Ezekiel 48

The LORD Is There: Every Tribe a Place, Every Tribe a Gate

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Every tribe gets a place, every tribe gets a gate, and God's house sits at the center of it all. Ezekiel's book began with exiles far from home and the glory leaving the city; it ends with a city whose very name is "The LORD is there." That's the whole point of the land, the temple and the city — God with His people.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

EZEKIEL 48 (KJV), MARKED

Gold God — His character & actions
Green Command / instruction
Sky Key repeated word
Rose Sin / warning
Violet Promise / blessing
Amber Time / place / contrast

1 Now these are the names of the tribes. From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazarenan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath; for these are his sides east and west; a portion for Dan.

2 And by the border of Dan, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Asher.

3 And by the border of Asher, from the east side even unto the west side, a portion for Naphtali.

4 And by the border of Naphtali, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Manasseh.

5 And by the border of Manasseh, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Ephraim.

6 And by the border of Ephraim, from the east side even unto the west side, a portion for Reuben.

7 And by the border of Reuben, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Judah.

8 And by the border of Judah, from the east side unto the west side, shall be the offering which ye shall offer of five and twenty thousand reeds in breadth, and in length as one of the other parts, from the east side unto the west side: and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it.

9 The oblation that ye shall offer unto the LORD shall be of five and twenty thousand in length, and of ten thousand in breadth.

10 And for them, even for the priests, shall be this holy oblation; toward the north five and twenty thousand in length, and toward the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand in breadth, and toward the south five and twenty thousand in length: and the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in the midst thereof.

11 It shall be for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok; which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray.

12 And this oblation of the land that is offered shall be unto them a thing most holy by the border of the Levites.

13 And over against the border of the priests the Levites shall have five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth: all the length shall be five and twenty thousand, and the breadth ten thousand.

14 And they shall not sell of it, neither exchange, nor alienate the firstfruits of the land: for it is holy unto the LORD.

15 And the five thousand, that are left in the breadth over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane place for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs: and the city shall be in the midst thereof.

16 And these shall be the measures thereof; the north side four thousand and five hundred, and the south side four thousand and five hundred, and on the east side four thousand and five hundred, and the west side four thousand and five hundred.

17 And the suburbs of the city shall be toward the north two hundred and fifty, and toward the south two hundred and fifty, and toward the east two hundred and fifty, and toward the west two hundred and fifty.

18 And the residue in length over against the oblation of the holy portion shall be ten thousand eastward, and ten thousand westward: and it shall be over against the oblation of the holy portion; and the increase thereof shall be for food unto them that serve the city.

19 And they that serve the city shall serve it ★ out of all the tribes of Israel.

20 All the oblation shall be five and twenty thousand by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the ⇄ holy oblation foursquare, with the possession of the city.

21 And ◷ the residue shall be for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the ⇄ holy oblation, and of the possession of the city, over against the five and twenty thousand of the oblation toward the east border, and westward over against the five and twenty thousand toward the west border, over against the portions for the prince: and it shall be the ⇄ holy oblation; and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the midst thereof.

22 Moreover from the possession of the Levites, and from the possession of the city, being in the midst of that which is the prince's, between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin, shall be for the prince.

23 As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side unto the west side, ◷ Benjamin shall have a portion.

24 And by the border of Benjamin, from the east side unto the west side, Simeon shall have a portion.

25 And by the border of Simeon, from the east side unto the west side, Issachar a portion.

26 And by the border of Issachar, from the east side unto the west side, Zebulun a portion.

27 And by the border of Zebulun, from the east side unto the west side, Gad a portion.

28 And by the border of Gad, at the south side southward, the border shall be even from Tamar unto the waters of strife in Kadesh, and to the river toward the great sea.

29 ★ This is the land which ye shall divide by lot unto the tribes of Israel for inheritance, and these are their portions, ▲ saith the Lord GOD.

30 And these are the goings out of the city on the north side, four thousand and five hundred measures.

31 And ★ the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi.

32 And at the east side four thousand and five hundred: and three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, ★ one gate of Dan.

33 And at the south side four thousand and five hundred measures: and three gates; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun.

34 At the west side four thousand and five hundred, with their three gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali.

35 It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, ▲ The LORD is there.

Marked in the text

- **v1** ⇄ these are the names of the tribes
- **v1** ★ a portion for Dan
- **v7** ◷ a portion for Judah
- **v8** ▲ the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it
- **v9** ▮▮ The oblation that ye shall offer unto the LORD
- **v10** ⇄ holy oblation *(every occurrence)*
- **v10** ▲ the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in the midst thereof
- **v11** ★ which have kept my charge
- **v11** ⚠ which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray
- **v12** ▲ a thing most holy
- **v14** ▮▮ they shall not sell of it, neither exchange
- **v14** ▲ for it is holy unto the LORD
- **v15** ◷ the city shall be in the midst thereof
- **v19** ★ out of all the tribes of Israel
- **v21** ◷ the residue shall be for the prince
- **v23** ◷ Benjamin shall have a portion
- **v29** ★ This is the land which ye shall divide by lot unto the tribes of Israel for inheritance
- **v29** ▲ saith the Lord GOD
- **v31** ★ the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel
- **v32** ★ one gate of Dan

- **v35** ▲ The LORD is there

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 48:1 (KJV)

1 Now ⇄ these are the names of the tribes. From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazarenan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath; for these are his sides east and west; ★ a portion for Dan.

Setting

This is the last chapter of the temple vision dated "in the twenty-fifth year of our exile" (40:1), about 573 BC, and the last chapter of the book. Ezekiel's ministry began with the glory of God appearing to an exile by the river Chebar (ch 1); he watched that glory leave the temple and the city (chs 10–11) and return to a new temple (43:1–5). Chapter 47 set the outer borders of the land. Now the land is divided among the tribes, the holy district is laid out, and the city receives its twelve gates and a new name.

Structure

- vv1–7 — **seven tribes north:** "Now these are the names of the tribes" (v1). From the northern border southward, in east–west strips: "Dan, one portion" (v1), then Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben and Judah (vv2–7).
- vv8–12 — **the holy allotment and the priests:** next to Judah lies "the allotment which you shall set apart," with "the sanctuary shall be in the middle of it" (v8). "The allotment that you shall set apart to the LORD" (v9) belongs to the priests, the sons of Zadok, "who have kept My charge, who did not go astray when the sons of Israel went astray" as the Levites did (v11). It is "a most holy place" (v12).
- vv13–14 — **the Levites' land:** a strip of equal size beside the priests. "They shall not sell or exchange any of it," "for it is holy to the LORD" (v14).
- vv15–20 — **the city:** the remaining strip is "for common use for the city" (v15), with the city in its middle, a square of 4,500 cubits on each side (v16) and open land around it (v17). Its farmland feeds the city's workers (v18). "The workers of the city, out of all the tribes of Israel" shall cultivate it (v19). "The whole allotment shall be 25,000 by 25,000 cubits" (v20).
- vv21–22 — **the prince's land:** what remains on both sides of the holy allotment and the city belongs to the prince, between Judah and Benjamin (vv21–22).
- vv23–29 — **five tribes south:** "As for the rest of the tribes" (v23): Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun and Gad (vv23–27), with Gad's southern border at Tamar and Meribath-kadesh (v28). "This is the land which you shall divide by lot" (v29).
- vv30–35 — **the gates and the name:** twelve gates, three on each side, "named for the tribes of Israel" (v31): Reuben, Judah, Levi (north); Joseph, Benjamin, Dan (east); Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun (south);

Gad, Asher, Naphtali (west) (vv31–34). "The city shall be 18,000 cubits round about; and the name of the city from that day shall be, 'The LORD is there'" (v35).

Repeated words

tribes (vv1, 19, 23, 29, 31); allotment (vv8, 9, 10, 12, 18, 20, 21); holy (vv10, 12, 14, 18, 20, 21); sanctuary (vv8, 10, 21); city (vv15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 30, 31, 35); gate(s) (vv31, 32, 33, 34); prince (vv21, 22).

Contrasts

the sons of Israel and the Levites "went astray" ⟷ the sons of Zadok "kept My charge" (v11). The holy allotment that may not be sold (v14) ⟷ land "for common use" (v15). Northern tribes ⟷ southern tribes, with the sanctuary between them (vv1–29). Dan, first to fall into idolatry ⟷ Dan, first in the list and given a gate (vv1, 32). The glory gone from the city (chs 10–11) ⟷ "The LORD is there" (v35).

Chapter theme (my words)

Every tribe gets a place, every tribe gets a gate, and God's house sits at the center of it all. Ezekiel's book began with exiles far from home and the glory leaving the city; it ends with a city whose very name is "The LORD is there." That's the whole point of the land, the temple and the city — God with His people.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 48:10 (KJV)

10 And for them, even for the priests, shall be this ⇄ holy oblation; toward the north five and twenty thousand in length, and toward the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand in breadth, and toward the south five and twenty thousand in length: and ▲ the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in the midst thereof.

The tribes in their places (vv1–7, 23–29)

The land is cut into parallel strips running from the Mediterranean to the Jordan, seven north of the holy district and five south of it. Unlike Joshua's division, no tribe settles east of the Jordan. The sons of Jacob's wives' maidservants — Dan, Asher, Naphtali and Gad — are placed at the far ends, while Judah and Benjamin sit on either side of the holy allotment. Feinberg, in Guzik, describes them as "Judah and Benjamin, the tribes which remained faithful to the Davidic dynasty." Dan is missing from the tribal list in Revelation 7; Guzik notes that many connect this with Dan's early idolatry (Judg 18:30–31) and sees Dan's place here, first on the list, as a demonstration of God's grace.

The holy allotment (vv8–14)

At the center is a square district, 25,000 cubits on each side (v20), holding the land of the priests, the land of the Levites and the city. The priests are the sons of Zadok, rewarded for faithfulness when others went astray (44:15). The land is holy to the LORD, "this choice portion of land" (v14) — the Hebrew word is *reshith*, the first and best — and it may not be sold or traded. What belongs to God isn't for bargaining.

The city and its workers (vv15–20)

The city sits in a strip "for common use," not inside the holy district, and is about a mile and a half square — Wright, in Guzik: "about a mile and a half square." Its workers come "out of all the tribes of Israel" (v19), so the city belongs to the whole nation, not one tribe. Guzik takes the measurements literally and quotes Feinberg that such detail is "inexplicable, if all the statements are to be taken symbolically." The prince's land frames the holy district on east and west (vv21–22), so he is provided for and need not take the people's land (45:8; 46:18).

How should we read it?

As with chapters 40–47, Christians differ. Guzik reads the whole division literally, as the arrangement of the land in Messiah's millennial kingdom, citing Feinberg, who compares the detail to the instructions for the tabernacle. Others see an idealized picture of a restored people ordered around God's presence, fulfilled in Christ and consummated in the new Jerusalem, whose twelve gates also bear the names of the tribes of Israel (Rev 21:12–13). Guzik notes the likeness to Revelation 21 but says the two are not identical.

Twelve gates (vv30–34)

In the gates Levi has its own gate and Joseph's two tribes count as one, so the twelve gates bear the names of Jacob's twelve sons. Guzik cites Block that ancient city walls usually had only one gate, and Feinberg that the gates symbolize unity. A city with twelve gates is a city built for entering.

"The LORD is there" (v35)

Hebrew *Yahweh Shammah*. Guzik connects it to the glory leaving the temple in chapters 10–11 and returning in chapter 43, and to God dwelling with His people in Revelation 21:3; with Wiersbe, he lists it among the seven compound names of the LORD. The book that opened with a priest in exile seeing God's glory in a foreign land closes with God's presence as the name of the city. The story of the Bible moves the same way: from Eden, to the tabernacle, to the temple, to Immanuel — God with us (Matt 1:23) — to the new Jerusalem, where God Himself dwells among His people.

Word study (Hebrew)

- **tribe — *shebet* (H7626):** a rod, staff; by extension a tribe.
- **allotment — *terumah* (H8641):** a contribution, offering, portion set apart.
- **sanctuary — *miqdash* (H4720):** holy place, sanctuary.
- **holy — *qodesh* (H6944):** holiness, a holy thing, set apart.
- **charge — *mishmereth* (H4931):** a watch, duty, obligation kept.
- **go astray — *taʿah* (H8582):** to wander, err, go astray.
- **sell — *makar* (H4376):** to sell.
- **exchange — *mur* (H4171):** to change, exchange.
- **choice portion — *reshith* (H7225):** beginning, first, best part; firstfruits.
- **common — *chol* (H2455):** common, profane, not holy.
- **city — *ʿir* (H5892):** a city, town.
- **inheritance — *nachalah* (H5159):** inherited portion, possession.
- **gate — *shaʿar* (H8179):** gate, entrance.
- **name — *shem* (H8034):** name, renown, character.
- **there — *shammah* (H8033):** there, thither — as in *Yahweh Shammah*.

Cross-references

Gen 49:1–28; Num 34:1–12; Josh 14:1–5; Judg 18:30–31; Ps 46:4–5; Ps 132:13–14; Isa 60:14; Jer 3:17; Ezek 10:18–19; Ezek 11:22–23; Ezek 43:1–7; Ezek 44:15; Zech 2:10–11; Matt 1:23; John 1:14; John 14:23; 2 Cor 6:16; Rev 7:4–8; Rev 21:2–3; Rev 21:12–13; Rev 22:3–4.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 48:11 (KJV)

11 It shall be for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok; ★ which have kept my charge, ⚠ which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray.

Command to obey — "they shall not sell or exchange any of it"

(v14). What is holy to the LORD isn't up for trade. My time with Him, my marriage, my integrity, the ministry He's given me — I won't sell them for convenience or swap them for something that looks better this week. A man in recovery learns that the one thing he can't trade away is his sobriety, his first allegiance; my first allegiance is to the Lord.

Sin to confess — going astray with the crowd

The sons of Zadok "did not go astray when the sons of Israel went astray" (v11). It's easy to drift when everyone drifts. I confess where I've let the crowd around me set my standard instead of God's charge.

Warning to heed — faithfulness shows up later

The sons of Zadok's faithfulness was remembered generations later; so was the unfaithfulness of others (44:10–15). What I do in the dark years matters in the bright ones. For a man doing time, the choices he makes in the cell will be remembered on the outside.

Promise to trust — "The LORD is there"

(v35). The book that began in exile ends with God's presence. For the man who thinks God left him in a prison yard, a detox ward or a dark apartment, this is the last word: God's goal is to be with His people. In Christ He is already with me (Matt 28:20), and one day the whole city will bear His name.

Example to follow — a gate for every tribe

Even Dan, the first to fall into idolatry, has a gate (v32). God made room for every tribe. When I build tools, write books and gather men, I want to build with many gates — a way in for every man, whatever his story.

Worship

The LORD keeps His promises to the last tribe and the last border. He sets His sanctuary at the center of His people. He remembers the faithful, makes room for the failed, and names His city by His own presence: The LORD is there.

Prayer

Lord GOD, You are the point of everything — the land, the temple, the city. Be at the center of my life. Keep me from going astray with the crowd and from trading what is holy. Open Your gates wide to the men I serve, and let each one find his place among Your people. Thank You that in Jesus You are with us now, and that one day we'll live where Your name is "The LORD is there." Amen.