

Dr. Leslie Allen, Ezekiel, Lecture 23, Vision of Temple Stream, Renewing the Land and New Israel, Ezekiel 47:1-48:35

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This is Dr. Leslie Allen in his teaching on the book of Ezekiel. This is session 23, Vision of Temple Stream, Renewing the Land, the New Israel, Ezekiel 47:1-48:35.

We come now to the closing chapters of the book of Ezekiel, chapters 47 and 48. And these are a continuation of the vision of 43 through 46, the conclusion of that vision in 47:1-12. And we have here the vision of the temple stream, renewing the land, and we're going to move on to the territory of the New Israel.

And we shall see that these two themes are very much interrelated, that they come as different forms, the latter very pragmatic and geographical, and the former one representing an imaginative vision. In 43 to 46, we found visionary narrative used as an introduction to practical organizational material. Similarly, here in 47:13 through 48:35, we shall find that these latter verses, 47:13 through 48:35, will go on to deal with the extent of the land and its tribal divisions.

And this is after that vision of 47:1-12. And so the vision and the geographical lessons, as we shall see, both have a common theme, the close bond between temple and land. 47:1-12, first of all, this vision has the same style of guidance, measurement, and explanation as we found at work in chapters 40 through 42. But now, explanation is given the major role in verses 8 through 12.

Verses 1 through 12 have a literary frame, the water issuing from the temple as its source. We mention this in verse 1, where water flows from below the threshold of the temple, and this is picked up again at the end of verse 12. The water for them flows from the sanctuary, so there is a careful frame around this particular section.

In fact, this water, eventually called a river, dominates the whole passage. In the explanation, verses 8 to 12, there is a focus on healing. In our English text, it appears in verse 12, where it says, their leaves shall not wither, nor their fruit fail.

They will bear fresh fruit every month, and it goes on to say the fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing. But where the Hebrew text is concerned, that's the second time healing is mentioned, but as so often, our translations let us down and don't give identical readings where you have the same Hebrew words. And in fact, in verse 8, healing is mentioned there.

The water will become fresh. Literally, the water will become healed. You can't really give that in an English translation, but it might have been useful to put it down there as a footnote. And so, the water will become fresh, and literally, the water will be healed.

The Dead Sea will be dead no longer, but it was to have new vitality as fresh water. There are four stages in this visionary narrative: verse 1, verse 2, 3 through 6a, and then 6b through 7. Each begins with the prophet being led by the angel to a new location. In the third stage, verses 3 to 6a, the longest section, there's a fourfold series of the prophet being taken from place to place.

Notice verse 6. There's something mentioned in verse 6 that should remind us of something that's come earlier. At the end of verse 6, well, the beginning of verse 6, rather, 6a, God said to me, mortal, have you seen this? Mortal, have you seen this? And this is a question we've had very often in those earlier parts of that earlier vision, chapter 8, verses 6, 12, and 17. God kept asking the same question: have you seen this? And so, there's a parallelism here, but the context is so much different now.

In the same way, special attention is being brought to a new feature. But in verse 8, the question, in verse 8, the question was set in a negative context, and here it's put in a positive setting, in a sort of reversal of chapter 8. After those nasty surprises that God drew Ezekiel's attention to in chapter 8, it is thankfully time to speak of a wonderful surprise. This vision is a climactic conclusion to the earlier ones.

It has a metaphorical, imaginative quality, somewhat like the Dem Bones vision in chapter 37. And like that one, it's certain by its imagery to have stayed in the minds of the listening exiles and to foster their hope. Stage 1 comes in verse 1, and this begins the story by saying that the temple is going to become a source of blessing for the land.

But in verse 1, the angelic guide has brought the prophet back to the temple building. He's evidently climbed the steps, crossed the porch, and is now standing at the threshold to the nave of the temple. He looks down, and he sees a trickle of water coming up from the threshold.

His eye follows the water as it runs out into the porch, down the steps, and into the inner court. He watches, and it goes down the right-hand side of the steps, and then it turns left a little way along the south wall of the porch. Then, it turns left again, crossing the inner court towards the inner east gatehouse. This is a detour, a necessary detail for the water because it's got to avoid the altar in the midst of the court, which stood between the temple and the east gate.

And so, the water can pass on the south side of the altar and then move straight forward in and through the east gatehouse and down the steps of that east gatehouse. And the presupposition is, I hope that the doors are not shut, and the water can flow through. Perhaps there was an opening in it, and they could go under the doors.

And so, then Ezekiel wants to follow the course of the water, but he's not allowed to go out through that inner east gate. And so, he, too, has to make a detour. And so the angel had to take Ezekiel on this long detour, out of the inner court, through the inner north gate, across the outer court to the outer north gate, then round the outside wall to the right, turning right at the corner, until he came to the outside of the outer east gate, which too he wasn't allowed to go through.

And there was the stream of water. It had come a much more direct way, apart from its own little detour. And evidently, it had flowed down through the outer court, through the outer gatehouse, and down the steps into non-temple land.

We can observe that the water takes the same route as God in coming into the temple area and into the temple, but in reverse. And it does so as God's instrument. The water can do what people can't.

This is the second stage of the vision we've reached in verse 2. The third stage comes in verses 3 through 6a, a longer section corresponding to the bigger area traveled. The water flows eastward, ever eastward, and it gets stronger and deeper all the time. The angel and the prophet follow its course.

The angel keeps measuring their progress. About every 600 yards, the angel stops and measures the depth of the water. At each measuring point, they go into the water and walk into it.

That's how they're measuring that, using the measuring line for the distance, the 600 yards. But then they go into the water and find out how far it comes up them, and so how deep it had become. Until it's too deep to go into on foot.

It's now a river. Now, there's something very strange here. Because in real life, we can envision a river increasing in size, getting deeper and wider.

But that's because of one or two conditions. It may be that there's a water drain-off, or there are tributary streams joining that river. But neither is evidently the case here.

This is a miracle. It's growing wider and deeper by itself. It's a miracle, like, say, the miracle of feeding the 5,000 in the Gospels.

The increase just happens. There is no thought of rain, runoff, or other streams. Geographically, the course that the river is taking is a river by now. Ezekiel is now walking in the so-called wilderness of Judah, a dry and barren area normally.

The fourth stage of the river is in verses 6b and 7. Evidently, the angel and prophet have been standing in the water at the edge and finding the river impossible to wade through anymore. The angel brings Ezekiel back to the bank of the river, and out they come, both wet and dripping. Ezekiel now notices an oasis of trees on his side of the river. he looks across, and there's also an oasis of trees on the other side.

This is the climax of the vision. The angel and the prophet stay there. Other things happen, but the angel only tells Ezekiel what's going to happen from now on.

But it's time to stop and reflect and tell Ezekiel that there is another installment to the story that he is not going to follow on foot. And in verses 8-12, the angel explains what's going to happen next. The river is going to carry on down through the wilderness of Judah, down to the so-called Arabah, part of the rift valley, that runs all the way from Asia Minor down into Africa, and it includes the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea.

And so, the water, the river, was going to run all down there, and it's going to flow down into the Dead Sea, the angel explains. Another miracle is going to take place when it reaches the Dead Sea, according to the second half of verse 8. When it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh. The water will be healed in the Dead Sea.

And verses 8-10 speak of the healing effect of this river. The water of the Dead Sea has a very high salt content, 25% salt, compared to seawater, which has only 5% salt. And now the Dead Sea, by contrast, is going to become a freshwater lake and a fisherman's paradise with fresh fishing.

Fishing of fresh fish, not saltwater fish. But in verse 11, there's a note of realism. But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh, and they should be left for salt.

If we had read the earlier chapters in greater detail about the regulations for the temple and the maintenance of the temple, we would have found in 43-24 that salt was needed for certain uses in sacrificial rites. And so, here, a source of salt is to be left for the temple's sake—verse 12.

On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. And the angel looks at the trees alongside the river, he noticed them, Ezekiel had noticed them, back in verse 7, but now the angel speaks about them and comments on them. In the future, in real life, apart from this visionary experience, in the future, there will still be real trees growing.

Fruit trees, with fresh fruit every month, are fresh for food. So, a continual supply of food all through the year. And two, these fruit trees weren't going to be deciduous.

The leaves would stay on the trees all year round, and they would have medicinal value and healing power to cure the sick. And so, miraculous trees indeed. The message of the vision is that the new temple will be a source of blessing for the land and so for the people.

To speak of the temple being a source of blessing had always been a traditional role for the temple. And the Psalms had celebrated it. Psalm 133 and verse 3, what does that say? Speaks of the mountains of Zion.

For there, the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore. And then 134 says the same thing, but here in a prayerful wish. May the Lord, maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion.

And so, Zion, and especially the temple, was associated with God's blessing. And pilgrims came to the temple to get blessings, in fact. And we're reminded too, at the end of every festival service there was a special blessing given to the people of God.

And we use it very often as a benediction at the end of services. Numbers chapter 6, verses 24 to 26. The priests say at the end of the festival, the law is that as the pilgrims are about to go home, they're to carry the blessing of God with them.

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. But this benediction, it doesn't work magically, because verse 27 follows, so they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them. I will listen to those prayerful wishes, and I will honor them and answer them in the subsequent lives of those pilgrims.

And there's a fascinating illustration of blessing from the temple, via the priestly benediction, that we have in 2 Chronicles, the end of chapter 30, and the beginning of chapter 31. 2 Chronicles, chapter 20, there's a great Passover celebration. No, it's 30, not 20, I misread my notes.

Hezekiah holds that great Passover in chapter 30, and at the end, verse 27, the priests and the Levites stood up and blessed the people, and their voices were heard, and their prayers came to his holy dwelling in heaven. And so, we would expect, and we get a following narrative, God did bless them real good, and they went home, and they went through the ordinary processes of agriculture, and they couldn't believe it, how they were blessed, and how that blessing came true, in fact. And in 31, the end

of verse 1, then all the people of Israel returned to their cities, all to their individual properties.

In verses 4 through 6, there's a command. He commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites so that they might devote themselves to the law of the Lord. As soon as the word spread, the people of Israel gave in abundance the first fruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and all of the produce of the field.

And they brought in abundance the tithe of everything. The people of Israel in Judah, who lived in the cities of Judah, also brought in the tithe of cattle and sheep, the tithe of the dedicated things that had been consecrated to the Lord, and they laid them in heaps. In the third month, they began to pile up the heaps, all this food, and they finished them in the seventh month.

When Hezekiah and the officials came and saw the heaps, they blessed the Lord and his people, Israel. Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites about the heaps, and the chief priest, Azariah, who was of the house of Zadok, answered him, since they began to bring the contributions into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat, and have had plenty to spare, for the Lord has blessed his people, so they have all this great supply left over. And so that's a wonderful illustration of the blessing that can proceed from that temple benediction at the end of that Passover celebration.

Now, in this vision, we have an association of the temple with a river. And there's a special reason for that. It's not invented in the book of Ezekiel, but it's taken from a psalm, and especially a song of Zion, Psalm 46.

It's celebrating God's presence in Zion, and in the midst of that, in verse 4 of Psalm 46, there is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. And there was this thought given, this imaginative thought of this river in this song of Zion. Actually, there never was a river in Jerusalem.

But there was the Gihon Spring, the Spring of Gihon, which was down in the Kidron Valley on the southeast side of Jerusalem. It's very interesting because the Gihon Spring had religious associations. In 1 Kings, chapter 1, we find that King Solomon is anointed king, and he's taken down to the Gihon Spring for the coronation to take place.

And several times we find mention in 1 Kings 1 of the Gihon Spring. In verse 33, the king, this is David, still alive, said to them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and have my son Solomon ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. And then 38, so the priest, the prophet Nathan, and so on, went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule, and led him to Gihon, a very important place.

Lastly, in 45, the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan anointed him as king at Gihon. And so there it is, religious associations of this particular spring. And what happened in that Song of Zion is that imaginatively, the river was brought up into Jerusalem, and in Ezekiel, it's taken a stage further that the spring is brought into the temple and flows out of the temple nave, the edge of the temple nave.

Of course, in Psalm 46 and in the vision, the river stands as a metaphor. Everybody knew there was no real river in Jerusalem, but it's a metaphor for blessing. There's another psalm that very obviously uses it as a metaphor, and that is Psalm 36, verses 8 through 9. Pilgrims feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them to drink from the river of your delights.

The river of your delights, there's the metaphor, for with you is the fountain of life. And so, there's this watery association with blessing from the temple. And here, in the vision, the temple is the ultimate source of vitality, and food, and healing, as the vision and the river takes its course.

A friend has reminded me that a Christian hymn uses the river metaphor in its own way. Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace, perfect yet it floweth fuller every day, perfect yet it groweth deeper all the way. And there we are, and so the river lives on in Christian song.

The rest of chapters 47 and 48 speak more literally about the land. 47, 13 through 23, gives the geographical extent of the land, and this section functions as an introduction to the tribal allocations of the land in chapter 48. In chapter 48, the temple stands at the dynamic center of the land of Israel.

It's going to be pointed out. These two sections belong together: 47:13 following, and chapter 48. And they function in a pair, and they're written in the same style.

They both got headings. 47:13, these are the boundaries by which you should divide the land for inheritance among the 12 tribes of Israel. And correspondingly, 48 begins, these are the names of the tribes.

And then you've got a summary. 47:21 is the summary, so you shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel. And then 48:29.

This is the land you shall allot as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel, and these are their portions, says the Lord God. And in fact in addition to the similarity in the frames that they both have, both parts start in the north and work their way down to the south in their description of the land. In verse 14, the second part of verse 14, I swore to give the land to your ancestors, and this land shall fall to you as your inheritance.

This verse provides the old theological basis for occupying the land. It was the land promised to the patriarchs and those promises were still valid, Ezekiel is saying. And the assurance must have thrilled the exiles who were now landless.

Earlier in the book, return to the land had been a key theme in the positive post-587 messages of Ezekiel. In chapter 20, return to the land had been portrayed as a second exodus, now from Babylon, so that the old exodus had been used as a type or analogy for a great future work of God. And living again in the land had been a focus of chapters 36 and 37.

And here in 47, we have the term inheritance, that precious word, inheritance. And it functions as a keyword. We've got it in verse 14: this land shall fall to you as your inheritance.

And then it's picked up in 22 and 23. We have inheritance in both of those verses. And this is a very precious word, but also a legal term, a legal term for possession of the land.

It's an important theological word that gives a solid legal standing to God's gracious gift of the land. There are a number of surprises that we have in these two concluding parts of the book. And differences from what we've ever seen before in the preceding history of Israel.

The first occurs in the first half of verse 14. You shall divide it equally. Divide it equally.

And this was something quite different. The tribes had all been of different sorts, sizes, and shapes. But according to Numbers 33:54, the size of the tribal area could vary in each case, and it depended on the various sizes of how many tribal clans it had.

So, it had a lot of clans, a big tribal area, and so on. And so, there was that fair division, that population view of dividing out the tribal properties. But now, an equal amount of land to each tribe.

This basic difference of equality, this innovation of equality, will be developed in Chapter 48 in terms of the tribal strips of territory that are going to be mentioned there. Another surprise, but it does have a biblical precedent, is the geographical extent of the land where its eastern frontier was concerned. In Numbers 34:12, the eastern frontier is here in Jordan.

There is no trans-Jordan land belonging to Israel. However, we find in Deuteronomy 11:24 that the land includes the trans-Jordan, as it does in all the historical books

from Joshua onwards. However, here on this literary map, as in Numbers 13, the trans-Jordan is excluded.

And so, it's going back to an old precedent, way back in Numbers 34. And two, it will affect the layout in the tribal map of chapter 48. Also, the western frontier had never extended as far as the Mediterranean.

But now it will. So, the western frontier is extended, and the eastern frontier is reduced. In 47:13, at the end of that verse, it says, Joseph shall have two tribes.

Of the twelve tribes, Joseph shall have two tribes. This was nothing new. Joseph had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and they were among those twelve tribes.

So that's just the same. That's known from pre-exilic times. There were twelve tribes, according to the listing of Jacob's sons, and these sons actually include, the sons include Levi.

But there's a problem, because here there's a reckoning of twelve secular tribes. Twelve secular tribes. You leave out Levi, you're one short, eleven.

But you make up, by dividing Joseph into two, Ephraim and Manasseh. And so, you've got two, the addition of those two, after subtracting one, you've got twelve secular tribes now. And so, this is what's being followed here, in fact.

So, there are two ways of counting up Israel's twelve tribes, in terms of Jacob's sons, or in terms of secular tribes. Verse 21: So you shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel. This is a virtual heading for chapter 48.

But before we come to 48, we read of a further surprise never known before in the history of Israel. In the second half of verse 22 and into 23. And it's talking now about the resident aliens.

Aliens who reside among you and have begotten children among you. They shall be to you as citizens of Israel. With you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel.

In whatever tribe aliens reside, there you shall assign them their inheritance. Never been known before. Resident aliens had always been landless.

Only natural born Israelites could own land. And in fact, it's like the law in Mexico. Non-Mexicans cannot legally own property.

And so here, your resident alien, sorry, welcome. You've settled in Israel, and you've adopted Israel's faith, but sorry, you're not permitted to own land. Now, one needed land to cultivate and provide material support.

So naturally, resident aliens often fall on hard times. This is reflected in the way that Deuteronomy often characterizes needy people in the community. They speak of widows, orphans, and landless Levites, and resident aliens were also landless.

And the book of Ezekiel, in chapter 22, also gives its own testimony to the suffering of the resident alien. Verse 7 says the alien in Jerusalem suffers extortion. And then verse 29 of chapter 22 said, the people have extorted from the alien without redress.

And here, Ezekiel finds a solution to this economic problem by letting the resident alien own land. They were to be naturalized, as it were. They were to be adopted into their tribal communities as full members of the tribe and so of Israel.

In the, earlier in the Old Testament, in the various laws of the Torah, humane treatment of the resident alien is often commended to Israel. They're to be specially looked after. But there was no teeth to those rulings.

And very often, nobody listened to that. And the resident alien was regarded as a second-class citizen. But now, they're to be landowners, non-Israelites though they are.

So, this is a wonderful surprise at the end of this chapter here. 48:1 to 29, explains the tribal distribution that had been broached in 47:21 and also the equality of the tribal areas, which had been highlighted in 47: 14. The chapter falls into three main parts.

1 to 7, 8 to 22, 23 to 29, with an extra section in 30 through 45. The longest part is verses 8 to 22. And that carefully explains about the reservation.

And we've read a lot of it already earlier on in chapter 45. It was put back there because of its relationship to the king. And so, the king has got adequate land.

And so, remember, there's no call for you to take land from the tribes, from the people at large. And here, this talk of the reservation is put in the very middle of the chapter, at the heart of the chapter. And that nicely corresponds to its geographical placement at the heart of the land, with six tribal areas flanking it on either side.

And we've already read a summarized version of this part in 45:1 to 8. And so, we need not analyze it in detail except to see what its role is in its larger context. This section, as I say, is all about the reservation set aside from the rest of the land for the temple and its personnel, for the city, and for the king. Verses 1 to 7 specify the tribal

elements to the north of the central reservation, whereas verses 23 through 29 supply those to the south.

Because there was no land in Transjordan anymore, that restriction of the land of Israel to the west side of the Jordan meant that there had to be some changes. Because in the Transjordan, traditionally, that had been where Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had resided. And so, they've got to be moved over to the west.

And there seems to be a particular reason for the way that the tribes are organized here. And it seems to be out of respect for patriarchal tradition. There were two types of sons of Jacob.

Some of them were born from the two wives of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel, while others of them were born from Jacob's two concubines. Those latter tribes were Dan and Naphtali, as well as Asher and Gad. And those who were born from the wives were given better places, or shall we say better places closer to the reservation, and so less space to go up as pilgrims to the temple.

They were put nearer the reservation than the concubine tribes. And so, this seems to be the rationale. Those associated with the concubines had areas further away from the reservation.

There's something rather strange here because the tribe of Benjamin, which we think of as north of Jerusalem, is put south of the reservation, and Judah is put north of the reservation. And so, there's a reversal there of what had been true in historical fact. A strange reversion of tradition.

And here again, it seems to be going back to patriarchal tradition because Judah, Reuben, and Levi were all sons of Jacob's wife, Leah. And so, these tribes were put together. They were put near each other.

And so, that meant that Judah ended up north of the reservation and Benjamin to the south. Overall, these tribal areas' equality mentioned in 4714 is explained in their description in chapter 48. Each tribe had a latitudinal strip of territory between the east and west frontiers, the Mediterranean and the Jordan.

Each strip had a longitudinal size of about 8 miles, so there were these 8-mile strips up and down the land. The number 12, which we were first given in 4713 and which is being followed here, was a reminder of the traditional conception of Israel as 12 tribes before the kingdom was divided.

This is rather special because for centuries now, there has been the southern kingdom and the northern kingdom. Judah with a couple of tribes and then Ephraim and Manasseh and other tribes up in the north—divided and separated.

And pre-exilic Judah had forgotten that ideal of 12 tribes because of the stress and strain of history. The relationship between the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom was, at times, very strained. And sometimes, the northern kingdom was the enemy of the south.

And sometimes there was a cold war, sometimes a hot war. But Ezekiel is recalling the exiles to that old ideal. And his neighbor back in Jerusalem, Jeremiah had done the same thing.

In Jeremiah, there's a stress that in the future, the 12 tribes will be reunited. No longer just the southern kingdom, but that old ideal will be maintained afresh. Later on, if you read the Chronicles, those books hold up this ideal of 12 tribes as a sort of theological gold standard that one should be aiming for.

The equal size of the strips was a corrective in past history for the larger tribes to exploit the younger ones. Well, not the younger ones, the smaller ones. And there was this problem that they could use their size as a means of political power at the expense of the small tribes.

And so, there's a political meaning that there should be equality in the land. And then in the reservation, as we saw before, the existence of generous crown lands on either side of the square of the section that belonged to the priests, the Levites, the temple, and the city. This was a polite reminder that the king was no longer to seize his subjects' land, as he'd often done before.

But the fact that he had this large amount of property on either side of the reservation also respected his high rank. And it was alongside these holy places. And so he had a measure of holiness, too.

The tribal layout of the land to the north and south of the reservation honors the central role of the temple and its staff of priests and Levites. Perhaps surprisingly, the extra material that we get at the end of this chapter is devoted to the city. We've had a mention of the city as part of that reservation in verse 22.

The city is part of it, but now this thought of the city is picked up, and this is rather interesting.

The presence of the city in the reservation alongside but separate from the temple area itself ensures that the traditional bonding of temple and city should still be honored. The fact that the king had territory as well in this strip on either side of this

holy land also allowed for that bonding not only of temple and capital but of king as well. They belong together in ancient theological history, and so they will again.

But here, of course, the bonding is loosened because the city and the temple area are different places and the king's palace is not in the city but it's in one of those two strips on the edges. But there is that bonding in that one reservation. But verses 30 following revert to the city.

And hitherto, the city has lost out. There's been accent on the temple all the way through. But it's pointed out that the city was to be a microcosm of the whole people.

And this is rendered symbolically by the fact that the gates of the city 12 gates of the city each on each side are to be named after the 12 tribes. And that symbolizes that the city belongs to Israel to the whole people. The 12 gates are named after those tribes.

That's the symbolic assertion that people of any tribe could live there. There's a different listing because one of the tribes is Levi, and one of the tribes is Joseph. And so you've got that other numbering of the 12 tribes according to the sons of Jacob here, which was over against that geographical reckoning of the 12 tribes in terms of the two secular tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh.

So the ending of the book these two ways of looking at it Ezekiel has the best of both old worlds one might say. Now the names of the tribes are given to the city's gate. But how about God's name? That's given to the city.

And in the last verse, we're told the end of the last verse the name of the city from that time on shall be the Lord is there. Yahweh is there. Now, this is very striking when you think of it in terms of the rest of the book of Ezekiel because if you think of God's presence essentially being initially linked with the temple, and it was in the songs of Zion that it had been extended to Jerusalem.

So, in Psalm 46, you could say Jerusalem is the city of God, the holy habitation of the most high. But that was an extension by grace that God was there in the city, and that presence extended from the temple where, more strictly and theologically, his presence was placed. But this final highlighting of the city still wants to honor that tradition of the old Zion tradition that you get in those songs of Zion.

And so even though geographically the city is now to be in a different place from the temple area for the sake of holiness, having the temple next to the palace has been too close for comfort, and so king's property far away from the temple area but also within a small area still the city of Jerusalem was in a different place from the temple area and so there's a maintaining of this degrees of holiness there. But still, one can

think of the presence of God in the city, and verse 35 affirms that even though the temple was no longer in the city. And so, in this layout, not only was the tradition of Davidic kingship preserved but also the Zion tradition. These were too valuable to discard, so they're combined in this notion of the reservation and also in the name of the new name that's given to the city.

But this final focus on the city does tie up a loose end in the book because Ezekiel chapter 16 and verse 53 had said to Jerusalem I will restore your fortunes, and so not only the people of God were to be restored to the land but I will restore your fortunes Jerusalem, and then we've never heard anything more about that. But here's an affirmation: oh yes, indeed, Jerusalem's fortunes are to be restored, and what better way than enjoying the presence of God? This teaching in chapters 47 and 48 on the lands and tribes is grappling with the biblical tension between the transcendence and imminence of God.

Along with the initial vision in chapter 47, these sections translate this complex theology into an imaginative vision of God's blessing his people from the temple on the one hand and then also into a pragmatic geography of God's people living in harmony and God's presence in the city and also in the temple area. On a larger scale, chapters 47, 40, through 48 have taken up the old theological ideas of temple, covenant, king, and land, and it was those theological themes that have been outlined in the closing verses of chapter 37 and probably 40 to 48 at an earlier stage in the editing of the book stood immediately after chapter 47 and so it was plain you have this theological introduction, and then it's played out in various ways by vision and description in the later chapters. These chapters in 40 to 48 have turned these ideals into imaginative pictures to nourish the hearts of the exiles and into down-to-earth presentations to nourish their minds.

Hearts and minds of the exiles are met in the course of these chapters. And those promises of return to the land that we had in earlier positive messages of Ezekiel 40 to 48 are crowning those promises and so complete Ezekiel's great theme of salvation for the people of God. Salvation that was to follow judgment.

At the heart of this promise salvation would be the renewed presence of God. Still traditionally in the city but more vitally in a new temple area. The temple is to be the magnet that draws the 12 tribes of Israel to itself and holds them together.

And the temple gives Israel its identity and its *raison d'etre*.

This is Dr. Leslie Allen in his teaching on the book of Ezekiel. This is session 23, Vision of Temple Stream, Renewing the Land, the New Israel, Ezekiel 47:1-48:35.