

EZEKIEL

Chapter 48

“These are the names of the tribes: Beginning at the northern extreme, beside the way of Hethlon to Lebo-hamath, as far as Hazar-enan (which is on the northern border of Damascus over against Hamath), and extending from the east side to the west, Dan, one portion. 2 Adjoining the territory of Dan, from the east side to the west, Asher, one portion. 3 Adjoining the territory of Asher, from the east side to the west, Naphtali, one portion. 4 Adjoining the territory of Naphtali, from the east side to the west, Manasseh, one portion. 5 Adjoining the territory of Manasseh, from the east side to the west, Ephraim, one portion. 6 Adjoining the territory of Ephraim, from the east side to the west, Reuben, one portion. 7 Adjoining the territory of Reuben, from the east side to the west, Judah, one portion. 8 “Adjoining the territory of Judah, from the east side to the west, shall be the portion which you shall set apart, 25,000 cubits in breadth, and in length equal to one of the tribal portions, from the east side to the west, with the sanctuary in the midst of it. 9 The portion that you shall set apart for the LORD shall be 25,000 cubits in length, and 20,000 in breadth. 10 These shall be the allotments of the holy portion: the priests shall have an allotment measuring 25,000 cubits on the northern side, 10,000 cubits in breadth on the western side, 10,000 in breadth on the eastern side, and 25,000 in length on the southern side, with the sanctuary of the LORD in the midst of it. 11 This shall be for the consecrated priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept my charge, who did not go astray when the people of Israel went astray, as the Levites did. 12 And it shall belong to them as a special portion from the holy portion of the land, a most holy place, adjoining the territory of the Levites. 13 And alongside the territory of the priests, the Levites shall have an allotment 25,000 cubits in length and 10,000 in breadth. The whole length shall be 25,000 cubits and the breadth 20,000. 14 They shall not sell or exchange any of it. They shall not alienate this choice portion of the land, for it is holy to the LORD. 15 “The remainder, 5,000 cubits in breadth and 25,000 in length, shall be for common use for the city, for dwellings and for open country. In the midst of it shall be the city, 16 and these shall be its measurements: the north side 4,500 cubits, the south side 4,500, the east side 4,500, and the west side 4,500. 17 And the city shall have open land: on the north 250 cubits, on the south 250, on the east 250, and on the west 250. 18 The remainder of the length alongside the holy portion shall be 10,000 cubits to the east, and 10,000 to the west, and it shall be alongside the holy portion. Its produce shall be food for the workers of the city. 19 And the workers of the city, from all the tribes of Israel, shall till it. 20 The whole portion that you shall set apart shall be 25,000 cubits square, that is, the holy portion together with the property of the city. 21 “What remains on both sides of the holy portion and of the property of the city shall belong to the prince. Extending from the 25,000 cubits of the holy portion to the east border, and westward from the 25,000 cubits to the west border, parallel to the tribal portions, it shall belong to the prince. The holy portion with the sanctuary of the temple shall be in its midst. 22 It shall be separate from the property of the Levites and the property of the city, which are in the midst of that which belongs to the prince. The portion of the prince shall lie between the territory of Judah and the territory of Benjamin. 23 “As for the rest of the tribes: from the east side to the west, Benjamin, one portion. 24 Adjoining the territory of Benjamin, from the east side to the west, Simeon, one portion. 25 Adjoining the territory of Simeon, from the east side to the west, Issachar, one portion. 26 Adjoining the territory of Issachar, from the east side to the west, Zebulun, one portion. 27 Adjoining the territory of Zebulun, from the east side to the west, Gad, one portion. 28 And adjoining the territory of Gad to the south, the boundary shall run from Tamar to the waters of Meribah-kadesh, from there along the Brook of Egypt to the Great Sea. 29 This is the land that you shall allot as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel, and these are their portions, declares the Lord GOD.

Ch 48 Two aspects of restoration to God’s favor are highlighted: (1) all the redeemed share alike in its privileges and obligations, and (2) the blessings bestowed are a permanent possession. The 12 tribes of Israel and the land they receive for an inheritance foreshadow what is in store for all among whom God is pleased to dwell. The land is divided into parallel strips of equal width and length, in contrast to the division of the land under Joshua, which was based on the sizes of the various tribes (Jsh 14–21). The equal divisions here emphasize that each tribe will have a place among God’s people, despite their earlier disobedience and failures (cf Ac 20:32; Col 1:12–14). (TLSB)

48:1 *Dan*. Occupies its historical location as the northernmost tribe (see the phrase “from Dan to Beersheba,” giving northern and southern boundaries—e.g., in Jdg 20:1; 1Sa 3:20). Dan was born to Rachel’s maidservant Bilhah (Ge 35:25). (CSB)

Hazarenan. As a NT parallel to the equal portions of land granted to the twelve tribes, one can note in Rev 7:4–8 the equal numbers of sealed believers from each tribe that total the one hundred forty-four thousand who comprise the new Israel. (CC)

48:2 *Asher*. Born to Leah’s maidservant Zilpah (Ge 35:26). The tribes descended from maidservants were placed farthest from the sanctuary (see Dan, v. 1; Naphtali, v. 3; Gad, v. 27). (CSB)

48:3 *Naphtali*. Born to Rachel’s maidservant Bilhah. (CSB)

48:6 *Reuben*. Leah’s firstborn (Ge 29:31). (CSB)

48:7 *Judah*. Son of Leah (Ge 35:23). He had the most prestigious place, bordering the central holy portion (v. 8), because his tribe was given the Messianic promise (Ge 49:8–12). (CSB)

48:8–22† An expansion of 45:1–8. For geographic and topographic reasons a schematic division of the land into parallel strips of equal length and width was an idealistic rather than an actual, realistic program. As Ezekiel’s temple was not built by human hands, so the envisioned promised land need not be acquired by weapons of war. It is God’s to give to a people restored to his favor “in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light” (Col 1:12; cf. Ac 20:32). (CSB)

Before listing the inheritances in the south, the holy portion, the allotment for the city, and the property of the prince are described once more (cf 45:7–8). (TLSB)

48:14 *not sell or exchange*. Since it was the Lord’s, it was not to be an object of commerce. (CSB)

48:18–19 *workers of the city*. The city is not exclusive to the Levites. (TLSB)

48:19 *from all the tribes of Israel*. The sacred district was national property, not the prince’s private domain. (CSB)

48:23–29 The first territory below this well-defined area (vv 8–22) was assigned to Benjamin. The portions of Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad followed in that order, from east to west. The focus in ch 48 is decidedly on Judah; cf 48:1–7. The glorious future has appeared in prophetic vision. The new covenant is described in terms of the old provisions. The immediate future and the more distant scenes of the messianic Kingdom merge in a single panoramic view of God’s accomplished salvation to the ends of the earth. (TLSB)

48:23 *Benjamin*. Rachel’s son (Ge 35:24). (CSB)

48:24 *Simeon*. Leah's son (Ge 35:23). (CSB)

48:25 *Issachar*. Leah's son (Ge 35:23). (CSB)

48:26 *Zebulun*. Leah's son (Ge 35:23). (CSB)

48:27 *Gad*. Son of Zilpah, Leah's maid. (CSB)

47:13–48:29 Just as the temple complex symbolized ideal worship and the river symbolized God's blessings flowing to His people, the land apportionment symbolizes God's abundant grace. Each tribe is welcomed back. In the new covenant, God has reconciled every person to Himself—including you. The blood that flowed from Christ's hands, feet, and riven side supply life to all who believe. • Father, I know that many still do not believe in Your Son. Use me to carry this message of salvation to all. Amen (TLSB)

The Gates of the City

30 “These shall be the exits of the city: On the north side, which is to be 4,500 cubits by measure, **31** three gates, the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah, and the gate of Levi, the gates of the city being named after the tribes of Israel. **32** On the east side, which is to be 4,500 cubits, three gates, the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin, and the gate of Dan. **33** On the south side, which is to be 4,500 cubits by measure, three gates, the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar, and the gate of Zebulun. **34** On the west side, which is to be 4,500 cubits, three gates, the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher, and the gate of Naphtali. **35** The circumference of the city shall be 18,000 cubits. And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD Is There.”

48:30–35 As all the tribes receive a portion of land, so they all have access to the holy city—through four gates, each of which is assigned to three tribes. The city is not an earthly Jerusalem. Revered and worshiped in His sanctuary, God's presence will also hallow the labors and lives of all redeemed, reconciled sinners. (TLSB)

48:31 *Reuben ... Judah ... Levi*. The three most influential tribes—Reuben, the firstborn; Judah, the Messianic tribe; Levi, the tribe of the priesthood—had gates together on the north side. Since Levi was included in this list, Joseph (v. 32) represented Ephraim and Manasseh in order to keep the number at 12. For the gates cf. Rev 21:12–14. (CSB)

48:35 *THE LORD IS THERE.*† The great decisive word concerning the holy city; in Hebrew *Yahweh-Shammah*, a possible wordplay on *Yerushalayim*, the Hebrew pronunciation of Jerusalem. For other names of Jerusalem see 23:4; Isa 1:26; 60:14; 62:2–4, 12; Jer 3:17; 33:16; Zec 8:3. God's presence will always hallow the labors and lives of all redeemed, reconciled sinners, until in “the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God” there “will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Rev 21:2–4). (CSB)

Reconciled with God and declared a communion of saints, the former servants of sin bring to their Redeemer the sacrifices of praise and a sanctified life. They need not worry that the supply of royal gifts will give out, for they flow from the throne of grace in streams that grow in abundance. Nor will there ever be a moment when the gracious, protecting presence of the Shepherd/King in His flock will be in doubt, for it will always be true that “The LORD Is There” (cf 34:23–24; Rv 21:2, 4; see “be with,” p 5). Luth: “This everlasting kingdom, however, contains in addition such immeasurable, glorious blessings as forgiveness of sins, peace with God, security against everlasting death and all evil, communion with the Divine Majesty and with all angels and saints, joy and pleasure in the whole creation, even in a physical

sense. For this same body, which is now the old body, shall also become new, together with the whole creation, as the soul has already begun to become new in faith” (AE 35:290). (TLSB)

48:30–35 The idealized promised land is the prophetic symbol of a place in time in which the type of worship described previously will be possible. This is the era of the Holy Christian Church and of heaven; the place is the redeemed, restored community of saints, gathered from every nation and race on the earth. “The LORD Is There” (v 35) symbolizes what God has done for you through Jesus Christ. He has become your God. Through the forgiveness of sins, He dwells with you forever. God keeps His covenant! • Lord, You are faithful. Your mercy grants me eternal life through the blood of Christ Jesus, my Lord. Amen.