

Ezekiel Chapters 47-48 - John Karmelich

Title "What matters in the end? Hope for a better tomorrow!"

We've come to the end of one of the longest books in the bible. In short, these chapters describe a river (new one) that will run from God's temple to both the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea. Chapter 48 is a specific tribe by tribe allocation of the land of Israel (expanded to include much of Syria, Lebanon, and even parts of Iran)! I realize no Israelite today knows what tribe they are from, but that's God's problem to explain, just as how a new Israel based source of water will be a mighty river that will turn the Dead Sea (that's too salty to support life) to one that's filled with salt-water based fish! The key point is after Jesus returns the land of Israel becomes the center of the world for the next 1,000 years. My question is why does the book end this way? In a way it's a "happily ever after" type of ending, where God returns life on earth to how He intended it be with the Israelites there separated by tribe and Jesus ruling there.

That leads to my favorite question, "Why should I care?" Yes, I believe the church will be around as it will be the church's job to "Enforce His rule" over the world. The focus of Ezekiel is on Israel's fate, after millenniums of not living as God desired. He made unconditional promises to that nation. The 9 final chapters of Ezekiel give Israelites and us, hope of their eternal destiny despite how badly they did blow at the time Ezekiel wrote this book. So why we may not care how the Israelites will be blessed in the end, but there are some connections to the final chapter of Revelation and whether we like it or not, this is our eternal destiny! As I like to say, "God's in charge, deal with it!" Our eternal destiny does not involve "Playing harps for eternity" or as I say, "watching sports on a sofa forever!" We're saved so we can honor God for eternity! Accept it, deal with it and let's discuss the final chapters of Ezekiel now!

These chapters open when Ezekiel (this is all a vision as he was living in what's Iraq today) sees what'll be a new Temple (to be built then) where Jesus will rule the world from! It will be a 1,000-year period with Satan locked up (to show we can still be sinful with him not there). The last 9 chapters of Ezekiel focus on life in the future 1,000-year period. These chapters give us specific dimensions of that temple and the grounds surrounding it. Jerusalem will be much bigger then. compared to how it was when the Gospel events occurred! Even if you don't care about all this "Jewish stuff" remember Ezekiel gives us very specific size and location descriptions. If you're thinking, I'll think about all this when I get there, then you're missing the point! God wrote this not only to give those Israelites hope as they suffered in captivity, but to give us hope that God is setting up a world for us to worship Him as He desires! God is telling us "You might as well get used to having Me as the center of the world as that' how life will be forever!" As the saying goes, "How do we expect to honor God then, if we're not willing to live for Him now?"

OK then, time for details. Ezekiel is taken back to the Temple structure. Realize it is outside of the city of Jerusalem. Some argue it's located where the Tabernacle first stood when the Israelites got there, but it's just debate. Anyway, from under the temple a small stream of water flowed. Being fascinated with real estate, I admit I thought if it affected the foundation, but if God put it there, it's not an issue! What the issue is, is the water flowed downhill to become a mighty river. Part of it flowed into the Dead Sea and part flowed into the Mediterranean. For those who don't know the Dead Sea has its name as there's no outlet and no fish live there as it's about six times saltier than the ocean! That new river will change that sea so salt-based fish will exist there! We don't know all the details of how it'll work, but the Bible says fish will be there and what God can do has never been an issue to me. The text also describes trees will grow by that river which bear fruit year-round. Revelation 22 also states those trees will exist then,

so that's enough proof for me! Those trees not only produce fruit, but their leaves will be medicine! It teaches us, if nothing else, there will still be a need to eat then and a need for medicine!

Most of the text in these chapters describe the division of the land of Israel. When the land was divided when the Israelites first entered the land, the boundaries were basically water locations and most likely rock formations. Then, the tribal boundaries are strips of land that will include much of Lebanon, Syria and some of Iran! Each strip is for each of the 12 tribes of Israel. They're not listed in birth order, but I noticed that of the children of Jacob's two wives, get land closest to the temple! Outside of that comes the descendants of the two wives who were "handmaidens" get land further from the temple! It may be helpful to remember Jacob had 12 sons by 4 women and the two sons of Joseph (one of the 12) became equal with the 12! It just means 14 names exist to choose from whenever God wants a list of 12! Also realize in Revelation 7, the tribes of Dan and Ephraim were not a part of a list as idolatry entered Israel through them. Yet those two "bad tribes" are listed here. The point is God forgives despite "corporate" sins as well as our individual ones. He also rewards specific descendants of specific priests (at the time of King Solomon), as those descendants will be the priests then. It means remembers faithfulness! He rewards those of us who use their lives for His glory!

In effect the land is described north to south. We get a long break in the early part of Chapter 48 to tell us very specific boundaries within the temple area. Notice the temple is not in the city and they're both separate places. Land is separated not only for the temple, but for the priests to have farmland plus that is where they can raise their families. We get clues in the final chapters of Isaiah that death still occurs, but people live a lot longer. Remember some people survive the Revelation "bad stuff" and a lot of this is for people then to learn to worship God as He requires. So, another purpose of all this is to show life will go on even after "Revelation ". Again, the new Jerusalem will be much bigger than the "old city". I think God is driving the point home that despite all of Israel's (and our) failures when God restores this the way He wants it to be, it'll be even bigger and more glorious than we can imagine! The text lists the fact the city has 12 gates named after the 12 tribes. Gates implies that the temple will be opened for the times when God wants the Israelites to come worship Him, let alone for business within the city. This means when it occurs, life will go still on, and people will still work and eat! The last few words of the book state "The Lord is there"! Bottom line, God's in charge, accept it and even though normal aspects of life continue, life will center on the worship of God.

OK John, this would be interesting if I was a religious Jewish person! We get that Jesus will be "center stage" and the eternal future will be with Him in charge. We get that when we are resurrected, we'll be a part of this to enforce His rule! How does any of this affect me here and now? First, it gives us hope that no matter what we're dealing with we "bet on the winning horse" and there's a wonderful future as we trust in Jesus for our salvation. Remember why we're saved in the first place, to use our lives to be a witness for Him to the world around us! Just saying as there is a payday for the Jewish nation based on unconditional promises God made to them, there's also "pay day" for believers as He will be center our lives for eternity. The point being is we must accept it now as that's why we're saved! Of course it is necessary to say, work to support ourselves and take care of people. That aspect will exist then, just as that exists now! Still, one must remember why we're saved in the first place.

With that said I hope you liked my study of Ezekiel. The big picture idea I learned is to keep trusting in God despite the mistakes I make. To quote one of my favorite expressions, "We can't change our past, only learn from it!".

With that said, hope you liked this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on one of the two links below. It's a joy to study and write this and I'm grateful for you

reading it. The rest of this email is links to questions you may have. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again for reading this!