

Survey of the Bible **Ezekiel's Temple Part 3**

For the last two or three weeks we've touched on the vision that the apostle John was given in Revelation 20 as he saw the souls of the saints in the present heaven ruling and reigning with Christ on His throne.

And they ruled and reigned with Him for a thousand years, which is a symbolic number referring to the totality of that time that they await Christ's physical return to this earth to judge the nations and destroy this universe only to recreate out of the same substance new heavens and a new earth.

And it will be on this new earth where Christ will dwell with His people forever thus fulfilling in totality the promise of Immanuel, God with us.

And this is precisely how Ezekiel ends his vision as God reveals to him in the last two chapters of Ezekiel the throne of God as it is depicted in terms the Jews would have understood as all of Israel participating in the inhabiting of the land surrounding the capital city, Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 47:1 ^{NAU} 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.

Ezekiel 47:7-9 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. 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. 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.

Again, this is language that is designed to describe symbolically an actual reality, and that reality is the place from where God will rule with His people for eternity.

And that place is the same place that John describes.

Revelation 22:1-4 ^{NAU} Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 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. ³ There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; ⁴ they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads.

All throughout the book of Ezekiel we see he is given specific measurements and instructions regarding the temple which symbolizes the kingdom of God and those who will participate in it.

But as God closes the vision of this temple and the people who dwell in God's presence, it would be very easy to conclude that Ezekiel only has the Jews in mind as each tribe is given an inheritance in the land.

The entire 48th chapter clearly marks out the specific areas for each tribe of Israel.

Ezekiel 48:1-8 ^{NAU} "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*. ² "Beside the border of Dan, from the east side to the west side, Asher, one *portion*. ³ "Beside the border of Asher, from the east side to the west side, Naphtali, one *portion*. ⁴ "Beside the border of Naphtali, from the east side to the west side, Manasseh, one *portion*. ⁵ "Beside the border of Manasseh, from the east side to the west side, Ephraim, one *portion*. ⁶ "Beside the border of Ephraim, from the east side to the west side, Reuben, one *portion*. ⁷ "Beside the border of Reuben, from the east side to the west side, Judah, one *portion*. 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.

You'll note here that seven tribes are allotted seven different portions. It isn't until you get to the end of this chapter that we see the remaining five.

By the way, when you look at the end of verse 8 there is an allotment that is set apart for the sanctuary. And as we look at the remaining five tribes with their portion, this allotment set apart for the sanctuary belongs to the prince.

Ezekiel 48:22-29 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. ²³ "As for the rest of the tribes: from the east side to the west side, Benjamin, one *portion*. ²⁴ "Beside the border of Benjamin, from the east side to the west side, Simeon, one *portion*. ²⁵ "Beside the border of Simeon, from the east side to the west side, Issachar, one *portion*. ²⁶ "Beside the border of Issachar, from the east side to the west side, Zebulun, one *portion*. ²⁷ "Beside the border of Zebulun, from the east side to the west side, Gad, one *portion*. 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. 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.

Again, if we try and define the kingdom of God through the lens of Old Testament prophecy then we deny how prophecy was meant to be used by God. Because all prophecy in the Old covenant pointed to the Messiah of the New covenant.

Therefore, it is the New Covenant or New Testament, which in fact defines what the old foretold. And so, when Ezekiel gives a vision of Israel and the land that they possess, in the pages of this book, by definition the fulfillment of that is not defined in an Old Covenant people, but the people of the New and everlasting covenant.

In fact, Ezekiel gives us a glimpse into who these new covenant people are in the previous chapter.

Ezekiel 47:21-23 ²¹ "So you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. 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.* ²³ "*And in the tribe with which the alien stays, there you shall give him his inheritance,*" declares the Lord GOD.

And so, which two groups are identified with the inheritance?

The sons of Israel and any alien who identifies themselves with the tribes of Israel.

But the question needs to be asked, what is the inheritance that is being described in relationship to the different allotments of land?, because this is critical in our understanding of how God fulfills His promise to Israel.

Again, we need to understand a basic principle of how we interpret the word of God. The Old Testament does not define the New. In fact, there is a phrase that is often used that states, the Old Covenant is the New Covenant concealed, while the New Covenant is the Old revealed.

And so, it is the New Covenant that always reveals and defines what was concealed in Old Covenant.

And this principle was clearly defined by Jesus Christ Himself as seen in His response to the two disciples He met on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection.

Luke 24:25-27 ²⁵ And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷ *Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.*

What Jesus is saying is that all of the prophets, which would obviously include all of the prophecies, all point to Himself. But more than that they all point to the entirety of His redemptive work which includes the Kingdom which He came to secure.

If we look only to Ezekiel, for example, as to what this kingdom looks like, we might be tempted to think that that kingdom is for Israel only as they are given the land back with their prince being in their midst.

In fact, this is precisely what many of Jesus' disciples thought, all of whom were Jews at the time.

Mark 11:9-10 ⁹ Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting: "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; ¹⁰ Blessed *is* the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!"

These Jews had read Ezekiel. And don't think for a moment that they weren't excited of the possibility that this Jesus, whom they recognize as the son of David, would fulfill all that Ezekiel foretold.

But, Jesus did come to fulfill Ezekiel, not with some earthly kingdom of this present world, but an eternal kingdom on the new earth.

And this is precisely why Jesus, only a few short days later from this incident that we just read of in Mark, would define what this kingdom was not.

John 18:33-36 ³³ Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" ³⁵ Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" ³⁶ ***Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."***

The point is that the Jews thought that Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and others were all pointing to a kingdom of this present world where Israel would be restored to her glory days with God blessing them with a King seen in Jesus.

Jesus essentially was saying that all of those prophets foretold of Me, but I am defining what that kingdom is and it is not a restoration of a physical descendant of Abraham, called Israel, back to the land of their forefathers, because My kingdom is not of this world, and it's not a kingdom in the future on this earth for a thousand years, because again, My kingdom is not of this present cursed world.

He could not make it more plain. Jesus is saying that the Old Testament prophets do not define what His New Testament kingdom is. They simply point to the One who will fulfill that Kingdom's identification.

And that identification is one that includes all people's from every corner of the earth.

Revelation 5:9-10 ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain,

and purchased for God with Your blood *men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.* ¹⁰ *"You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."*

This New Testament kingdom is the same Kingdom that Ezekiel is describing, but the book of Ezekiel only gives us a glimpse into what God is describing through the words given to His prophet.

Therefore, we are not allowed, according to Christ's own words, to take the words of the prophets and redefine them into something that is outside of what Christ has clearly revealed in the New Testament.

And when the New Testament defines the kingdom of God as including all people's who embrace Christ as the one's reigning upon the earth then the Old Testament language describing all the tribes of Israel having an allotment of land given them to rule over must give way to what that language is actually describing.

In fact, the apostle John gives us a great example of this when he borrows the same kind of language that Ezekiel uses to describe this kingdom using the imagery of the 12 tribes of Israel, but then redefines what he means in light of the bigger kingdom Christ came to secure for all of His people.

Revelation 7:4-10 ⁴ *And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:* ⁵ *from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, ⁶ from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, ⁷ from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, ⁸ from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed. ⁹ *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; ¹⁰ and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."**

John has combined language from both the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles in describing this kingdom

over which the Lamb rules and reigns as this Lamb has shed His blood for all of His people.

This is the exact Israel that was foretold through the prophets, and of whom Paul would describe when speaking about both Jews and Gentiles as participants of this Kingdom, as the Israel of God.

This is the same group that John would again describe later in Revelation.

Revelation 14:1-3 ^{NAU} Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb *was* standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard *was* like *the sound* of harpists playing on their harps. ³ And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.

Are there only 144,000 people who will inherit the Kingdom of God?

Only if you're a Jehovah's Witness would you believe that.

This is prophetic and symbolic language which again describes the whole group of believers with a number that describes the completion of Christ's mission.

144,000 is 12 X 12 X 1000.

In other words, it is a number that includes every one of the people of God from both before Calvary and after.

The 12 tribes of Israel represent the promise of the Messiah in an Old Covenant setting, while the 12 apostles represent all of the New Testament believers. Multiply that number by a vast amount in the number 1,000 and you end up with the entire group described in 144,000.

Symbolic language is used in all prophetic and apocalyptic literature and this is no exception. But it is defined by the fulfillment found in Christ as He and He alone tells us what this Kingdom is and who is included in it and what form it will take in an eternal setting.

The meek will inherit the earth and the sons of Israel will share in the inheritance but both the meek and Israel are defined by those who are covered by the blood of the Lamb.

And so, we come to the close of the book of Ezekiel which is a vision of a future kingdom defined as Israel, with a shepherd who is David.

Ezekiel 34:23-24 ²³ "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. ²⁴ "And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.

This prophetic language finds its fulfillment, not in other O.T. prophecies but in the N.T. Scriptures.

Matthew 12:22-28 ²² Then a demon-possessed man *who was* blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. ²³ All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." ²⁵ And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶ "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ "If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? For this reason they will be your judges. ²⁸ "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

And the inference is that the King of that kingdom is in your midst.

It is this King, this Shepherd who will bring His people together and it is this Shepherd who will lead them beside quiet streams.

Ezekiel 34:25-31 ²⁵ "I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. ²⁶ "I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing. ²⁷ "Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those

who enslaved them. ²⁸ "They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make *them* afraid. ²⁹ "I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore. ³⁰ "Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people," declares the Lord GOD. ³¹ "As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God," declares the Lord GOD.

The Psalmist also makes note of the Shepherd and the sheep who belong to Him.

^{NAU} **Psalm 100:3** Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; *We are* His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Who are these sheep?

Jesus tells us who some of them are not and surprisingly they are not many of the Jews of His own time.

John 10:25-26 ²⁵ Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. ²⁶ "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.

These are Jews of the nation of Israel who are told by the very Messiah who was a Jew that they do not belong to His pasture.

But He goes on to describe that there are sheep who belong to Him and that they are part of His eternal kingdom.

John 10:27-30 ²⁷ "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ "My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ "I and the Father are one."

Who are these sheep?

John 10:14-16 ¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, ¹⁵ even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ "I have

other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become **one flock with one shepherd.**

One flock with one shepherd with sheep from both the Jews and Gentiles.

Ezekiel understood that the Great Shepherd he spoke of was a Shepherd who would establish an everlasting covenant with His people and this people will live in peace with God in their midst forever.

Ezekiel 37:26-28 ²⁶ *"I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them.* And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. ²⁷ *"My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.* ²⁸ *"And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever."'"*

And so we come full circle with the knowledge that what Ezekiel saw for future Israel was an Israel that included God's sheep from every tribe, tongue and nation and those people would know their Shepherd as their Shepherd dwelled with them forever as He would make all things new.

Revelation 21:1-5 ^{NAU} Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."