

HOPE FOR CREATION

Lesson 7

Ezekiel 40–48

RECAP

Take a moment to share about your experience with last week’s “Spiritual Practice” and “On Mission” sections.

HOPE FOR CREATION

Ezekiel received a final vision that gave hope not only for the people of Israel but also for all of creation. In the vision he saw a temple with a river flowing from it. The temple, water, and restoration are significant themes that weave throughout God’s entire story.¹ While the Israelites were given the law that brought life, time and again they chose to try to satisfy their thirst with other things and not in God. Eventually, they found themselves in the dry and barren land of exile.

But even in exile God gave hope. Just as Ezekiel received a vision of Israel as dry bones in a desert that God would one day pour His Spirit into, he also received this vision of new life and hope for all of creation. Ultimately, this vision is fulfilled in Jesus, who offers life-giving water that will satisfy eternally. He invites anyone who is thirsty to come to Him and drink (**John 7:37**).² And we get to anticipate the future reality of living in this new creation (**Revelation 22:1–5**).

¹ This imagery started in **Genesis 2** when the earth was a dry and barren wilderness. God created a spring in the desert that became a river of life. It sustained all creation—the animals, plants, and the people. God created man and woman to help tend the garden and the creation was sustained by the river of life that flowed out into the whole world (**Genesis 2:1–14**). When sin entered the world, both humanity and the land were cursed with the consequences of sin, each becoming dry, barren, and thirsty (**Genesis 3:16–19**). As the story of God’s people continued, they longed for the return of the garden of life and to find water that quenches all thirst, as well as the river that spreads and sustains life.

² “After Jesus was raised from the dead, he sends the Spirit into his followers—to fill them up with God’s own life. This is why the apostle Paul said that when we join the current of God’s Spirit, the fruit of Eden starts growing in us: love and joy, patience and kindness, gentleness and self-control (**Galatians 5:22–23**). People like that can create beautiful things in the world that bring life to others—like little streams of God’s life that can come together and point forward to the beautiful scene that we find on the last page of the Bible. There’s a new river of life. It’s flowing out from God and into a renewed creation, bringing life to all wherever it goes (**Revelation 22:1–5**).” “Water of Life.” *BibleProject*, <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/water-of-life/>.

READING PLAN

We encourage you to read the entire section of Scripture using the following reading plan.

Day 1: Ezekiel 40–42

Day 2: Ezekiel 43

Day 3: Ezekiel 44–46

Day 4: Ezekiel 47

Day 5: Ezekiel 48

OVERVIEW³

The questions in this lesson will focus on **Ezekiel 43:1–12; 47:1–23; 48:30–35**.

Here is a brief summary of the chapters that will not be covered by questions in this lesson:

- **Chapters 40–42** reveal another vision given to Ezekiel, 14 years after the fall of Jerusalem. In the vision, Ezekiel was taken to a high mountain in Israel where he saw a city and a temple.⁴ A man whose face shone bright took a measuring rod

³ “All of the detail [about the temple] is a way of emphasizing the importance of the worship of Yahweh by the restored community of the future. And even if you do not share Ezekiel’s own vested interest in the details, do not lose the central point, which Ezekiel himself makes by giving it center place in the vision—the return of Yahweh’s presence among his people (**43:1–9**)! Also important for this great future for God’s people is the redistribution of the transformed land (**45:1–12**), which is what the final two chapters [of Ezekiel] (**47–48**) are all about.” Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas K. Stuart. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book: A Guided Tour*. Zondervan, 2014. Bible Gateway Plus

⁴ “This vision of the Temple has been interpreted in four main ways:

(1) This is the Temple Zerubbabel should have built from 520–515 BC and is the actual blueprint Ezekiel intended. But due to disobedience (**43:2–10**) it was never followed.

(2) This is a literal Temple to be rebuilt during the millennial reign of Christ.

(3) This Temple is symbolic of the true worship of God by the Christian church right now.

(4) This Temple is symbolic of the future and eternal reign of God when his presence and blessing fill the earth. Whether the Temple is literal or symbolic, it seems clear that this is a vision of God’s final perfect Kingdom.

... One argument against the view that Ezekiel’s Temple is a literal building of the future is that sacrifices are mentioned (**40:38–43**). If the sacrifices were to be reinstated in the last days, then Christ’s final sacrifice would not have been final. The New Testament makes it clear that Christ died once and for all (**Romans 6:10; Hebrews 9:12; 10:10, 18**). Our sins have been removed; no further sacrifice is needed. In Ezekiel’s day, however, the only kind of worship the people knew was the kind that involved sacrifices and ceremonies as described in Exodus through Deuteronomy. Ezekiel had to explain the new order of worship in terms the people would understand.” *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2016. 1362

and measured all of the different parts of the temple building including the walls, gateways, inner and outer courtyards, rooms for sacrifices, and rooms for priests.

- **Chapters 43:13–46:24** continue Ezekiel’s vision with measurements of the altar and descriptions of the sacrificial requirements. At the east gateway, Ezekiel was told it must remain closed and only the prince⁵ could go in and out and feast in the Lord’s presence. Ezekiel was given priestly requirements for the tribe of Levi. He was given land divisions as well as rules and instructions for princes, offerings, and celebrations. This section ends with a description of the temple kitchen.
- **Chapter 48:1–29** contains more land boundaries for the twelve tribes.

QUESTIONS

Day 2: Ezekiel 43:1–12

1. Ezekiel was in the middle of a very detailed vision from the Lord about the temple in **Ezekiel 40–42**. What happened to the temple in **Ezekiel 43:1–5**?

2. What do you learn about God from His message to Ezekiel in **43:7–9**?

⁵ While the prince is not expressly named, he should not be confused with David, nor should he be confused with the Messiah. *The Wiersbe Study Bible: Be Transformed by the Power of God’s Word. NKJV.* Thomas Nelson, 2019. Bible Gateway Plus

a. What thoughts, images, or feelings come to mind when you think about God making His home with His people forever? **(43:7)**

b. As you think through the history of the nation of Israel,⁶ recognizing their struggle to keep God at the forefront of their lives and worship, what does God's promise of dwelling with His people signify to you?

c. What, if any, hope does it give you as you acknowledge your struggles?

3. What is the basic law of the Temple? **(43:12)**

a. How would you describe holiness?⁷

⁶ For a review of their history, refer to the timeline of the nation found on page 8.

⁷ To be holy means to be set apart—entirely devoted and consecrated to God. It doesn't mean you have to be perfect 100% of the time.

- b. We are God’s mobile temples⁸ as we wait for the future where all of His promises are fully revealed.⁹
Acknowledging this truth, what does holiness look like in your life?

4. What does God’s glory filling the temple look like today?¹⁰

5. How do you imagine worship will look in God’s future Kingdom? How might it be different from how we experience His presence and worship Him today?

⁸ **1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16**

⁹ God is working to restore and redeem all of His creation. Eventually, He will dwell among us and the whole earth will be filled with His presence, just as it was at the beginning. **Revelation 21** and **22** reveal a day when God will bring the new heaven and new earth—He will dwell with His people for eternity. In the eternal city there will be no temple because God will be the temple and His presence will once again fill the whole earth. In the meantime, we are called to be His temples here on earth.

¹⁰ *“For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”*
(John 4:24)

“Don’t you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?” **(1 Corinthians 3:16)**

Day 4: Ezekiel 47:1–12

6. What is flowing out of the temple (47:1–5) and what is the result? (47:7–12)

7. Read **Revelation 22:1–5** below:

¹ Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations. ³ No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. ⁵ And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.

What similarities do you see to **Ezekiel 47:1–12**?

8. Ezekiel described leaves of healing growing on the trees by the river. As we anticipate the ultimate future healing, how do you experience God as healer now, while we wait? (**Ezekiel 47:12; Revelation 22:2**)
9. Because we are filled with Holy Spirit, we experience a foretaste of the future with God, but the full reality has yet to be experienced.¹¹ What are you most looking forward to as you think about your eternal future with God?

Day 4 & 5: Ezekiel 47:13–23 and 48:30–35

10. In **Ezekiel 47:13–23**, Ezekiel saw a vision of the restored and proper boundary divisions for the land of Israel.¹² What do you notice about the inclusion of foreigners in **verses 22–23**?¹³

¹¹ *Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.* (**1 Corinthians 13:12**)

¹² *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible: Follow God's Redemptive Plan as It Unfolds throughout Scripture.* Zondervan, 2018. Bible Gateway Plus

¹³ Once the Israelites had finally entered the promised land, the land was strategically divided between the 12 tribes. See **Numbers 1:49; Deuteronomy 10:9; Joshua 13:14.**

By including foreigners, God continues to show that it was His intention all along to include everyone in His redemptive plan. In fact, when we choose to accept Him, God adopts us into His family (**Romans 8:23**) and grants us full rights as His children. What does this inheritance and inclusion mean to you? (**Ephesians 1:5–14**)

11. How many gates will there be in the new city of God? (**Ezekiel 48:30–34**)¹⁴

The gates, also referenced in **Revelation 21:10–14**, represent the complete access we have to God. How have you experienced this complete access in your life?

¹⁴ “Providing access to the city are 12 gates that are associated with the 12 tribes, emphasizing the unity of the entire people of God. The gates are named after Jacob’s original sons, not the tribal territories. As a result, Levi’s name appears in the list (**48:31**) when one does not expect it (the Levites were not granted tribal allotments, cf. **Numbers 1:49; Deuteronomy 10:9; Joshua 13:14**). Likewise, Joseph’s name appears (**Ezekiel 48:32**) instead of Ephraim and Manasseh (vv. **4–5**). This maintains the number 12 and may emphasize the city’s accessibility to all (cf. **Revelation 21:12–14**). The number 12, because of its origin with [Jacob] and God’s promises to him and his family (**Genesis 49:28**), is used repeatedly in the Old Testament (**Exodus 24:4; Numbers 13:1–16; Joshua 3–4; 1 Kings 10:20**; etc.). The New Testament writers make great use of its symbolism (**Matthew 19:28; Mark 4:10; James 1:1; Revelation 7:1–8; 21:12**). Thus, Ezekiel’s audience would be reminded of God’s character. God will fulfill his promises of redemption.” Barker, Kenneth L., et al. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Old Testament*. Zondervan, 2004. Bible Gateway Plus

12. What will the city be named? (**Ezekiel 48:35**)

a. What is the significance of that name?

b. Does that name bring you hope? Why or why not?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Though we are still in the “wilderness” waiting for the return of Christ and the perfect “garden” we were created for, we get to live in this beautiful world. While this world is currently broken, it still belongs to and was created by God. We can partner with and worship Him by doing things that make the world a little more like the Garden of Eden each day. We live in hope for the new and restored creation as we care for the world we live in now.

What could it look like for you to make the world more like Eden this week?

- It could be as simple as picking up litter wherever you go or organizing a litter clean-up day.
- You could ride your bike or walk somewhere instead of driving.
- It could be taking the time to plant and water some beautiful flowers or herbs to use for cooking. (It doesn't have to be a whole garden; you could start with one potted plant).
- It could be helping someone with their yard work.

However you decide to engage with creation, thank the Lord for the blessings of life all around you and for the hope that one day all of creation will be renewed and restored forever.

ON MISSION

In today's world, many people experience hopelessness. They don't have a future that they anticipate or look forward to. Those of us who know Jesus and embody hope, have an opportunity to share our hope. We want everyone to know Him and have hope for the future.

What could it look like for you to share the hope and love of Jesus?

It could be a tangible act of service (see Spiritual Practice for ideas) or perhaps something more direct, like telling your story of how Jesus has brought you hope and healing.

Take some time to brainstorm with God in the space below.

TAKEAWAY SUMMARY

When you think about hope for creation, what is one key takeaway from this lesson?

Write a brief summary of your takeaway on page 106.

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, occupying most of the page. It is intended for the user to write their sermon notes.

TAKEAWAY SUMMARY PAGE

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