

Raised to Life

The Extreme Extent of God's Ability to Restore

Impossible Hope Series – Part 7

Ezekiel 37; 40:1-48:35

Feb 23, 2024

Introduction

- **My God, My Deliverer – Our God is a God of rescue.** From the moment He created beings (by definition all that He created is lower than He), He has been rescuing them from dangers. Danger means possibility of harm. God built both angelic and human races with danger as a reality because He gave them elements of choice. **A limited being will always fail.** Only God is perfect. **Therefore, danger is inherent in creation.** Therefore, God will always be in a rescuing posture toward His creation. He is the only one that doesn't need help. **Just as Pastor Brian cited last week that the Bible is one big story of redeeming and restoring, so too does the Bible record God rescuing PEOPLE from all sorts of issues.** He saves them from natural catastrophes, from each other, from a broken world, from themselves. Let me give you a short recap of some of the variety of God's famous rescues.
- **A sample list of Biblically recorded miracles of God rescuing:**
 1. Noah's worldwide flood (ark)
 2. Sarah from Abraham's lies
 3. Lot's choices/environment (S&G)
 4. Joseph from rejection, slavery & prison – like Pastor Brian cited last week.
 5. Hebrews from Egyptian oppression
 6. Joshua from war
 7. Gideon from insurmountable odds
 8. Samson from a lion & philistines
 9. Ruth from poverty
 10. David from a giant & assassination
 11. Naaman from leprosy
 12. The Hebrew boys from the fiery furnace
 13. Daniel from a lion's den
 14. Mass healings of every type of disease: paralysis, internal bleeding, withered hands, blindness, & deafness.
 15. Mass deliverances from demons – from 1 to legion.
- **An example List of things we need rescuing from in this modern-life:**
 1. Harmful people
 2. Addiction
 3. Bad choices
 4. Trauma
 5. Extreme poverty
 6. Disease...
- **Is anyone here today struggling with something like that?** The fill in the blank is for you...

There is No PIT That God Cannot LIFT Us Out of

- The **ONE greatest enemy of mankind** that we cannot defeat ourselves and are **entirely dependent on God** for is **DEATH**.
 - **Creation control** - We knew by creating Adam from dust by His own bare hands that **He could construct and reconstruct at any moment**. The bigger question was, would He? Was that in His plan or were we a one-and-done type of race of beings?
 - **OT show outs** - When God resurrected individuals in the Old Testament, we got a taste of what He was capable of. There are **3 resurrections in the OT**: Elijah raising a young man; Elisha raising a young man; & the random guy who was thrown on Elisha's bones. Each of these **demonstrated what God COULD and WOULD on occasion do**.
 - **NT reality** - **Jesus resurrected 3 people** (Jairus' daughter; young man at Nain; Lazarus) during His earthly ministry. But when He got up Himself after death, we learned it was a **whole new ball game** (also many came up from tombs). Suddenly through his people like **Peter & Paul more started getting up** (Tabitha; Eutychus; likely even Paul himself - stoning).
 - **If God can raise the dead, then what are you facing worse than death?**
- **A Favorite Story** – we are able to study one of my favorite stories of **Transformation** in the whole Bible. Will you turn with me to **Ezekiel 37**.

Lesson

- **Valley of Dry Bones**
 - **Ezekiel assesses an impossible situation**
 - **Eze 37:1–3** – *“The hand of the LORD was upon me,¹ and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones.² And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many³ on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord God, you know.”*

¹ “As elsewhere in the book, the arrival of the hand of Yahweh upon the prophet speaks of the overwhelming force with which the prophet perceives himself to have been seized by God, and in this instance carried away... The manner of Ezekiel's translocation is described as by the Spirit of Yahweh (bērûah yhw). The statement introduces the reader to the Leitwort, rūah, which occurs ten times in vv. 1–14. In characteristic Ezekielian style, however, rūah bears at least three different nuances within this unit: agency of conveyance (v. 1), direction (v. 9c), and agency of animation (vv. 5–6). The present phrase, Spirit of Yahweh, occurs elsewhere in the book only in 11:5, where the falling of the Spirit of Yahweh upon Ezekiel is followed by a command to prophesy. But one should distinguish the role of the rūah as agency of prophetic inspiration from its role as agency of conveyance. The present activity bears a closer resemblance to 11:24, according to which bērûah 'ēlohîm, “by the Spirit of God,” explains bēmar'eh, “by a vision,” as the transporting agency. Both are technical expressions associated with trancelike prophetic experiences, and there is no need to suppose a literal physical journey in any of these instances.” NICOT, Daniel Block

² “The scene is striking in three respects. First, the circumstantial clause at the end of v. 1 and the phrase wēhinnēh rabbôt mē'ōd highlight Ezekiel's amazement at the exceedingly high number of bones. The significance of their number will not become apparent until later (v. 10), but the sight suggests the remains of a major catastrophe. Second, the bones lay on the surface of the valley, like the remains of corpses denied a proper burial and left for scavenging buzzards. As an Israelite and especially as a priest, Ezekiel knew how important was the proper treatment of human corpses, and the altered image of graves in the interpretive comments of v. 12 would certainly have been more welcome for the prophet. Third, the prophet is surprised at the bones' extreme dryness, which indicates that the people whose remains they represent have been dead for a long time.” NICOT, Daniel Block

³ “As already intimated, the opening declaration is expository, offering the first clear interpretive statement on the vision. The bones on the surface of the valley do not represent just any victims of Nebuchadrezzar's wars who have been denied a proper burial; they represent the entire house of Israel, including even those who had been exiled by the Assyrians more than 130 years earlier.” NICOT, Daniel Block

- **A vision or a trip?**⁴ – is this an actual physical trip to a normal valley or a visual trip in a prophetic vision? **It seems to be a vision.** It's real enough to Ezekiel and he is interacting with it as if its real. As opposed to just watching a visual demonstration, he is part of the action and what he says, alters the outcome, so it's very **immersive**. But no, this is not an actual army of dead Jews coming to life and having to reintegrate into society. This is a metaphor to make a point.
 - **The hand of the Lord was upon me** – this means that **God took over control and He was going to do something, to show Ezekiel something, whether Ezekiel was on board or not.**
 - **Full of bones** – the first thing that Ezekiel notices is, is **HOW MANY bones there are.** Clearly something went wrong here. He can see them, so they **aren't properly buried**, which means there's dishonor there or no survivors to bury the dead (ultimate catastrophe). And there's so many of them. It's not like a normal battle, it's an enormous battle. We find out later that the number of bones is significant, this is a symbolic view of the **WHOLE** nation of Israel that had rebelled against God, not just recently but the whole falling after the divided kingdom.
 - **They were very dry** – this means that they had been dead for a long time. It wasn't a recent problem but **a historic problem**. The dryness also adds to the impossibility of what is going to happen in a moment. The ancient Jews were relatively familiar (at this time) to resurrection, but it was always someone who recently died. They even had a folklore view that the spirit/soul hung around for a couple of days before it went to its next location (afterlife). The fact that these are so dry means they are **dead-dead**, and there's no chance of anything being done with them other than burying them. It's a **symbol of HOPELESSNESS**.
 - **Can these bones live?** – God asks Ezekiel a question. Why? **To get him involved in the process**, to start thinking the metaphor through. God is asking Ezekiel's current assessment of the situation and whether or not there is hope or possibility.
 - **O, Lord, God, you know** – Ezekiel pushes it back to God, saying, 'I have no idea, but you know, God. Why ask me. Clearly you are showing me something Lord, show me.' **Ezekiel has already been thoroughly shaped into believing in the impossible and the magnitude of God's power.** We are quite a way into Ezekiel's long ministry time and he knows so much more about God now. **He cannot say anything is impossible at this point after all that he has experienced with God.**
- **The Prophetic Voice of a Believer**
 - **Ezekiel is commanded to resurrect on God's behalf**

⁴ "Even so it is difficult to establish precisely the nature of Ezekiel's experience. Is this a vision account, or does it describe a moment of prophetic ecstasy? The absence of the verb *rā'â*, "to see" (cf. 1:1; 8:2), or the derived noun *mar'eh*, "vision," and the seizure by the hand/Spirit of Yahweh point to the latter. Nonetheless, the particle *hinnēh* (v. 2), common in dream and vision reports, implies a visual experience. It is probably unnecessary to vote for one or the other. In none of the other visionary reports in the book (1:1–3:15; 8:1–11:25; 40:1–48:35) is the prophet a detached observer. Each example portrays him being physically led around the visionary scene by Yahweh (or by his representative). In this vision his involvement is even more dramatic as his own activity and speech actually affect the events envisioned." NICOT, Daniel Block

- **Eze 37:4–10** – *“Then he said to me, ‘Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.’⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.⁶ And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD.”⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone.⁸ And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them.⁹ Then he said to me, ‘Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.”*
- **He said to me, ‘prophecy over these bones and say to them...’** – This is stunning. Ezekiel would assume that God is going to SHOW him something, but **God immediately puts Ezekiel in the driver’s seat and demands that he do something to make the next part happen.** This is not a show situation as much as a command situation. God tells a man to **prophecy to BONES.** That’s weird. They can hear you. Why talk out loud to a bunch of bones? Isn’t there a less weird way to do this? No. **It’s actually in the function of speaking OVER and TO, the bones that matters. It’s commanding the inanimate to animate.** Jesus spoke to the wind and the waves. He spoke to the fig tree. He talked about speaking to a mountain to move. **It’s not that the items have ears, it’s that the voice has commanding power over nature.**
- **Normal way I teach this passage** – when I normally teach this passage, and I’ve taught it a lot (I don’t normally repeat messages but this one is so rich I can’t help it), I focus on this portion of the story deeply. What it’s explaining is two things: **1.) God involves His people in the process of the miraculous (power and authority); 2.) We have a responsibility to use our resources (voice) rightly (responsibility & command).** The most incredible thing about it, to me is the focus on **the prophetic voice of the believer.** God breathes through His people and therefore our words have power in them. We have the power (from God) to speak life over people. That’s a game changer. I know this is a prophetic vision and we wouldn’t make too much out of it if it was on its own, but I’m combining it with the rest of Scripture. The Old Testament is full of God doing the supernatural and miraculous through His people. Jesus is our concrete and tangible example of how to speak life on behalf of God. The New Testament is full of God moving through the early Church with power and authority in their words. This is simply one of the O.G. stories explaining how God operates and what that might mean for His people today.
- **Say to them, ‘hear the word of the Lord’** – although God allows a lot of leeway in terms of what His children say and do, I take this as **a life command that my job is not to share my opinion as much as I’m responsible to share the word of the**

Lord. It's His ways and His words that change things, not mine. He is the originator of all power and all good thoughts and plans. **I'm not supposed to be as brilliant as I am to be obedient.**

- **Thus says the Lord God to these bones** – although the words are coming out of my mouth, if they are said and done with the heart, mind, and intention of the Name of Jesus, they come with power FROM HIM. We may say the words, we may lay the hands on, we may cast it out, but the only reason its effective is HIM. Never forget that. There's no room for arrogance about what 'we can do.' It's all God, all the time. He gets all the glory, not us.
- **God has a VISION for the dead** – 'I will cause breath to enter you and you will live.' – that's a vision. You can't put breath into bones. Breath goes into lungs. There aren't any lungs yet. That means this is a vision of a future reality that will come to pass. God is looking at the end result as if it's a fact and speaking that out.
- **God has a PLAN for the dead** – sinews, skin, breath, understanding – God lays out a process for HOW He is going to resurrect and restore this deadness. God tends to do work THROUGH processes instead of one time shots (although He can and does that on occasion). The point is not simply to look alive, the point is to be alive with quality of life. This means that it's going to begin with infrastructure (ability), then covering (security), then animation (breath), then awareness (understanding, knowing). The end result is not just a person but a person that knows the Lord, loves the Lord, interacts with the Lord.
- **So I prophesied as I was commanded** – This is simply obedience. It wasn't about whether or not it made sense to Ezekiel. It wasn't whether it was comfortable. It wasn't whether he thought that it would work or not. It was obedience, period. The results were on God.
- **It began to work** – The bones came together and the sinew latched on, flesh covered them and they lay there looking like healthy humans. BUT, there was no breath in them. They are not alive unless the breath of God is in them (remember that was the case with the formation of Adam in the Garden of Eden).
- **Prophecy to the breath** – there was MORE to do. There was a second step. Why the delay between the two is not clear. It may have to do with the seriousness of the second step and God wanted a pause for consideration of what was about to happen. The command was speak to the breath, the wind (same word), to come from the 4 corners of the earth (the wholeness of God in creation), and enter into these lifeless bodies.
- **It worked** – they lived and stood on their feet. Oh my gosh. Imagine Ezekiel's stunned reaction. He got to be a part of that. It worked because it was God's idea and God's power. He was a partner in that. **God said it was going to happen and it happened.** The only thing left is awareness and understanding about God. Getting someone to live is one thing, getting someone to have eternal life is another.

- **A great army** – there were a ton of them and they looked like an army. I don't really know how a bunch of nude folks are going to look like an army, but hey what do I know? Maybe nude fighting is a thing. They are, as mentioned above, representatives of the whole nation of Israel for hundreds of years.
- **Impossible Hope**
 - **Impossible Hope for Israel**
 - **Eze 37:11–14** – *“Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’¹² Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel.¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people.¹⁴ And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”*
 - **Son of Man** – I just want to take a second to reiterate that this is the common way that God talks to Ezekiel and it's a nice way of saying, 'human being.'
 - **These bones are the whole house of Israel** – this is not a specific group of Jews, this is representative of all Jews. This is a massive movement and a metaphor of something major.
 - **They say, we are hopeless** – God cites back to Ezekiel what he heard the people of Israel say to one another: our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are indeed cut off' from our God. **They knew the significance of their devastation.** They may still have been struggling to accept that this was all their fault, but they certainly grasped that it was a horrible situation that there was no coming back from. Since they were cut off from God, and He would be the only one who COULD help them, all hope was lost (in their mind).
 - **Therefore, prophesy to them** – **now we see the whole point of the prior metaphor with the bones. God is calling Ezekiel to prophesy to the actual living nation to speak life and hope back into them so that they would rise again as the people of God.**
 - **Let them know what I will do⁵** – God is going to be VERY CLEAR here: it's God that's going to do all of this. Part of the reason for knocking Israel down so low was so they could NEVER believe that they were the ones that rose back up on their own. Now that they were sufficiently humbled, God could do what He wanted to do all along, which was start again. So God promised them what HE would do for them and to them:
 - **I will open your graves and raise you** – I will bring hope and restoration, period.

⁵ 4 Types of Restoration – Daniel Block, the commentary on Ezekiel for the NICOT commentary series, cites that there is 4 types of restoration mentioned in this passage: 1.) Ethnic restoration/integrity – one people, the Jews, the 'house of Israel'. 2.) Territorial restoration/integrity – retuning them to their ancestral homeland. 3.) Political restoration/integrity – back to theocracy instead of a divided monarchy. Davidic ruler. We know this will be Jesus. 4.) Spiritual restoration/integrity – healthy relationship with patron and deity/master.

- **I will bring you into the land** – this is a restoration of the Jews to the Promised Land.
 - **You will know that I’m the Lord** – this is not just a, raise Israel, for Israel’s sake. This is a move for God’s glory.
 - **I will put my Spirit within you** – this is a HUGE statement and one that didn’t get completely fulfilled until the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, almost 617 years later, so the promise was a big one with many layers. One was for that generation and one was shooting out into the distance. The initial fulfillment would be the limited application of the Spirit that they could see and experience with the rebuild of the smaller temple that was to come 70 years later (516BC).
 - **I have spoken and I will do it** – that’s God way of saying, ‘consider it a lock and take it to the bank.’
- **Impossible Unity**
 - **God demonstrates how Israel will be a restored nation of one**
 - **Eze 37:15–28** – *“The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁶ “Son of man, take a stick and write on it,⁶ ‘For Judah,⁷ and the people of Israel associated with him’; then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph⁸ (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with him.’ ¹⁷ And join them one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. ¹⁸ And when your people say to you, ‘Will you not tell us what you mean by these?’ ¹⁹ say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (that is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him. And I will join with it the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand. ²⁰ When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, ²¹ then say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to 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, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms.”*
 - **The restoration of a divided nation** – Instead of explaining all the self-explanatory pieces of this passage, let me explain the heart of it. **One of the greatest travesties and signals of the end to come for Israel was the division of the nation.** When God began the Jewish people through Abraham and the

⁶ “Following the customary word-event formula and the divine address of the Ezekiel, the prophet receives orders for a final sign-action.” NICOT, Daniel Block

⁷ “The reasons for inscribing Judah’s name are obvious. This was the dominant tribe in the south, the source of the Davidic dynasty, and the name for the southern state.” NICOT, Daniel Block

⁸ “the unconventionality of Joseph was recognized already in the transcription of the oral message by the addition of ‘ēš ’eprayim, “the wood of Ephraim.” Joseph was the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, the two dominant tribes in the northern kingdom. Of these two, Ephraim, the younger son,⁵⁰ dominated northern politics from the beginning. From Jeroboam I to the fall of the northern kingdom, the state was ruled by Ephraimite kings from Ephraimite capitals. But “Joseph” as a designation for the northern kingdom is less common,⁵² a fact that necessitated the clarifying comment. Ezekiel’s preference for “Joseph” may have been determined by the same disparaging considerations as his designation of Israel’s rulers as nēšî’im, “princes,” instead of mēlākîm, “kings.” For him the northern state headed by Ephraim was illegitimate from the beginning. Unlike Judah, the tribe did not impose its name on the nation.” NICOT, Daniel Block

patriarchs (Isaac, Jacob, Joseph), there were very clear specifications about how it was to be handled. It was supposed to be **one nation under God**, literally. They were going to be a theocracy (ruled by God, not an earthly king). But as we know from history, they wanted a king and installed one (first one was Saul, then David, then Solomon) and it went bad fast. **By the time Solomon died, the nation split into two** (10 tribes North “Ephraim/Israel”, 2 tribes South = “Judah”). The prophesy and promise was **ONLY that David’s lineage** would sit on the throne of Israel which meant that only the South was truly legit. The North was a bastardization of the plan. There was never going to be a blessing for the North in whole. It would be a temporary space of grace to let it exist for a time until God would shut the whole thing down. As we know, the North was wiped out in 722 BC, 136 years before the South. But even then, the South still acted like they were independent from the Northern deportees. God always wanted and would accept ONE Nation, not two for His people. So, the restoration of the divided nation (which was not able to happen nor going to happen with kings on the throne doing power moves) was critical. The kingdom was divided from Solomon’s death (931BC) to the wipe out of the North (AD722), which is **209 years apart**. For the Jews to be the Jewish people that God would bless would require full unification (reunification), not a treaty. **This wipe out, deportation, etc. allowed for that.**

- **One king** – so why does God say that there was only going to be ‘one king’ when they get back into the land when there wasn’t going to be a king since the king issue got them into trouble last time? Wasn’t it going to be a theocracy, where God rules, Himself? Or was there literally going to be another king on the throne, but one this time? The answer is both.
- **What history tells us** – Remember, only the South was legit at any point to God, so who was the king on the throne of the South when they were taken over by the Babylonians and deported? It was a king named Jechoniah (Jehoiachin). He didn’t stay king. He did have a son, named Shealtiel, who had a son named Zerubbabel. So, if kings were still going, he would be the king when they got back into the land. Interestingly, he is mentioned a lot and he is not called a king, he is called a GOVERNOR. That’s a very different thing. Some would say that it’s a better way to go underground and not tick off the nation who still own you, but it’s more than that. It’s symbolic. There was a king of the region, a Persian king (Cyrus was in control when they were allowed to go back 70 years later), but it wasn’t a Jewish king. And here’s where it gets crazy. The prophecy clearly states in Ezekiel 37:24 that the new king will be ‘DAVID.’ In the genealogy of Jesus we see it trace the kingly line from David, through Zerubbabel, all the way down to Joseph, who was Jesus’ step dad. Is it possible that he was actually the rightful ‘king of the Jews’ by lineage if they had kings? Maybe. Maybe the family lines had multiple options. But what’s most fascinating is that Jesus WAS in the line of David and DID become the King of the Jews, the NEXT official (spiritually and to His

people) king of the Jews after this prophecy. He was the ONE true KING that would rule forever and He does.

- **Deeper Restoration**

- **God promises impossibly full restoration**

- **Eze 37:23–28⁹** – *“They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. ²⁴ “My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. ²⁵ They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. ²⁶ I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. ²⁷ My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ²⁸ Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.”*

- **This should sound familiar** – Pastor Brian led us through a passage very similar to this last week (Ezek 36 - and when God repeats Himself is a sure thing) so we won't spend too much time on it. I just want to highlight a few things.
- **I will do it¹⁰** – Again and again we see that God is clear that they were never going to do it for themselves. It was either Him or nothing.
- **Spiritual Restoration** – of course the most important thing on God's heart with His people was their spiritual restoration, the restoration of the relationship with God. God had to do a lot of work on this one. He had to cleanse them and captivate their heart once again. He was promising here that He was going to do that and it would work.
 - **They will put away their sins and idols** – God will see to it that they are sufficiently done with their sins and their other gods.
 - **I will save them from their backslidings** – the baggage, the stain, the ramifications all needed to be taken care of as well as their intentions of their heart.
 - **I will cleanse them** – only God could cleanse that stain with His power and grace.
 - **They will be my people and I will be their God** – that's covenant language.
 - **David will be my king over them** – clearly David isn't coming back to life so who is this? It's Jesus Christ the descendant of David.
 - **They will walk obediently and according to my rules** – order will be restored and the nation will rise once again to its intended purpose.

⁹ Cf. Eze 28:25–26

¹⁰ Eze 34:22–31 – in Ezekiel 34 God explains that He is the Good Shepherd that will come in and fix things that human shepherds destroyed. He is tired of waiting on them to fix it and will fix it Himself.

- **They will live in the Promised Land forever** – again, from history we know that they get kicked out again, but a remnant is always left behind. When they came back in 1948 (May 14th) to be an official nation, there were still some Jews in the land. But with the gathering of all the Jews in surrounding nations, they took it over and occupied it once again.
- **I will make an everlasting covenant of peace with them** – this means that God’s intentions for the rest of history will be for them and supporting and blessing them instead of rejection.
- **I will get them back home and multiply them again** – they will rise again as a numerous nation that can defend itself.
- **I will set my sanctuary in their midst** – indeed history shows that in 70 years they build a new one, albeit a much smaller one. It gets a lot bigger with Herod the Great’s rebuild in 20BC (proposal and start) to AD63 (completion), that’s 83 years. Unfortunately, it was wiped out 7 years later in AD63 and torn down fully. It has never been rebuilt. The modern day ‘wailing wall’ in Jerusalem is one of the massive foundational stones of the temple mount.
- **The Depth of the Restoration** – In Ezekiel 36 (one chapter before) a lot of this is talked about as well.¹¹ But I want to highlight one of the most powerful phrases about how God restores things:
 - **Ezekiel 36:35 – “And they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.’**
- **The Details of the Restoration**¹² - It’s beautiful that God gives details to a promise of restoration. A general vague mention doesn’t bring the solid hope nor faith that a tangible plan does.
 - **The Vision for a New Temple**¹³ – The holy temple in Jerusalem was of highest importance to the Jewish people. When it was destroyed by the Babylonians (under Nebuchadnezzar), they were devastated. Now, we are now at 573BC. As Ezekiel talks about a temple that God let him see, all the Jews are going to take special interest in it. They are going to scrutinize it. We are doing the same here. What we learn is that **there are some challenges to finding out what it means**. The most major concern is that **this is not the temple design that was made when they got back into the land after 70 years of exile. Nor was it the much larger Herod created temple structure built closer to the life**

¹¹ Eze 36:24–38

¹² “Chapters 1–3 introduced to Ezekiel the vision of God visiting his people in exile; chapters 40–48 present Ezekiel with the vision of God returning to dwell in the midst of his people, now restored and re-established in their own land. These chapters also have links with the vision of the profanation of the temple and the departure of the glory of the Lord from Jerusalem (8:1–11:25), for they picture the rebuilt temple to which the glory of the Lord returns (43:5). They are therefore to be thought of not as a completely independent composition, only loosely tacked on to the end of the main body of Ezekiel’s work, but as a real climax to his thought as it has been maturing through twenty years of prayer, meditation and ministry.” Tyndale Commentary

¹³ Cf. Ezek 39:25ff

of Christ. So, what in the world? What temple is this? There seems to be two major guesses: 1.) It's the design of the future Millennial Reign (of Jesus) temple. 2.) it's a metaphorical design of restoration of God's presence among His people and what difference that would make. 3.) It's the Holy Jerusalem and Holy Temple that's depicted in Revelation that John saw. Since we don't know what or if the Millennial temple is a thing, we can't know the first one for sure, but the second one seems to be most likely. It is possible that the Millennial one, if it happens, is following the blueprint to demonstrate God's intent in physical form, so the answer could be BOTH. The third one is a similar tie-in because the Revelation temple is metaphorical as well to explain spiritual truths of heaven, so it could also be part of the mix.

- **What it means for the exiled Jews and us - Notice how detailed God sees it as an absolute reality not yet realized¹⁴ – The Jews could not imagine**

¹⁴ “Chapters 1–3 introduced to Ezekiel the vision of God visiting his people in exile; chapters 40–48 present Ezekiel with the vision of God returning to dwell in the midst of his people, now restored and re-established in their own land. These chapters also have links with the vision of the profanation of the temple and the departure of the glory of the Lord from Jerusalem (8:1–11:25), for they picture the rebuilt temple to which the glory of the Lord returns (43:5). They are therefore to be thought of not as a completely independent composition, only loosely tacked on to the end of the main body of Ezekiel's work, but as a real climax to his thought as it has been maturing through twenty years of prayer, meditation and ministry. In his vision, Ezekiel is transported to a high mountain near to the holy city (Mount Zion is probably intended) and there he meets an angelic figure who conducts him round the temple area, measuring everything with a builder's measuring-rod. He begins with a close study of one of the gateways to the outer court (40:6–16) before entering the outer court to see the chambers which faced inwards on to the pavement around its outer wall. After looking at the two other gateways to the outer court (40:20–27), he is led to the gateway which leads from the outer court into the inner court, where only the priests are allowed to go, and once again there are three of these, on the north, east and south sides respectively (40:28–37). The temple itself stands on the western side, so there is no gateway there, either to the inner or to the outer court (see Fig. II, p. 251). A brief reference to the special sacrificial equipment and the rooms reserved for the sacrificing priests (40:38–47) prepares the way for a detailed description of the holy place (40:48–41:26), after which the prophet is led outside for a final survey of the temple area (42:1–20). Then, in vision, Ezekiel sees the glory of the Lord re-entering the temple and he is instructed what he must do with the information he has been given (43:1–12); the rest of the chapter is devoted to the measurements of the altar of sacrifice and to how the altar is to be used (43:13–27). Chapter 44, deals with various regulations relating to the ordering of the temple, in particular to the Levites and the Zadokite priests who will minister there, and this is followed by a description of the allocation of the land around the temple, with specific allotments for the temple officials and for the prince (45:1–17). Further regulations regarding feasts, offerings and sacrifices follow (45:18–46:24), but chapter 47 introduces a new subject, namely the flow of water from the sanctuary which pours down in the direction of the Arabah, bringing life and fertility to the barren areas of the Dead Sea valley (47:1–12). The vision concludes with a description of the boundaries of the land, and the allocation of various portions to the twelve tribes of Israel (47:13–48:35). The chief problem in these chapters is that of interpretation. Four main views have been held. The first may be called the literal prophetic interpretation. According to this, we have here the blueprint of a temple which Ezekiel intended should be built when the exiles returned to Jerusalem: it is in fact a building specification. In defence of this theory it must be said that as Ezekiel was confidently expecting a literal return from exile, it would not be surprising for him, as a priestly as well as a prophetic figure, to outline the shape of the new temple that would surely need to be rebuilt in Jerusalem. The wording of 43:10f. (in the Heb., though not in LXX; see commentary below) encourages those who adopt this view. On the other hand, as Hengstenberg¹ comments, ‘this opinion forgets that we have here to do not with an architect, but with a prophet—with one whose department is not the hands, but the heart’. If this were an architect's specification we should have expected much more detail about materials to be used, and even though many measurements are given, the ground-plan leaves dozens of details to the imagination of any prospective builder, as those who have tried to reconstruct Ezekiel's temple have found to their cost. Moreover, this whole vision (40–48) must be taken as a unity and there are elements which are so impracticable that a completely literal interpretation of the vision must be ruled out (e.g. the siting of the temple on a very high mountain, 40:2; the impossible source and course of the river of life, 47:1–12; the unreality of the boundaries of the tribes which could never be worked out geographically in hilly Israel). The second interpretation is the symbolic Christian one, favoured by many older commentators. They held that this vision had its fulfilment symbolically in the Christian church. Now there is truth in this view, and it is given impetus by the use made of Ezekiel's language in the book of Revelation, where the picture of the new Jerusalem is based largely on Ezekiel's pattern. But it is overstating the case to refer Ezekiel's vision directly to a Christian ‘fulfilment’, without seeing that it has a real context for the readers of his own day, and this original context must be the prime concern of the Old Testament exegete. A variant of this, which is arrived at through similar hermeneutical principles, is the dispensationalist view. This is known most popularly through the Scofield Reference Bible which entitles Ezekiel 40–48, ‘Israel in the Land during the Kingdom-age’. The approach is literal and futurist. It refers to the last days, when it is supposed that all the prophecies regarding the glorious future of Israel are to be literally fulfilled in a new dispensation. If it follows from this that Old Testament festivals, blood sacrifices, priesthood and worship at a temple are to be reintroduced, after the New Testament revelation of Christ and his finished, fulfilling work, it shows how completely this view misinterprets the significance of Christ's salvation and how it casts doubt on the consistency of God's dealings with mankind. But its fault is basically in regarding Ezekiel 40–48 as prophecy and insisting on a literal fulfilment of it, if not in the past then in the future. The fourth view is to regard these chapters, not as prophecy, but as apocalyptic, and to interpret them according to the canons of this style of Hebrew writing. Its features are symbolism, numerical symmetry, and futurism. We have already noted how 38–39 were couched in this style, and 40–48, although

another temple. The one that they had seen all their lives was so magnificent to them and now it was gone. But **God knew what HE was capable of and cast THAT vision.** God sees the future like it's present fact. **What that means for us is that He does the same thing with our restoration. He knows what He CAN make through us and He knows what will take place since He's in charge.** One of the beautiful things about accurate prophetic words is that they ping on that future reality and cast a vision for it today.

- **Ezekiel sees a new temple compound** - Eze 40:1–2 - *“In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year¹⁵ after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me to the city. ²In visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain,...”*
 - **A guide** - A man with the appearance like bronze with measuring items in his hand told Ezekiel to write what he was about to see.
 - **A tour of a new Temple walled compound** – very specific measurements of the gates, the outer court, inner court, chambers for the priests, altar, etc.
 - **The Glory of the Lord fills the temple¹⁶** - Eze 43:1–5 – *“Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. ²And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. ³And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. ⁴As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, ⁵the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.”*
 - **The last movement of the Spirit** – It was **19 years prior** that Ezekiel watched in horror as a vision depicted **the Holy Spirit of**

very different in content, lean in the same direction. This was Ezekiel's pattern for the Messianic age that was to come. It lay in the future, and yet it grew out of the present. It was expressed in tangible terms and yet these were merely the forms in which the general principles of God's activity were enshrined. The vision of the temple was in fact a kind of incarnation of all that God stood for and all that he required and all that he could do for his people in the age that was about to dawn. On this view, which of all the interpretations seems to take the most realistic view of the literary character of the material with which we are dealing, the message of Ezekiel in these chapters may be summarized as follows: (a) the perfection of God's plan for his restored people, symbolically expressed in the immaculate symmetry of the temple building; (b) the centrality of worship in the new age, its importance being expressed in the scrupulous concern for detail in the observance of its rites; (c) the abiding presence of the Lord in the midst of his people; (d) the blessings that will flow from God's presence to the barren places of the earth (the river of life); (e) the orderly allocation of duties and privileges to all God's people, as shown both in the temple duties and in the apportionment of the land (a theme taken up in Rev. 7:4–8).” Tyndale Commentary

¹⁵ “The present vision may therefore be dated 10 Nisan, in the 25th year of the exile, which computes to April 28, 573 B.C., making this the second latest of Ezekiel's recorded prophecies. Only the oracle against Egypt in 29:1 is later.” NICOT, Daniel Block

¹⁶ “It was nineteen years since Ezekiel had seen the vision of the glory of the Lord leaving his temple (10:18–22; 11:22–24). Now he sees his return, to occupy and to consecrate this new building to be his holy sanctuary.” Tyndale Commentary

God departing from the temple. All that time, Ezekiel may have been wondering if He would ever return.

- **The Temple's river¹⁷** – it says that below the threshold of the temple on the east side there was a small flow of water coming out which eventually becomes a massive river going down into the sea turning water fresh, teeming with fish and living creatures. It was only trickling out the South side. Oddly, **the pathway of the river flowing into the Dead Sea (and bringing it alive) is an impossible and unlikely route if it were literal.** On the banks of the river there will be fruit bearing trees that are thriving.¹⁸ There is a similar river concept in Revelation called the River of life flowing from the temple with healing trees on the side.
- **Holy district area with the future 'prince's portion' – who's the prince?¹⁹** It mentions there are still sacrificial offerings being given. It

¹⁷ "the stream flows 'el-haggēlîlâ haqqadmônâ (lit. "the eastern circuit"), a vague reference to the region between Jerusalem and the Jordan River. Second, the stream descends into the Arabah. Today the name usually identifies the depression south of the Dead Sea that terminates in the Gulf of Aqabah, but in the OT the name was also used more generally of the rift valley that runs from Lake Tiberias (Galilee) in the north to the Gulf of Aqabah in the south. Ezekiel has in mind the south end of the Jordan Valley. Third, the water is said to flow into the sea (hayyāmmâ). Although yām had earlier referred to the western sea, viz., the Mediterranean, here it obviously means the Dead Sea. Fourth, the destination is defined more precisely as hayyāmmâ hammûšā'im, the sea of stagnant waters. The expression is problematic textually, but the context supports a reference to the stagnant nature of the Dead Sea. hammûšā'im is an appropriate description for the Dead Sea. The surface of this remarkable body of water is 1300 ft. (about 400 m.) below sea level, making it not only the lowest point in the rift valley but the lowest on the surface of the earth. With a salinity today of 26–35 percent, this body of water is also justly known as "the Salt Sea"... The messenger seems oblivious to the geographic problems this course of the stream presents. In order for water to flow from Jerusalem to the Jordan Valley it must flow down into the Kidron, up over the Mount of Olives, and then cross a series of valleys and mountain ranges before it reaches its destination. Whether or not he envisions a cleavage of the barriers like that foreseen in Zech. 14:4, the scene calls for a miraculous act, the converse of that experienced by the Israelites at the Red Sea. Instead of creating a dry path through the sea, this holy stream produces a watercourse through the desert... The moment the stream from the temple reaches the "Salt Sea" its waters are miraculously healed. rāpā' normally refers to the healing of a diseased body, but in this case the miracle involves neutralizing the baneful chemicals in the water, so it becomes fresh and life is no longer inhibited. The fourfold kol, "all," and the repetition of an entire clause, kol-'āšer yābô' šām[mâ] naḥālayim, "wherever the stream flowed," in v. 9 emphasize the thoroughness of the "healing." In language reminiscent of Gen. 1:20–21, the sea "swarms" (šāraš) with "every living creature" (kol-nepeš ḥayā) in "every place where the stream flows." The causal clause, kî bā'û šāmmâ hammayim hā'ēlleh, "because these waters have arrived there," leaves no doubt about the source of the healing. The arrival of the living water from the temple revives the Dead Sea, which results in the profuse multiplication of fish (wēḥayā haddāgā rabbā mē'ōd)... virtually every detail of the vision is unrealistic and caricatured. Streams do not issue forth from temple thresholds, nor do they increase geometrically in size and volume, from a mere trickle to an unfordable stream in the desert, without benefit of tributaries. Waters do not flow over or through hills. When fresh water contacts putrid water, particularly the most fouled body on earth, the influence is from foul to fresh, not the reverse. A body of water as lifeless as the Dead Sea cannot match the Mediterranean in the number and variety of its fish, nor do marsh waters differ generically from water of the larger body. Trees do not break the seasonal patterns and produce fruit every month of the year, nor do the leaves of these trees have medicinal value. All these features suggest an impressionistic literary cartoon with an intentional ideological aim." NICOT, Daniel Block

¹⁸ "like the trees in Eden (Gen. 2:15–17), these will remain perpetually green and provide an endless supply of food (ma'ākāl). The impression of regularity and reliability, reflected in lō'-yittōm piryō, "its fruit will not fail," is rendered more concrete with loḥōdāšāy wēbakkēr, "according to their months they will yield fresh fruit." This picture of abundance contrasts with the mediocrity that characterizes produce at the end of a harvest season. Third, in addition to satisfying aesthetic sensitivities, the never-withering leaves (lō'-yibbōl) serve a medicinal function, offering healing to sickly and wounded bodies. As in the case of the revitalized Dead Sea (v. 9), a causal clause removes all doubts about the source of this fruitfulness and healing: because their nourishing waters originate (yāšā') in the sanctuary." NICOT, Daniel Block

¹⁹ "this passage adds several significant details to Ezekiel's portrait of the nāšī'. This ordinance reinforces the impression of a fundamentally religious (though not cultic), rather than civil/political, role. The nāšī' alone may enter the eastern gateway of the inner wall and observe the rituals performed in the inner court. Indeed, the gate will open up for him (v. 12), and he will be the first to bow before Yahweh in worship. Furthermore, as the patron of the cult, the prince is responsible for providing the sacrificial animals and other resources needed in the rituals. Even so, his primary identification is with the laypeople rather than the cult functionaries. The community at worship may look to him as their leader... Whether or not Ezekiel envisions this nāšī' as a messianic figure, the realism of this portrait is remarkable. As patron of the cult the prince enjoys a privileged position, but he stands in the shadow of the priesthood, barred from the inner court and subject to clearly defined restrictions. Furthermore, like the rulers of Israel in the past, he is vulnerable to temptations of self-aggrandizement, and ever in danger of exploiting his office at the expense his subjects. In regulating the activity of the nāšī', this fragment reminds those who occupy positions of leadership in the community of faith that theirs is a service vocation, not a profession of privilege. Responsible leaders exercise authority within the bounds set by

mentions that the prince will have sons. So clearly, it's not talking about when Jesus takes over in the Millennial kingdom. Who are these princes?²⁰ This is one of the best arguments for a metaphorical temple. History tells us that as far as we know there is no one to fit this description. He is far too earthly and common to be a Messianic figure (far too limited in authority), and **unless the Millennial kingdom is run by Jesus THROUGH earthly princes and not personally, I don't see this figure existing literally.**

- **Vision for New Land²¹ & New City** – The power of this vision at this time is talking to a people about dividing a land that is currently impossible to regain

God, resisting the temptation to use the office for personal advantage and mindful of the rights of the inferiors. After all, the call to leadership is a gift of God, to be used for the benefit of all his people." NICOT, Daniel Block

²⁰ "Scholars have correctly recognized the special status of the *nāšî*' in Ezekiel's final vision. He is clearly an exalted figure, far more important than the "princes" of the premonarchic period. But does this mean that Ezekiel identifies this *nāšî*' with the messianic figure described in 34:23–25 and 37:21–25? According to some, to deny this link appears to drive a wedge between the *nāšî*' in chs. 40–48 and the *nāšî*' in earlier chapters. However, this conclusion is not as certain as it seems. First, Israelite messianic expectations were by definition monarchic in flavor, and immutably based on Yahweh's dynastic covenant with David. But why are chs. 40–48 silent on the Davidic connection? They seem indeed to portray the *nāšî*' as an honorable figure, but without apparent political power. Second, Israelite messianism insisted on a close link between the Messiah and Jerusalem/Zion. But why does Jerusalem seem to be out of the picture in Ezekiel's final vision? The prince and his land are deliberately separated from the city bearing the name "Yahweh is there" (48:35) and the temple, Yahweh's true residence. Third, Israelite messianism perceives the Messiah as sovereign over the entire universe. But why does this vision both tie him down to the land of Israel and place severe restrictions on the rights of the *nāšî*'? Yahweh may authorize him, even invite him to eat before him in this gate, but as a mortal he must enter by another way. Only Yahweh may enter through the eastern gate. Fourth, and perhaps most seriously, elsewhere (including Ezekiel's own statements in 34:23–24 and 37:21–25) Israel's Messiah is always portrayed in glorious idealistic terms elsewhere. But why is the portrait of the *nāšî*' in the Ezekielian Torah so shockingly realistic? Not only must offerings be presented on his behalf; specific ordinances warn him not to exploit and abuse his subjects like Israel's kings had done in the past (46:18). These questions may be answered from several directions. First, although one might expect a consistent use of a technical term like *nāšî*' throughout the book, Ezekiel has a habit of using the same expressions with different nuances. Second, a dramatic shift in genre is evident between the earlier restoration oracles (chs. 34–39) and the idealistic final vision. Whereas the former are closely tied to history, anticipating a wholesale reversal of the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the latter is contrived, ideational, symbolic, and many of its features are unimaginable. Contrary to common popular opinion, the description of the temple is not presented as a blueprint for some future building to be constructed with human hands. This vision picks up the theme of divine presence announced in 37:26–27 and describes the spiritual reality in concrete terms, employing the familiar cultural idioms of temple, altar, sacrifices, *nāšî*', and land. In presenting this theological constitution for the new Israel, Yahweh announces the righting of all old wrongs and the establishment of permanent healthy deity-nation-land relationships. Ezekiel's final vision presents a lofty ideal: Where God is, there is Zion. Where God is, there is also order and the fulfillment of all his promises. Third, the primary concern in this vision is not political but cultic. The issue is not the return of David but the presence of Yahweh. Accordingly, the *nāšî*''s role is facilitative, not regally symbolic. Unlike past kings, who perverted the worship of Yahweh for selfish ends or sponsored the worship of other gods, this *nāšî*''s charge is to promote the worship of Yahweh in spirit and in truth. In this vision (and only here), with its radically theocentric portrayal of Israel's future, the *nāšî*' emerges as a religious functionary, serving the holy community of faith, which itself is focused on the worship of the God who dwells in their midst. Where the presence of God is recognized, there is purity and holiness. Ezekiel's *nāšî*' is not responsible for the administration of the cult, he does not participate actively in the ritual, and he does not build the temple, design the worship, or appoint the priests. These prerogatives belong to Yahweh. This agrees with the image of the *nāšî*' in 34:23–24, who is installed as undershepherd by Yahweh only after the latter has personally rescued Israel. In this ideological presentation the *nāšî*' functions as Yahweh's appointed lay patron and sponsor of the cult, whose activity ensures the continuance of shalom between deity and subjects. The God of Israel has fulfilled his covenant promises, regathering the people and restoring them to their/his land. More important, he has recalled the people to himself and established his residence in their midst. Now let them celebrate, and let the *nāšî*' lead the way! Herein lies the hope of Ezekiel's message for Christians. In Jesus the Messiah, the glory of Yahweh, has descended and dwells among us, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). He is Immanuel, "God with us!" Where two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, there he is (Matt. 18:20)." NICOT, Daniel Block

²¹ "First, Ezekiel's understanding of Israel's tribal structure follows the traditional premonarchical order: (a) The land is divided into twelve tribal allotments (cf. Josh. 13–19). (b) The tribe of Levi is excluded from the allocations. (c) The twelve-tribe system is maintained by elevating Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to full tribal status and assigning a separate territory to each (cf. 47:13). Accordingly, this literary map expresses concretely the prophetic hope for reunion of all the tribes of Israel as foretold in 37:16–23. In appealing to these ancient tribal structures Ezekiel repudiates the pragmatically centralized administration of the monarchy (1 K. 7–19). Second, Ezekiel's tribal allocations display little concern for historical realities. In accordance with 47:15–20, the territory east of the Jordan is completely overlooked, Reuben, Gad, and one-half of Manasseh having rejoined their compatriots. Formerly northern Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad are located at the south end of the country, and Judah is north of Benjamin. Dan's position at the extreme north clashes with Joshua's original assignment (Josh. 19:40–48), but accords with the historical reality of the Danite seizure of land from the Laishites, even if without divine sanction (Judg. 18). But any correspondences to historical reality in the list seem purely coincidental. Third, Ezekiel's tribal boundaries run against the grain of natural topography. Whereas the physical landscape of the land of Israel is defined by north-south lines (the coastal plain, the central spinal region, the Jordan rift valley), Ezekiel's borders

militarily. They are currently exiled in a far greater empire (Babylonian & Persian). They have no current means of getting back home much less building another glorious temple. **Yet again, God is calling out things as true that aren't yet true. But you can bank on it. It wasn't just getting into the land but what to do WHEN you arrive in the land. This is how God thinks about your life. It may be a mess now but He has plans for when it's fixed.** The dimensions of the newly proposed Promised Land are radically different from the original allotment (there is nothing allowed for East of the Jordan River which was a huge portion).

- **Tribal Allotment** - Ezekiel 47:13-14 – “Thus says the Lord God: “This is the boundary by which you shall divide the land for inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph shall have two portions. ¹⁴ And you shall divide equally what I swore to give to your fathers. This land shall fall to you as your inheritance.”
 - **Tribal Allotment oddities** - And when we get into the detailed tribal allotment, it's a **dramatic redesign of what tribe goes where**. It seems clear that this is a metaphorical redesign based on God's original plans for the nations. For example, Rachel and Leah's kids have the best land and are named first. The maidservants kids are not. The tribe of Judah (kingly) is closest to the new temple. Things are shifted around to make a point, rather than set up a new camp plan.
 - **Grace in the design** – **notice the mercy, grace and restoration due to the Northern 10 tribes which had prior led rebellion** (split of the nation that broke God's heart).
- **The Bottom Line Point of the Vision Tour** – **God has a plan. There is hope. God knows what it will be and how to get there. Nothing can stand in His way.**

all run in an east-west direction. The effect is highly artificial. Insofar as communication is easier within rather than across topographic regions, however, this arrangement facilitates intertribal exchange and access for all to the sacred tērûmâ. Fourth, Ezekiel's allocations are based on a paradigm of tribal parity and designed to neutralize the inequities of the past... But this does not mean that Ezekiel has achieved a utopia, completely devoid of stratification. The present modified concentric design is by definition hierarchical. An ideal map, in which all tribes have identical sociopolitical status, and all enjoy equal access to the temple, would be designed like a wheel, with spokes for boundaries and the apex of each territory abutting the sacred area. In Ezekiel's plan distances alone create inequalities. Most obviously the outlying tribes must travel farther to worship in the sacred tērûmâ than those nearer by. Furthermore, if we assume the strips of territory were all the same width (about 25 mi.), differences in east-west distances create great inequities. Whereas the distance from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River at the south end of the Sea of Galilee is only 40 mi., the tip of the Dead Sea is 70 mi. from the Mediterranean. Even more problematic is the massive eastward bulge of the border north of the Sea of Galilee, where the strips could have been 100 mi. long. Nonetheless, any attempt to interpret all these details literally is futile. Either Ezekiel was unfamiliar with the actual distances between these points,⁹⁹ or, more likely, his map represents an artificial ideal, in keeping with the rest of chs. 40–48. In any case, one should construe this document not as a literary photograph of the land of Israel but as a cartographic painting by an artist with a particular theological agenda. Fifth, Ezekiel's territorial allocations respect the traditional genealogical relationships among the tribes, distinguishing between the descendants of Jacob's wives (Leah and Rachel) and their handmaidens (Bilhah and Zilpah). This discrimination, reflected in the tribes' respective proximity to the tērûmâ, may be highlighted by listing them in geographic order... The tribes descended from Jacob's primary wives enjoy pride of place, nearest the sanctuary, the eight Leah and Rachel tribes being distributed equally, four on each side of the tērûmâ. The tribes descended from the handmaidens are placed at the extremities, farthest from the sacred reserve. Appropriately, Ephraimite and Manassite allotments are side by side, intentionally (?) reflecting their status as two branches of the Josephite line. Sixth, while Judah and Benjamin retain their historical positions near the sanctuary, perhaps reflective of their royal past, their positions are reversed. Benjamin's position may have been influenced by the name (Benjamin = “son of the right hand, viz., south”).¹⁰³ But the placement of Judah is striking. There is some ambiguity in Judah's position, next to the tērûmâ. Although the dualities of the monarchic period remain in the north-south grouping, the disruptive regional loyalties are neutralized by assigning Judah's territory with the northern tribes and denying any tribe the religio-political center.¹⁰⁵ This is reserved for the sacred tērûmâ between Benjamin and Judah. Seventh, the manner in which the tribal territories are allotted signals a return to an ancient theocratic ideal.” NICOT, Daniel Block

Conclusion

- **Possibility** – Resurrection power is radical hope of a whole other kind. There is nothing that God cannot do. There is no situation that He cannot unravel. God is good at mess. He knows what to do and how to do it.
- **Altar Call** - the cross was one of those EXTREME salvation stories/examples. God can save anyone right now.