itself requires this tree
 - That is, the way God grants physical immortality to mankind is through the mechanism of this tree's fruit and leaves
 - In doing so, He ensures that we never forget that He is our supply of life
 - In fact, the ultimate fulfillment of John 7 may be pointing to this tree...
 - The flowing waters of Christ are truly our living waters, both spiritually *and* physically
- Next we move to the boundaries of the tribes of Israel

[Ezek. 47:13](#) Thus says the Lord GOD, "This shall be the boundary by which you shall divide the land for an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel; Joseph shall have two portions.

[Ezek. 47:14](#) "You shall divide it for an inheritance, each one equally with the other; for I swore to give it to your forefathers, and this land shall fall to you as an inheritance.

[Ezek. 47:15](#) "This shall be the boundary of the land: on the north side, from the Great Sea by the way of Hethlon, to the entrance of Zedad;

[Ezek. 47:16](#) Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazer-hatticon, which is by the border of Hauran.

[Ezek. 47:17](#) "The boundary shall extend from the sea to Hazar-enan at the border of Damascus, and on the north toward the north is the border of Hamath. This is the north side.

[Ezek. 47:18](#) "The east side, from between Hauran, Damascus, Gilead and the land of Israel, shall be the Jordan; from the north border to the eastern sea you shall measure. This is the east side.

[Ezek. 47:19](#) "The south side toward the south shall extend from Tamar as far as the waters of Meribath-kadesh, to the brook of Egypt and to the Great Sea. This is the south side toward the south.

[Ezek. 47:20](#) "The west side shall be the Great Sea, from the south border to a point opposite Lebo-hamath. This is the west side.

[Ezek. 47:21](#) "So you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel.

[Ezek. 47:22](#) "You shall divide it by lot for an inheritance among yourselves and among the aliens who stay in your midst, who bring forth sons in your midst. And they shall be to you as the native-born among the sons of Israel; they shall be allotted an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel.

[Ezek. 47:23](#) "And in the tribe with which the alien stays, there you shall give him his inheritance," declares the Lord GOD.

- The Lord established the boundaries of Israel in the Kingdom

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- To appreciate these borders, it helps to see Israel's borders today
 - It's a small country, and it's much smaller than it was under David or Solomon
 - And it's also much smaller than it will be in the Kingdom according to these borders
 - Because it's a fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham
- Abraham was told

[Gen. 15:18](#) On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying,

“To your descendants I have given this land,
From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:

- This gives us a southern and northern border
- Then we move to Joshua where we find:

[Josh. 1:2](#) “Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel.

[Josh. 1:3](#) “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.

[Josh. 1:4](#) “From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory.

- Now we see confirmation of the southern and northern borders and the addition of an (obvious) western border
- Finally, looking at Ezekiel we get a much better defined eastern border
 - It extends into present-day Syria in the north
 - Then comes back to parallel the Jordan River
 - Until bracing down into much of the Sinai
- This allows us to draw four approximate lines from which we arrive at the borders of the Kingdom Israel

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- If we “smooth” out those borders we get a more realistic border line
- Still, this is approximate though much larger than present day Israel
- Next we look at the tribal allotments

[Ezek. 48:1](#) “Now these are the names of the tribes: from the northern extremity, beside the way of Hethlon to Lebo-hamath, as far as Hazar-enan at the border of Damascus, toward the north beside Hamath, running from east to west, Dan, one portion.

[Ezek. 48:2](#) "Beside the border of Dan, from the east side to the west side, Asher, one portion.

[Ezek. 48:3](#) "Beside the border of Asher, from the east side to the west side, Naphtali, one portion.

[Ezek. 48:4](#) "Beside the border of Naphtali, from the east side to the west side, Manasseh, one portion.

[Ezek. 48:5](#) "Beside the border of Manasseh, from the east side to the west side, Ephraim, one portion.

[Ezek. 48:6](#) "Beside the border of Ephraim, from the east side to the west side, Reuben, one portion.

[Ezek. 48:7](#) "Beside the border of Reuben, from the east side to the west side, Judah, one portion.

- Ezekiel tells us to start dividing up the territory from the north and then moving southward

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- So the tribes descend in the order listed in equal portions except for Joseph
 - To understand why Joseph isn't counted, remember that originally Jacob had 12 sons
 - When Jacob later discovered that Joseph was alive, Joseph had married an Egyptian and already had two sons of his own
- At that time, Jacob told Joseph that he would adopt Joseph's two boys, Ephraim and Manasseh
 - And future sons of Joseph would belong to Joseph's household, but these two boys would be considered sons of Jacob
 - So Jacob made Joseph's two sons to be his two sons and in that way Jacob went from 12 sons to 13
- So in that way, we can say that Joseph received the double portion of the inheritance
 - In Eastern culture, the most favored son (usually the oldest) received a double portion of the father's inheritance
 - In the case of this family the Lord created an inheritance for the family, since God created the people of Israel in the first place

- So the Lord told Abraham he would have an inheritance in the land and a seed blessing that would bless all nations

[Gen. 12:1](#) Now the LORD said to Abram,

“Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father’s house,
To the land which I will show you;

[Gen. 12:2](#) And I will make you a great nation,

And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;

[Gen. 12:3](#) And I will bless those who bless you,

And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

- Like any inheritance, the inheritance God gave Abraham could be passed down to sons
 - Isaac received it and then did Jacob as the Lord determined
 - But when Jacob had 12 sons, the inheritance would have to be divided out among children
- Technically, Reuben was first born, so he should receive the double portion of the inheritance – but how do you divide the seed promise?
 - You can’t, so only one son would receive the promise to bring the Messiah
 - But Reuben disqualified himself by dishonoring his father’s bed
 - And the next two sons, Simeon and Levi likewise dishonored themselves as well
- Which meant Judah was in the lead position and he received the seed promise
 - But the inheritance of the land can be divided, so the sons share equally in that
 - Except in God’s providence, Joseph received the double portion by virtue of his two sons each getting a portion

- But Levi had no portion since that tribe lives in the sanctuary
- So in this list we have 12 sons, though Joseph is missing, and his two sons receive a portion each
- Speaking of the sanctuary city, we read how that allotment goes next

Ezek. 48:8 “And beside the border of Judah, from the east side to the west side, shall be the allotment which you shall set apart, 25,000 cubits in width, and in length like one of the portions, from the east side to the west side; and the sanctuary shall be in the middle of it.

Ezek. 48:9 “The allotment that you shall set apart to the LORD shall be 25,000 cubits in length and 10,000 in width.

Ezek. 48:10 “The holy allotment shall be for these, namely for the priests, toward the north 25,000 cubits in length, toward the west 10,000 in width, toward the east 10,000 in width, and toward the south 25,000 in length; and the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in its midst.

Ezek. 48:11 “It shall be for the priests who are sanctified of the sons of Zadok, who have kept My charge, who did not go astray when the sons of Israel went astray as the Levites went astray.

Ezek. 48:12 “It shall be an allotment to them from the allotment of the land, a most holy place, by the border of the Levites.

Ezek. 48:13 “Alongside the border of the priests the Levites shall have 25,000 cubits in length and 10,000 in width. The whole length shall be 25,000 cubits and the width 10,000.

Ezek. 48:14 “Moreover, they shall not sell or exchange any of it, or alienate this choice portion of land; for it is holy to the LORD.

Ezek. 48:15 “The remainder, 5,000 cubits in width and 25,000 in length, shall be for common use for the city, for dwellings and for open spaces; and the city shall be in its midst.

Ezek. 48:16 “These shall be its 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.

Ezek. 48:17 “The city shall have open spaces: on the north 250 cubits, on the south 250 cubits, on the east 250 cubits, and on the west 250 cubits.

Ezek. 48:18 “The remainder of the length alongside the holy allotment shall be 10,000 cubits toward the east and 10,000 toward the west; and it shall be alongside the holy allotment. And its produce shall be food for the workers of the city.

Ezek. 48:19 “The workers of the city, out of all the tribes of Israel, shall cultivate it.

[Ezek. 48:20](#) “The whole allotment shall be 25,000 by 25,000 cubits; you shall set apart the holy allotment, a square, with the property of the city.

[Ezek. 48:21](#) “The remainder shall be for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy allotment and of the property of the city; in front of the 25,000 cubits of the allotment toward the east border and westward in front of the 25,000 toward the west border, alongside the portions, it shall be for the prince. And the holy allotment and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the middle of it.

[Ezek. 48:22](#) “Exclusive of the property of the Levites and the property of the city, which are in the middle of that which belongs to the prince, everything between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin shall be for the prince.

- We studied much of this detail in earlier chapters, so I will provide a picture and make some basic observations

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- First, this allotment is similar to Washington DC in the sense that it's not land belonging to any tribe but independent of all tribes
 - It's divided up into sections as we remember
 - One section is 25,000cu by 10,000cu section for the temple priests of Zadok
 - Next to that is the section for other Levites
 - None of this land may be sold or exchanged
- Another allotment in vs.15-19 is for the holy city of Jerusalem and its open spaces
 - These spaces are for common use by all Jews and include homes and a green belt and a farm
 - In v.20 we're told the entire allotment for priests and city is nearly 70 sq miles
- On the east and west sides of this 70 sq mile section would be land for the prince, meaning David
 - One man, King David, receives a portion of land almost as big as every other tribe received
 - That tells us something of how the Lord felt about David

- Then we see the rest of tribes

[Ezek. 48:23](#) "As for the rest of the tribes: from the east side to the west side, Benjamin, one portion.

[Ezek. 48:24](#) "Beside the border of Benjamin, from the east side to the west side, Simeon, one portion.

[Ezek. 48:25](#) "Beside the border of Simeon, from the east side to the west side, Issachar, one portion.

[Ezek. 48:26](#) "Beside the border of Issachar, from the east side to the west side, Zebulun, one portion.

[Ezek. 48:27](#) "Beside the border of Zebulun, from the east side to the west side, Gad, one portion.

[Ezek. 48:28](#) "And beside the border of Gad, at the south side toward the south, the border shall be from Tamar to the waters of Meribath-kadesh, to the brook of Egypt, to the Great Sea.

[Ezek. 48:29](#) "This is the land which you shall divide by lot to the tribes of Israel for an inheritance, and these are their several portions," declares the Lord GOD.

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- This completes the allotment of tribes
- Finally, we see some descriptions of the city and its gates

[Ezek. 48:30](#) "These are the exits of the city: on the north side, 4,500 cubits by measurement,

[Ezek. 48:31](#) shall be the gates of the city, named for the tribes of Israel, three gates toward the north: the gate of Reuben, one; the gate of Judah, one; the gate of Levi, one.

[Ezek. 48:32](#) "On the east side, 4,500 cubits, shall be three gates: the gate of Joseph, one; the gate of Benjamin, one; the gate of Dan, one.

[Ezek. 48:33](#) "On the south side, 4,500 cubits by measurement, shall be three gates: the gate of Simeon, one; the gate of Issachar, one; the gate of Zebulun, one.

[Ezek. 48:34](#) "On the west side, 4,500 cubits, shall be three gates: the gate of Gad, one; the gate of Asher, one; the gate of Naphtali, one.

[Ezek. 48:35](#) "The city shall be 18,000 cubits round about; and the name of the city from that day shall be, 'The LORD is there.'"

- The name of the Millennial city of Israel is not given in Ezekiel, though any Jew would have known its name

- Zechariah gives it to us

Zech. 14:8 And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.

- Obviously, it will still be called Jerusalem
- The city overall will be 1.5 miles on each of its four sides
- And each side has three gates for a total of twelve
- Each gate is named after a tribe, so that the twelve are memorialized
- This design is similar to the one for the New Jerusalem, in which the city is a cube, not a square, and exactly 1,000 times larger
 - But it too has 12 entrances named after the tribes
 - So the design of the Kingdom city suggests the next age, just as the present city suggests the Kingdom age
- Finally, the name of the city will also be “The Lord is there” which is Jehovah Shammah
 - Interestingly, the phrase is the Lord is “there” not “here” as most of the world will not be in the city
 - Therefore, when the world speaks of Jerusalem, they say “the Lord is there”
 - Here again, it will be a testimony to the unbelieving world that their God resides in a certain city on earth
 - But it will require faith for the people of that time to accept it
 - Nevertheless, the people of Israel will be there and will be blessed by their close relationship with the God Who called them and preserved them for that moment