

**International Sunday School Lesson  
Study Notes  
November 23, 2014**

**Lesson Text: Ezekiel 47:13-23  
Lesson Title: Transformed Inheritance**

**Introduction**

In the last two chapters of Ezekiel, chapters 47-48, Ezekiel's attention is directed to a river which will flow from the millennial temple and to the boundaries and divisions of the Promised Land. In the millennial kingdom, the boundaries of the tribes will be altogether different from what they were before Israel went into Babylonian captivity. The boundaries of the land described in our lesson text today will be similar to how Moses described them in Numbers 34, but each tribe's allotment will cut straight across the land.

When God gave Ezekiel the vision of the Promised Land boundaries in the millennial kingdom, God's people had been exiled from their land and were in Babylonian captivity. The people had lost their inheritance as a result of their sin and disobedience. Boundaries and tribal identity was marred. The words God gave Ezekiel in our lesson text were words of hope and encouragement. The inheritance God had promised Israel would be renewed and restored.

In Genesis 13:14-17 and Genesis 15:17-21, God promised Abraham and his descendants the land of Palestine for an inheritance. That land, known as the Promised Land, was given to Abraham and his descendants through the mercy and grace of God. The original inheritance and land allotments is detailed in Numbers 34:1-12. The territory and land promised to Israel has always had precisely defined borders. Since there were no survey capabilities in that day, borders and boundaries were recorded based on cities, towns or rivers. The Promised Land started with the south boundary of Canaan (Numbers 34:3-5), then moved to the western border, which was the Mediterranean Sea (Numbers 34:6). Next came the north border (Numbers 34:7-9), the east border (Numbers 34:10-13), and the portion for allotted for the Transjordanic tribes (Numbers 34:14-15). All the land allotments and boundaries were exactly as God wanted them to be.

**The Basis of the Transformed Inheritance (Ezekiel 47:13-14)**

Verse 13

“Thus saith the Lord GOD; This shall be the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph shall have two portions.”

“Thus said the Lord GOD” is the way in which God identified Himself to Ezekiel when introducing a new action (Ezekiel 43:18; 44:9; 45:9; 46:1). It is clear from the words “the Lord GOD” that the message Ezekiel was about to receive was clearly of divine origin. The basis of the original promise of land to Abraham’s descendants originated with God and the borders of the transformed inheritance will also originate with “the Lord GOD.”

“This shall be the border” or the boundaries “whereby ye shall inherit” or divide “the land.” The land was to be divided “according to the twelve tribes of Israel.” The words “according to the twelve tribes of Israel” must have been hopeful words. They presuppose that every tribe would be represented when the captives returned from Babylon.

The “twelve tribes of Israel” is a reference to Jacob’s twelve sons, born over a period of approximately twenty-three years through four different mothers. The names of Jacob’s twelve sons are: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph and Benjamin (Genesis 49).

Ezekiel is told that “Joseph shall have two portions.” The “two portions” or two parcels of land was given to Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 48:1-22), whose descendants formed two of the twelve tribes. Ephraim and Manasseh each had a separate inheritance. This is in keeping with the promise of Jacob to Joseph (Genesis 48:5-6; 49:22-26). The double blessing or “two portions” for Joseph meant that instead of producing one tribe, he would produce two! Since the tribe of Levi did not have land for an inheritance, the “two portions” through Joseph made up the “twelve portions of land for inheritance” (Deuteronomy 10:9).

#### Verse 14

“And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: concerning the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers: and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance.”

The children of Israel will “inherit” or possess their allotted land equally, or “one as well as another.” This means that although the people had lost their tribal identities after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, they will recover them in the Messiah’s kingdom. The distribution of the land will be based upon the original tribal names, and each tribe will receive the same amount of territory.

The words “lifted up mine hand” is a phrase unique to Ezekiel’s prophecy (Ezekiel 20:5-6, 15, 23, 88, 42). It means “to swear.” The words “I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers” means that God had sworn an oath or made a promise that His people would inherit the Promised Land. “And this land shall fall unto you for inheritance” simply means God is going to give His

people who has lost everything, everything! No enemy, physical or spiritual, will be able to stop God from giving His people this promised inheritance. These words must have been encouraging to the captives as they lived in the midst of powerful Assyria and Babylon.

Believers today live in the midst of some mighty powerful opponents of Christianity, truth, and the promises of God. We should be reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul, *“For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day”* (2 Timothy 1:12). Paul also wrote, *“Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it”* (1 Thessalonians 5:24). The Apostle John writes, *“...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4).

### **The Borders of the Transformed Inheritance (Ezekiel 47:15-21)**

#### Verse 15-16

“And this shall be the border of the land toward the north side, from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad; Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazarhatticon, which is by the coast of Hauran.”

Ezekiel’s vision describes “the border of the land” beginning with the “north side,” and moving in a clockwise position east, south, and west. Naturally, Ezekiel described the borders using names that existed in his day. The northern boundary begins “from the great sea” which is Mediterranean Sea, which is near an area called “Hethlon,” near or in Syria.

“As men go” is a reference to traveling or places where one road would lead to another. “Zedad” is on the north boundary of Canaan. “Hamath” is possibly a location in Syria. “Berothah” is located near Damascus. King David mentions this place in 2 Samuel 8:8. “Sibraim” is also believed to be an area near Damascus. While there is no absolute certainty as to the exact locations of these places today, rest assured they are places and territories within the inheritance of God’s people.

“The border of Damascus” is most likely a reference to the capital of Syria. “Hamath,” as previously mentioned is possibly a location in Syria. The location “Hazarhatticon” means “the middle village” and was a place “by the coast of Hauran” which is south of Damascus.

#### Verse 17

“And the border from the sea shall be Hazarenan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath. And this is the north side.”

The name “Hazarenan” means “the village of springs” and is an area northeast of Damascus. “Hamath” means “fortress” and is located in Syria. “And this is the north side” means the boundaries have been described. “The northern border will stretch east from the Mediterranean Sea north of the modern city of Tripoli and will include what was then the northern border of Syria.” (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.*)

Remember, although man may not actually be able to identify all of these places in a modern day map, the God who created them knows exactly where they are and which of the twelve tribes will occupy that land.

God also knows His children! The Apostle Paul said, “*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his...*” (2 Timothy 2:19).

#### Verse 18

“And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel by Jordan, from the border unto the east sea. And this is the east side.”

The “east side” or eastern border will “measure” or extend “from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel by Jordan.” That means the edge of Israel’s territory will go along the southern border of Syria until it reaches the Jordan River south of the Sea of Galilee.

“And this is the east side” of the land means this is the eastern border.

#### Verse 19

“And the south side southward, from Tamar even to the waters of strife in Kadesh, the river to the great sea. And this is the south side southward.”

The “south side” or southern border is “from Tamar even to the waters of strife in Kadesh.” “Tamar,” which means “palm trees,” is the last town of Judea located by the Dead Sea. From “Tamar” the borders proceed “to the waters of strife in Kadesh.” The “waters of strife” refers to the waters of Meribotk Kadesh in the Desert of Sin near Kadesh-Barnea (Numbers 20:1-13).

From there the borders run to the “river” which refers to the Brook of Egypt and then on to the Mediterranean Sea, called “the river of the great sea.” That “is the south side southward.”

#### Verse 20

“The west side also shall be the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This is the west side.”

The western border of the Promised Land will be the Mediterranean Sea, referred to as “the great sea from the border.” The border will go along the shoreline in the south to a border “over against Hamath” in the north.

### Verse 21

“So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel.”

With the geographical boundaries of the land now given to Ezekiel, the Lord again orders the land to be “divided according to the tribes of Israel.” This is a prelude to the division of the land recorded in Ezekiel 48. Clear and specific directions are given as to the manner of distribution and allotment of land to each of the tribes.

### **The Blessing of the Transformed Inheritance (Ezekiel 47:22-23)**

#### Verse 22-23

“And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord GOD.”

For the “stranger” to be included in the transformed inheritance of Israel is indeed a blessing. The “stranger” was a Gentile who was often poor, needy, oppressed and often abused. It would have been easy for the Jew to reject the “stranger” or look down upon them.

Just because Israel and the Jewish people were called to be a separated people, that didn’t mean they were a selfish people. While Israel was without question God’s chosen people they were taught to show hospitality and care for the “strangers” (Exodus 22:21; 23:9). While Israel did show favor to “strangers,” in previous divisions of the land, no division of land was given to “strangers.” But in Ezekiel’s division of land, the “strangers” were to have an inheritance.

Gentile foreigners living among the Jews will receive a portion of land in the millennial distribution. The “strangers” inheritance will most likely be in the allotment of land assigned him in the tribe where he sojourned. Of course, no foreigners will be living among the Jews unless they have become true believers. These foreigners are to be treated the same as native-born Israelites and allowed to raise their families within the nation of Israel (Leviticus 19:34;

24:22; Numbers 15:29). Foreigners and their families will receive an inheritance within the borders of the tribe they settle among.

## **Conclusion**

Although Israel never fully occupied the land God gave them, and although some nations today claim Israel's land for their own, God's promise concerning Israel's inheritance of land has not been rescinded.

There is a new distribution of land in the future for God's people. Ezekiel saw the land being distributed from north to south, giving Dan a portion, then Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah. Judah's southern boundary will be marked out as the prince's and priest's portion. South of this will be Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad. There is no reason to question that what Ezekiel saw and recorded is anything less than literal places and boundaries.

The glorious vision Ezekiel saw and recorded have never been fulfilled. But they will be fulfilled in the future millennial kingdom after the rapture of the church and the second coming of Christ.

If you are a born-again believer, you too have an inheritance. Peter said, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:3-9).*

Amen.