

Ezekiel 45:1-8, 47:13-48:35 - The Division Of The Land

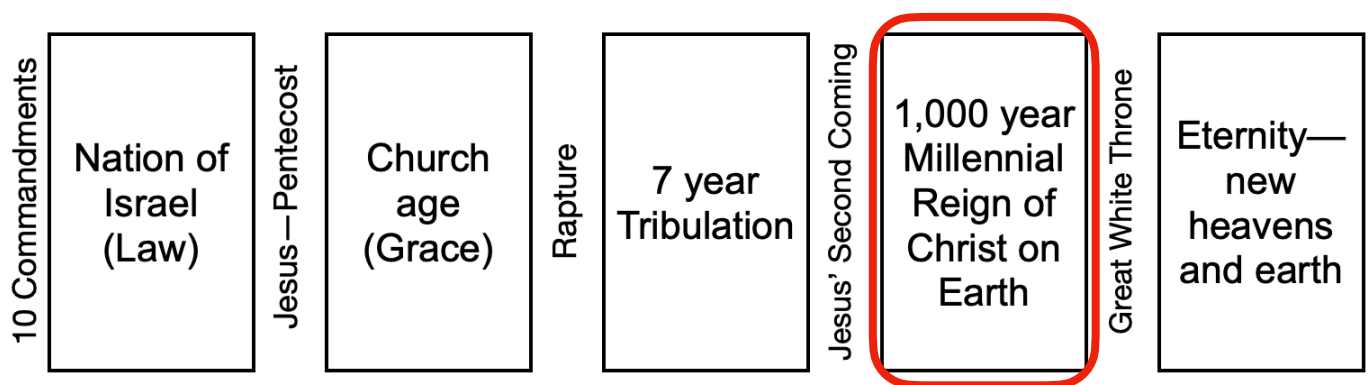
Memory Verse

Ezekiel 36:26-27 NKJV

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Introduction

Ezekiel chapters 40-48 describe places, buildings, land allocations, and worship that are a part of Jesus' Millennial Kingdom, when He comes back to earth from heaven and He reigns for a thousand years on a beautifully renovated earth. The chart below shows when this fits in God's plan of the ages (red outline). The vertical writing represents the events that mark the transition from one time period (or dispensation) to the next.



Outline of Ezekiel 40-48

Chapter 40—The measurement of the courts of the temple

Chapter 41—The measurements of the temple

Chapter 42—The outer court being described

Chapter 43—The glory of God returns to the temple and the altar described.

Chapter 44—Only the sons of Zadok will be allowed to go into the inner court; the other priests were not faithful.

Chapter 45—Describes how the land around the temple/city is divided up, and that the Passover will be one of the feasts observed each year.

Chapter 46—Describes the sacrificial offerings that will be made, and how the temple will be closed throughout the week and only open on the sabbath.

Chapter 47—Describes the river of living water that flows from the temple, and the boundaries of the Land of Israel.

Chapter 48—Describes the divisions of the lands given to each of the 12 tribes of Israel, and the gates of the city of Jerusalem.

Revision

So far we have seen in Ezekiel chapters 40-44:16:

- The angel give the measurements and pattern for the Millennial Temple to Ezekiel (40-42)
- God (Jesus) comes to take His rightful place on the throne which is inside the temple, which He calls "My Throne". The throne represents authority over all creation. (43:1-12)

- The altar for burnt offerings and the instructions for its consecration including animal sacrifices (43:13-27)
- The shut eastern gate and the prince. The outer eastern gate of the temple complex will be shut forever because Jesus went in there, *and He will never leave—a picture of our eternal security*. The prince (very likely king David) will have access to the chamber of the gate where he will eat before the LORD. (44:1-3)
- Only the family of priests who had been faithful in Ezekiel's day, the sons of Zadok (whose name means righteous), would be allowed to serve in the temple itself. They would enjoy the glorious, delightful, heavenly, and extraordinary privilege of ministering and fellowshiping in the direct presence of the LORD Jesus in the temple itself. The other priests who had followed the rest of the nation into idolatry in Ezekiel's day would be limited to serving the people, as they loved to do when they offered sacrifices to the idols on behalf of the people. Each of us must choose—*will I be a man pleaser or a God pleaser—will I be motivated by what pleases God, or by what pleases man*. (44:4-16)
- Real holiness starts in the heart and is expressed in; who we marry, our appearance, teaching and doing what is right from the Word of God, and most importantly total surrender to the LORD God so that we are trusting and walking in His strength (rest) and not our own (sweat). (44:17-27)
- God promised that He would be the priest's inheritance, that He would provide for them. The same is true for the believer today. Will I trust that God will provide for all my needs, and that what He has waiting for me is far greater and far more glorious than anything that this world can offer me. (44:28-31)
- Worship is willing obedience motivated by gratitude and love for God (see Genesis 22). For my life to be an acceptable act of worship (see Romans 12:1), I must be:
 1. Just and righteous (godly and not worldly) in thought, word, and deed (45:8-12)
 2. Willing to Sacrifice - it must cost me something, the cost being giving up what I want so I can do what God wants (45:13-17)
 3. Contrite (penitent, repentant) - keep short accounts with God and others (45:18-20)
 4. Full of gratitude as I remember all that God has done and will do for me (45:21-25)
 5. Resting in the Lord (the Sabbath reality), meaning I live by grace and rely on His power (faith in God, not law keeping by self-effort) (46:1-11)
 6. Feeding on God's Word daily so I don't forget (46:12-15)
 7. Set free—the year of Jubilee or Liberty is a picture of Christ setting me free from the bondage of sin (46:16-18)
 8. In fellowship with God and others—private and public worship (46:19-24)

Introduction

This week we cover:

1. The borders of the land (47:13-23)
2. The allocation of the land to the twelve tribes (48:1-8, 23-29)
3. The holy district set apart for the Lord (45:1-8, 48:8-22)
4. To be or not to be—faithful—that is the question (48:11)

We'll start from the outside and work our way inwards. First we'll see what the borders of the Land of Israel will be in the Millennium, then see how it will be divided up, and then learn about the Holy District that will be in the middle of the land. There is also a not so subtle reminder of the consequences of unfaithfulness.

1. The borders of the Land

Ezekiel 47:13-14 NKJV—The complete fulfilment of the promise of the Land

Thus says the Lord God: “These are the borders by which you shall divide the land as an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph shall have two portions. ¹⁴ You shall inherit it equally with one another; for I raised My hand in an oath to give it to your fathers, and this land shall fall to you as your inheritance.

As we go through these final chapters of Ezekiel that describe the borders and division of the land we will continue to see incredible detail and very specific instructions. “This emphasises that this was not a symbolic or spiritual land, God gave specific **borders** to mark it. There was real land that would be given to the real **twelve tribes of Israel.**” (David Guzik)

v 13 **These are the borders by which you shall divide the land:** The boundaries which will be described are essentially the same as what God gave to Moses in Numbers 34:1-15.

v 13 **Twelve tribes:** Once again we come back to God’s promise to reunite the divided nation in Ezekiel 37:19-28. From the time that the exiles returned to Judah and Jerusalem at the end of the 70 year Babylonian captivity, they would be one kingdom made up of the all the twelve tribes—“Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; ²² and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again” (Ezekiel 37:21-22 NKJV).

“Although the nation had been divided politically for nearly four hundred years, as in the case of all his prophetic colleagues Ezekiel’s vision of Israel’s future is based on the tradition of a united nation consisting of twelve tribes of Israel descended from Jacob’s twelve sons.” (Block) *Conspiracy theory officially debunked—there are no lost tribes.*

v 13 **Joseph shall have two portions:** Why does Joseph get two portions? Because there are actually 13 tribes of Israel. It seems that God has always wanted the land to be divided 12 ways with the Levites taking the role of being the priestly tribe with Himself as their inheritance. In Old Testament times the Levites were scattered among the other 12 tribes. However, in the Millennium they will be allocated a relatively small amount of land close to the temple, where they will be working as assistants to the priests.

The creation of the extra tribe goes back to Genesis 48 where Jacob, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, “adopts” or takes two of Joseph’s sons to be as his own sons. In essence, the single tribe of Joseph is replaced with the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, although in the Old Testament and in the book of Revelation the names are sometimes used interchangeably.

Genesis 48:3-6 NKJV

Then Jacob said to Joseph: “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, ⁴ and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.’ ⁵ **And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.** ⁶ Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance.

v 14 **I raised My hand in an oath to give it to your fathers, and this land shall fall to you:** For those who believe the replacement theology lie, which teaches that the church has replaced Israel, here is another clear statement that *God still intends to give the land of Israel to the children of Israel—the twelve tribes of Israel*. There is simply no way that God could be more emphatic that the land of Israel will always belong to the children of Israel—**“I have raised My hand in an oath to give it to your fathers.”** God is showing us here that the Millennium will be the final and complete fulfillment of all the promises made to the nation of Israel.

“Again, God emphasised that this was a real land that would continue and fulfill the promises of a real land to Israel’s patriarchs. God made these promises to:

- Abraham in Genesis 13:15 and 15:18
- Isaac in Genesis 26:3
- Jacob in Genesis 28:13” (David Guzik)

Looking at the map as we read verses 15-20 will help you to understand the following verses as most of the place names are unfamiliar to us.

Ezekiel 47:15-20 NKJV—The Millennial borders of the Land of Israel

15 “This shall be the border of the land on the north: from the Great Sea, by the road to Hethlon, as one goes to Zedad, 16 Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim (which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath), to Hazar Hatticon (which is on the border of Hauran). 17 Thus the boundary shall be from the Sea to Hazar Enan, the border of Damascus; and as for the north, northward, it is the border of Hamath. This is the north side.

18 “On the east side you shall mark out the border from between Hauran and Damascus, and between Gilead and the land of Israel, along the Jordan, and along the eastern side of the sea. This is the east side.

19 “The south side, toward the South, shall be from Tamar to the waters of Meribah by Kadesh, along the brook to the Great Sea. This is the south side, toward the South. 20 “The west side shall be the Great Sea, from the southern boundary until one comes to a point opposite Hamath. This is the west side.

v 15 **This shall be the border of the land:** This is the border of the land of Israel during the Millennium when Jesus reigns as the Messiah and King. Only at one time in history has Israel ruled or controlled this much territory, and that was during Solomon’s reign (see 1 Kings 4:24).

“In his commentary, Daniel Block has a very good map. As he envisions it, if these borders were put upon a modern map it would include all of Lebanon and good portion of Syria (including Damascus). It would *not* include modern Jordan or Egypt, and *not* extend southward to modern Eilat.” (David Guzik)

“The description shows that this is *not* the eternal state. “The western boundary was the Great Sea (v.20; cf. Numbers 34:6). In contrast the land of God’s people in the eternal state will have no sea since the sea will no longer exist (Revelation 21:1).” (Alexander)

Another obvious difference between the eternal state (the New Heavens and the New Earth) and the Millennial reign of Christ is that during the Millennium there is a temple, whereas in the eternal state there is not—“But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light” (Revelation 21:22-23 NKJV).

2. The allocation of the land to the twelve tribes

Ezekiel 47:21-23 NKJV—The command to divide the land between the twelve tribes

²¹ “Thus you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. ²² It shall be that you will divide it by lot as an inheritance for yourselves, and for the strangers who dwell among you and who bear children among you. They shall be to you as native-born among the children of Israel; they shall have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. ²³ And it shall be that in whatever tribe the stranger dwells, there you shall give him his inheritance,” says the Lord God.

v 21 **Thus you shall divide this land:** God specifies where each tribe will live. There is no choice here. God will have all the tribal boundaries marked out.

v 22 **You will divide it by lot:** The members of each individual tribe would have to work out, within their tribe's portion of land, exactly where each family would live. To make it fair, they would do it by lot. They will subdivide their tribe's portion of land and then randomly assign each family to an area of land to live on and farm.

v 22-23 **And for the strangers who dwell among you ... there you shall give him his inheritance:** This is very generous. Strangers or non-Israelites get the same treatment as the Israelites—as **native-born among the children of Israel**. This equal treatment of strangers goes even beyond the generous rights given to them in the Old Testament (see Exodus 22:21-23; 23:9; Leviticus 19:10; 33-34; 23:22; Deuteronomy 14:29; 24:14-15, 17-22).

“It is based on the principle that if these men choose to accept the standards, the religion and the way of life within Israel as a permanency, i.e. as proselytes who settle and have children there (22), then they are entitled to the same treatment as native Israelites.” (Taylor)

Looking at the map as we read verses 21-23 will help you to understand the following verses as it gives a visual picture of how the land will be portioned out. Seven of the tribes receive land north of Jerusalem, and 5 to the south, simply because there is more land to the north above the holy district where Jerusalem and the temple are situated. The list starts with the tribe of Dan to the north.

Ezekiel 48:1-8 NKJV—The land given to the seven northern tribes

“Now these are the names of the tribes: From the northern border along the road to Hethlon at the entrance of Hamath, to Hazar Enan, the border of Damascus northward, in the direction of Hamath, there shall be one section for Dan from its east to its west side; ² by the border of Dan, from the east side to the west, one section for Asher; ³ by the border of Asher, from the east side to the west, one section for Naphtali; ⁴ by the border of Naphtali, from the east side to the west, one section for Manasseh; ⁵ by the border of Manasseh, from the east side to the west, one section for Ephraim; ⁶ by the border of Ephraim, from the east side to the west, one section for Reuben; ⁷ by the border of Reuben, from the east side to the west, one section for Judah; ⁸ by the border of Judah, from the east side to the west, shall be the district which you shall set apart, twenty-five thousand cubits in width, and in length the same as one of the other portions, from the east side to the west, with the sanctuary in the centre. ...

Ezekiel 48:23-29 NKJV—The land given to the five southern tribes

23 “As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side to the west, Benjamin shall have one section; **24** by the border of Benjamin, from the east side to the west, Simeon shall have one section; **25** by the border of Simeon, from the east side to the west, Issachar shall have one section; **26** by the border of Issachar, from the east side to the west, Zebulun shall have one section; **27** by the border of Zebulun, from the east side to the west, Gad shall have one section; **28** by the border of Gad, on the south side, toward the South, the border shall be from Tamar to the waters of Meribah by Kadesh, along the brook to the Great Sea. **29** This is the land which you shall divide by lot as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel, and these are their portions,” says the Lord God.

From its east to its west side: The land was portioned out in horizontal bands, stretching from the eastern boundary of the land to the western boundary of the land (the Mediterranean Sea), with one tribe underneath the next, from Dan in the north to Gad in the south.

v 1 **For Dan:** “Curiously, Dan is omitted in a listing of the tribes regarding the 144,000 in Revelation 7. Many think it was because Dan was the first tribe to embrace idolatry (Genesis 49:16–17 and Judges 17–18). Now, as a demonstration of God’s great grace, not only is Dan included, they are listed *first*.” (David Guzik)

v 8, 23 **By the border of Judah, from the east side to the west, shall be the district which you shall set apart ... As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side to the west, Benjamin:** Sandwiched between the horizontal bands of land assigned to **Judah** and **Benjamin** is the **district which you shall set apart**, which we’ll read about in the next section. It’s quite possible that Judah and Benjamin get the privilege of being closest to the temple and city of Jerusalem because they were the most faithful tribes throughout Israel’s history.

v 29 **This is the land which you shall divide by lot as an inheritance:** God never did and He never will forget or forsake His people; they will all receive their inheritance.

3. The holy district set apart for the Lord (45:1-8, 48:8-22)

Ezekiel 48:8 NKJV—The Holy District in the centre of the land

By the border of Judah, from the east side to the west, shall be the district which you shall set apart, twenty-five thousand cubits in width, and in length the same as one of the other portions, from the east side to the west, with the sanctuary in the centre.

Right in the middle of the land portioned out to each of the twelve tribes of Israel, in-between the land given to Judah to the north and Benjamin to the south, will be a section of land measuring 25,000 cubits square. The cubit measure used here is the “royal cubit” (see 40:5) which is roughly half a metre long, meaning that the district set apart for the Lord is about 13 kilometres square, or 169 km². The Bible here uses length to represent east to west, and width to represent north to south. The city of Jerusalem will be at the centre of the southern part of this square portion of land, and the sanctuary in its centre (see diagram).

The square of land will be divided three ways; the north section being for the Levites, the central section for the priests of Zadok and the temple, and the southern section containing the city of Jerusalem and its common land (see diagram). One thing to notice is that the city of Jerusalem will not belong to any one tribe, being located in this “set apart” district.

Ezekiel 48:9-12 NKJV—The Lord's portion, given to the priests of Zadok

“The district that you shall set apart for the Lord shall be twenty-five thousand cubits in length and ten thousand in width. ¹⁰ To these—to the priests—the holy district shall belong: on the north twenty-five thousand cubits in length, on the west ten thousand in width, on the east ten thousand in width, and on the south twenty-five thousand in length. The sanctuary of the Lord shall be in the centre. ¹¹ It shall be for the priests of the sons of Zadok, who are sanctified, who have kept My charge, who did not go astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray. ¹² And this district of land that is set apart shall be to them a thing most holy by the border of the Levites.

Ezekiel 45:1-4 NKJV

“Moreover, when you divide the land by lot into inheritance, you shall set apart a district for the Lord, a holy section of the land; its length shall be twenty-five thousand cubits, and the width ten thousand. It shall be holy throughout its territory all around. ² Of this there shall be a square plot for the sanctuary, five hundred by five hundred rods, with fifty cubits around it for an open space. ³ So this is the district you shall measure: twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand wide; in it shall be the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. ⁴ It shall be a holy section of the land, belonging to the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, who come near to minister to the Lord; it shall be a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary.

“The student of Ezekiel’s prophecy is struck again and again with the mass of details and particulars that characterise the last nine chapters of the book. This is the strongest and most irrefutable argument against taking these chapters in an allegorical or symbolical or spiritualising sense.” (Feinberg)

Looking at the diagram, you’ll notice that the portion of the land that God has kept for Himself is the middle section of this Holy District. It’s 25,000 cubits or about 13km long (east/west), and 10,000 cubits or 5.2km wide (north/south). It is where the priests of Zadok will build their homes and also where the temple complex will be. This section of land will be *most* holy to the Lord, as it will be where He lives, in the temple.

In the centre of this portion of land will be the temple complex. This includes the temple itself, as well as the inner and outer courts that were all described in exquisite detail in Ezekiel chapters 40-43. This temple complex is 500 cubits or about 250m square. It will be surrounded by a walled area (square plot, see 45:2) 500 rods or about 3 kilometres square (9 km²). This will be plenty of room for people to gather to fellowship before and after worshipping in the outer court of the temple complex.

Application: To be or not to be—faithful—that is the question

Here there is also a reminder to us as to why the priests of Zadok were allowed to serve in the inner court in the direct presence of God where the people and other Levites were not allowed; the priests of Zadok were faithful to the Lord when the other Levites went astray and helped lead the people into idol worship.

Ezekiel 48:11 NKJV

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

There are three main consequences for choosing to *not* love God with my whole heart and seek satisfaction in the world instead:

—loss of an intimate relationship with God now

—loss of reward at the Bema Seat Judgement

—loss of opportunity to serve in Christ's Millennial Kingdom on earth

1. Missing out on an intimate relationship with God now

I must remember that only those with clean hands and pure hearts, those who forsake all idols, will see the Lord.

Psalm 24:3-6 NKJV

Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? ⁴ **He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.** ⁵ He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. ⁶ This is Jacob, **the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face.**

I only have two choices. I can choose to live like the Levites in Ezekiel's day, who chose the easy life (to be popular and accepted by the majority of the people), worshipped idols, and enjoyed the the passing pleasures of sin (see Hebrews 11:25). However, they paid a very high price—a loss of intimacy with God. *The Levite's exclusion from the inner court of the temple and the temple itself (where Jesus will live during the Millennium), is a powerful picture of a superficial or unrewarding relationship with God.* My own relationship with God will also be superficial, shallow, and unrewarding if I allow sin, other people, or other things to become idols—an idol being anything which I allow to become more important to me than God—anything which steals my heart or turns my affections away from God.

OR, I can choose to live like the priests of Zadok did. They get to live in close proximity to the temple, having daily access to the inner court and temple itself where Jesus lives. Why? Because they were faithful. *They chose not to love the world or the things that are in the world, but to love God instead.*

1 John 2:15-17 AMP

Do not love or cherish the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, [agape, volitional not emotional] love for the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh [craving for sensual gratification] and the lust of the eyes [greedy longings of the mind] and the pride of life [assurance in one's own resources or in the stability of earthly things]—these do not come from the Father but are from the world [itself]. ¹⁷ And the world passes away and disappears, and with it the forbidden cravings (the passionate desires, the lust) of it; **but he who does the will of God and carries out His purposes in his life abides (remains) forever.**

James 4:4-10 AMP

You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? **So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God. [what stand am I taking in this life?]**

⁵ Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, **The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us and He yearns for the Spirit [to be welcome] with a jealous love?** [Jeremiah 3:14; Hosea 2:19]

6 But He gives us more and more grace (power of the Holy Spirit, to meet this evil tendency and all others fully). That is why He says, God sets Himself against the proud and haughty, **but gives grace [continually] to the lowly (those who are humble enough to receive it).** [Prov. 3:34.]

⁷ So be subject to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you.

⁸ *Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognise that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery].*

⁹ *[As you draw near to God] be deeply penitent and grieve, even weep [over your disloyalty]. Let your laughter be turned to grief and your mirth to dejection and heartfelt shame [for your sins].*

¹⁰ Humble yourselves [feeling very insignificant] in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you [He will lift you up and make your lives significant].

Remember that an idol is any person, desire, ambition, sin, or other thing in my life that I allow to become more important than God—anything that I give my affections, time, resources, money, talents, gifts and devotion to ahead of God. God wants all of me: He won't settle for second place—God has a **jealous love**—*God is not jealous of me, but jealous for me because He wants the best for me, and I will only find that best in intimate relationship with Him.*

2. Loss of reward at the Bema Seat Judgement

It's important that every believer remember that they will have to give an account for every thought, word, and deed to God (Jesus), at the Bema Seat Judgement, the believers reward judgement. The questions I must ask myself concerning the things I am doing in my life right now are these: do these things thing have any eternal value (reward), and do I want to hear Jesus say to me on that day, "*Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord*" (see Matthew 25:14-30).

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 NLT paraphrase

Because of God's grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation **must be very careful.** ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ. ¹² Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. ¹³ **But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value.** ¹⁴ **If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward.** ¹⁵ **But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.** [Also see 1 Peter 1:7]

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 AMP

Therefore, whether we are at home [on earth away from Him] or away from home [and with Him], **we are constantly ambitious and strive earnestly to be pleasing to Him.**

¹⁰ **For we must all appear and be revealed as we are before the judgment seat of Christ,** so that each one may receive [his pay] according to what he has done in the body, whether good or evil [**considering what his purpose and motive have been, and what he has achieved, been busy with, and given himself and his attention to accomplishing**].

3. Loss of opportunity to serve in Christ's Millennial Kingdom on earth

I must also remember that only those who are sanctified can now, and will later, be used by the Lord. If I am willing to cleanse or sanctify myself from worldly things then God can use me in His kingdom—both *now* and *in the Millennium*. Don't lose your reward—"Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward" (2 John 8 NKJV). *It doesn't mater how we started, but it does matter how we finish*. Consider the following verses carefully.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NKJV

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ **And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified [set apart],** but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. [faith without works is dead—James 2:14-2:24]

2 Timothy 2:20-21 NKJV

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour. ²¹ **Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.**

2 Corinthians 7:1 NKJV

Therefore, having these promises [of close and intimate relationship with God (see the preceding verses in 2 Corinthians 6:17-18)], beloved [love is our motive], **let us cleanse ourselves** [it must be our choice but done in God's power—Philippians 2:12-13] from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Ezekiel 48:13-14 NKJV—The portion given to the Levites

"Opposite the border of the priests, the Levites shall have an area twenty-five thousand cubits in length and ten thousand in width; its entire length shall be twenty-five thousand and its width ten thousand. ¹⁴ And they shall not sell or exchange any of it; they may not alienate this best part of the land, for it is holy to the Lord.

Ezekiel 45:5 NKJV

⁵ An area twenty-five thousand cubits long [13km] and ten thousand wide [5km] shall belong to the Levites, the ministers of the temple; they shall have twenty chambers [in the temple complex] as a possession.

This northern section of the holy district is exactly the same dimensions as the middle section set aside for the priests of Zadok (~13 km by 5 km, ~65 km²). This land will be set aside for the Levites, who will not be allowed to sell or exchange any of it. The Levites are descendants of Levi (as are the priests of Zadok), one of Jacob's twelve sons.

It's interesting to notice that this is described as "**this best part of the land**" (48:14). This shows God's mercy towards the unfaithful Levites in that He didn't put them aside or disqualify them altogether because of their unfaithfulness during the days of Ezekiel and the kings of Judah and Israel. However, just like any unfaithful or worldly or

immature believer today who chooses to *not* love God with their whole heart and seek satisfaction in the world instead, they also experienced and will experience:

- loss of an intimate relationship with God back then
- loss of reward when they stand before Christ
- loss of opportunity to serve in Christ’s Millennial Kingdom on earth

The role of the Levites will be to serve at the temple, assisting and supporting the work of the priests, *but only in the outer courts*—because of their past unfaithfulness, God will refuse them access to the inner court and His direct presence in the temple itself for the entire 1,000 years.

Just imagine what will be going through their minds each day for 1,000 years they see the priests of Zadok who were faithful enjoying being in the direct presence of God; thankfulness that they belonged to God and that they were actually a part of His kingdom, thankfulness that God in His mercy gave them any role at all; but also deep regret that, when they had the opportunity, they weren’t willing to go against the evil flow of this world.

Remember that Israel was given to us as an example, to teach us. May we learn from their lessons, and especially this one concerning the priest of Zadok and the Levites.

1 Corinthians 10:1-11 NLT paraphrase—*Lessons from Israel’s Idolatry*

I don’t want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors [the Israelites] in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. ² In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptised as followers of Moses. ³ *All of them ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ.* ⁵ *Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.*

⁶ **These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, ⁷ or worship idols as some of them did.** As the Scriptures say, “The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry.” ⁸ And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day.

⁹ Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites. ¹⁰ And don’t grumble as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death. ¹¹ **These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age.**

Remember God’s warning to believers:

1 Corinthians 3:14-15 AMP

If the work which any person has built on this Foundation [any product of his efforts whatever] survives [this test], he will get his reward. ¹⁵ But if any person’s work is burned up [under the test], he will suffer the loss [of it all, losing his reward], though he himself will be saved, but only as [one who has passed] through fire. [Job 23:10.]

What about unbelievers? Jesus doesn’t beat around the bush. He cares too much about each person’s individual soul to not be completely honest with them.

Matthew 16:26 NLT paraphrase

*“And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but **lose your own soul?** Is anything worth more than **your soul?**”*