

22T12d Ezekiel's Temple Part 2

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me @ the PUNLA coffee table. I just have to say it. I don't really like eschatology or end times theology. I always figured it was going to happen so why worry about it. I would say things like, it does not help me follow Jesus, it does not help me reach others for Jesus, then why. What's the point? And this is true.

And I still kind of feel this way but over recent years, this topic keeps coming up over and over and over again. I think Jesus is trying to tell me something. So, I'm trying to be obedient and study the word of God as Jesus wants me to, not as I would like to do it.

Anyway, here we are talking eschatology again. This time Ezekiel Chapters 40-48. This is commonly called Ezekiel's Temple. This vision or this series of visions, Ezekiel had in while in captivity in Babylon. People argue about the exact dates. Ezekiel says in the 25th year of captivity or about 573BC. People have fought about the interpretation of this generations. And even today, the interpretation of this prophecy is very hotly contested. Last time we talked about the first part, the Temple blueprint in Ezekiel Chapters 40-43. We determined that whatever the Temple represents, the message was meant for the House of Israel in exile most likely in Babylon which is what the Ezekiel 40:1-4 says.

Based on what we know, there are several possible interpretations of the Temple design visions in Chapters 40-43. It could have been the temple that Zerubbabel should have built after the return from captivity; it could be Herod's Temple from the time of Jesus; or a symbolic temple representing Jesus. What I don't believe is this. It is not a literal temple to be rebuilt either prior to the tribulation or during the millennial reign of Christ. The reasons are in other parts of the Bible, like Hebrews 8:8-10 which tells us the sacrifice of Christ ended the need for sacrifices and offering forever, that system is over, or Revelation 21:22-27 which says there is no temple in the future heavenly city, or Galatians 3:28 & Ephesians 2:12-22 which tell us Gentiles and Jews are one in Jesus, and there are lots of other scriptures which would not support a future temple.

So, today let's look at the remainder of these visions which are about new worship and new land allotments for the tribes of Israel.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father. Thank you for your good news. Lord use me to share your message. If I say something in error, please let them remember what you wanted them to hear, not my errand words. Help us not to be confused by the many voices and opinions we hear. May we stay focused on your word Lord. Guide our discussion. We pray in your name Lord Jesus, Amen.

I strongly recommend you read these chapters for yourself. Today, I want to concentrate our review on three aspects of these chapters, in order to determine the most logical interpretation.

- 1) Land Allotments
- 2) Sacrifices and Offerings
- 3) Priests

Let's start with the land allotments. The land allotments in Ezekiel have puzzled me. I have read and reviewed many commentaries on this as well. I researched how each interpretation could look on the land described and I have to tell you it is very confusing. So let's see what we can see. 1st the borders of Israel

are clearly laid out in Ezekiel 47:13-23 (NAS) ¹³This is what the Lord GOD says: “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. ¹⁴And 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. ¹⁵“And 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; ¹⁶Hamath, Berothah, Sibram, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazer-hatticon, which is by the border of Hauran. ¹⁷The 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. 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. 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. ²⁰“And the west side shall be the Great Sea, from the south border to a point opposite Lebo-hamath. This is the west side. ²¹“So you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. ²²You shall divide it by lot for an inheritance among yourselves and among the strangers 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. ²³And in the tribe with which the stranger resides, there you shall give him his inheritance,” declares the Lord GOD.

I want you to pay special attention to verse 14. Ezekiel 47:14 (NAS) ¹⁴And 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.

Every English bible translation I read had this idea of equal portions of inheritance for each tribe. Or equal amounts of land for each tribe. This is very different than the portions giving in the Book of Joshua when they entered the promised land. In fact, in Joshua Asher and Naphtali are in north most areas, Simeon and Judah in the south most area. But in Ezekiel, Dan is the north most area and Gad is the south most area. So this is a completely different land allotment from the one when Israel entered the promised land. Okay so it is different, we will ignore the old land allotments from Joshua for the remainder of this discussion. I looked and looked but every map depiction showed the correct order of the tribal allotments but none of the areas were equal. The tribes north of the “sacred district” or the area where the temple was to be, had much larger allotments than the ones to the south of the temple. Not even close to equal. Seven tribes north of the temple area, with five tribes to the south. Without looking at a map, the engineer in me said, 58% of the land is north of the temple and 42% south of the temple. There was a problem with this. Less than a third of the total land was south of Jerusalem. So how can this be? Well if there are no mistakes in the bible, then quiet clearly, the temple must be in Galilee. I about fell off my chair. Now I’m just an engineer and this drawing is just a rough estimate, but these land allotments look equal to me and that puts the holy district in Galilee, not Jerusalem.

To put it plainly if you don’t require the Holy district to be Jerusalem, then you just read Ezekiel as it is written, this is what you get. Okay, I’m not saying the temple will be built in Galilee but this gives us a strong case of the symbolic representation of Jesus ministry. Or of course, the directive could have just been ignored by the people. Doing what they wanted, a temple in Jerusalem, instead of what God wanted a temple in Galilee. It’s very interesting to ponder. What I cannot see in these scriptures, is support for a temple in Jerusalem or a future temple after the cross of Christ.

Okay. What about the Sacrifices and Offerings. Ezekiel 44-47 talks about the Sacrifices and Offerings. Ezekiel 44:29-31 (NAS) is talking about the Levitical priests, *“²⁸And it shall be regarding an inheritance for them, that I am their inheritance; and you shall give them no property in Israel—I am their property. ²⁹They shall eat the grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering; and everything banned from secular use in Israel shall be theirs. ³⁰And the first of all the first fruits of every kind and every contribution of every kind, from all your contributions, shall be for the priests; you shall also give to the priest the first of your dough, to make a blessing rest on your house. ³¹The priests shall not eat any bird or animal that has died a natural death or has been torn to pieces by animals.*

Sin offering and guilt offerings, first fruits, food restrictions. This is not New Testament worship of God. Hebrews 8:7-13 (NAS) says, *“⁷For if that first covenant had been free of fault, no circumstances would have been sought for a second. ⁸For in finding fault with the people, He says, “BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL BRING ABOUT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND THE HOUSE OF JUDAH, ⁹NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS ON THE DAY I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND TO BRING THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DID NOT CARE ABOUT THEM, SAYS THE LORD. ¹⁰“FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT WHICH I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, DECLARES THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. ¹¹“AND THEY WILL NOT TEACH, EACH ONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EACH ONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, ‘KNOW THE LORD,’ FOR THEY WILL ALL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM. ¹²“FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TOWARD THEIR WRONGDOINGS, AND THEIR SINS I WILL NO LONGER REMEMBER.” ¹³When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear.*

Now the author of Hebrews does not tell us what Old Testament prophet they are quoting but a close parallel is found in Jeremiah 31:27-40. Please read it for yourself but here is a sample, Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NAS) *“³¹Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. ³³“For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD: “I will put My law within them and write it on their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴They will not teach again, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their wrongdoing, and their sin I will no longer remember.”*

My point is, the old covenant and all of its animal sacrifices is obsolete today because of what Jesus did for the whole world. The whole world includes the Jew and the Gentile, together. Jesus is the only way, so sin and guilt offering after Jesus' resurrection is just silly. This cannot be about any period post Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. It does not hold up to the “all scripture test”. So whatever Ezekiel was talking about, it is either prior to Jesus' crucifixion or it's symbolic. Any other interpretation is challenging other scriptures in a way that is very difficult to defend.

Well, what about the priests. Ezekiel 44:15-31 outlines who can be priests and who can't. To be a priest you must be a Levite from the line of Zadok. This is very specific. As Christians we believe, Jesus is our priest. Our High Priest. But, Jesus is not from the tribe of Levi or the line of Zadok. Reality, there is no need for priests after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. I will use Hebrews again, Hebrews 4:14-16 (NAS)

says, ¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let's hold firmly to our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Therefore let's approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of our need.

Jesus is our priest. We do not need other priests in some future time. And new flash, this is from Hebrews, this letter in the New Testament is writing to the Jews, Israel, the Hebrews. This is their way to heaven just as much as it is ours. There is simply no other way but Jesus. That is what the Bible says.

So all the discussion about priests is either for a time before Jesus or is symbolic. This cannot be about any period post Jesus crucifixion and resurrection. It simply does not hold up to the "all scripture test".

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father. Thank you for your good news. Thank you for your word the Bible. Thank you for giving us the tools and historical accounts, the archeology, the science, to help us understand your message for us. Help us to listen to you as we study and research your word. Help us not to be confused by the many voices and opinions we hear. May we stay focused on your word Lord. Thank you, Jesus, for what you did for me or all of us. We pay in your name Lord Jesus, Amen.

So, okay. I do not know which interpretation is correct. The Temple and worship and land allotments that Ezekiel saw has not been fulfilled by history, this is true. It is possible that Israel simply did not follow God's directive and suffered because of it, just like they did over and over again in the Old Testament. It is equally possible these visions are symbolically talking about Jesus, Jesus' ministry and Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection.

The descriptions of sacrifices and offerings has always bothered me. Jesus put an end to the need for sacrifices when He died on the cross and rose from the dead. Now I believe Jesus once and for all ended the need for sacrifices, with His atoning death on the cross.

I'm actually very relieved that this vision and what it represents could be done and over in history past. It just makes more sense that it is pre-Jesus with all the offering and sacrifices but of course it could be symbolic but no one can prove that either.

Thank you for joining me @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. If you liked the message, please click like. And Please Subscribe to our channel. Leave comments here, or our website or mail me. I want your feedback so let me know what you think.

See you next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.