

Analysis of

EZEKIEL

"JUDGMENT AND RESTORATION 'UNTIL ALL KNOW I AM YAHWEH'"

"I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes." Ezekiel 36:23

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EZEKIEL¹

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"I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes." Ezekiel 36:23

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¹ Author's Note: This analysis at present consists of a fairly detailed outline of the book. The NASB text has been included only in a couple of instances – in a portion of chapter 28 and in chapter 47. There are relatively few footnotes at this time. The most substantive notes begin in chapter 47, which portrays a life-changing river emanating from a yet-to-be rebuilt Jewish Temple. This will occur in Christ's Millennial Kingdom. To go directly there, search for **

² What Ezekiel saw evidently consisted of God (pre-incarnate Christ) sitting enthroned upon a mobile platform powered by four angels called cherubim. The whole platform moved around on sets of intersecting wheels. One wheel (facing north and south) in each set could run forwards or backwards. The other one (facing east and west) could run from side to side. This brilliant display shows the blinding glory of God, his creative ability and rulership over these high-order angels (intelligence - human face; rulership - lion face; strength - ox face; infinity - eagle face [eagles are not bound to the earth]), his ability to be at any place in the universe (the mobility of the wheel), and his ability to know and see everything on the earth (the eyes on the wheels). See *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* on Ezekiel by Charles H. Dyer, Vol. I, pp. 1227-1229.

³So identified in 10:14, 20.

⁴God, possibly pre-incarnate Christ--observe the human form.

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⁵ Note his reappointment in 33:2-9.

⁶ Ezekiel was to be dumb except when God specifically gave him a message to speak. This dumbness continued for seven years until the day before Ezekiel heard of the fall of Jerusalem. Then God released him from dumbness and he began a new theme of the restoration of the nation (33:21-22).

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⁷ A reference to the judgment of Israel at the end of the Tribulation.

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 - H 2 Perfect in wisdom: Full of wisdom
 - H 3 Perfect in beauty: and perfect in beauty. {13} "You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared.
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 - H 4 Judgment. Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire.
 - H 5 His pride over his beauty: {17} "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You

⁸ This description goes beyond a mere human to Lucifer as cherub and the Devil as fallen angel. He is the powerful Vala originally known as Merkor, but ultimately as Morgoth, who wrought death and destruction in Arda as described by J. R. R. Tolkien in *The Silmarillion*.

- corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.
- H 6 Judgment. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, That they may see you.
- H 7 {18} "By the multitude of your iniquities, In the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries.
- H 8 Judgment. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you.
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⁹ Stated thrice: 28:22, 23, 24.

¹⁰ Twice: 29:6, 9

I'm Yahweh) 30:6-12

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¹¹ Cf. 3:16-21

¹² Cf. 3:26, where God had placed dumbness on Ezekiel except when God had a message of judgment for him to deliver. Now that the culmination of the judgment had befallen Judah--the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B. C., God, after seven years, had removed the sign of dumbness from Ezekiel the night before the messenger of the fall arrived on January 9, 585 B. C. Now God had a message of Restoration for Ezekiel to utter, and he was no longer silent with dumbness!

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 - E 1 Dispersed Israel a reproach against Yahweh's Name 36:16-21
 - E 2 Yahweh's clearing of His Name with regard to Israel¹⁴ 36:22-32
 - G 1 His resolve to vindicate His name (*They'll know He's Yahweh*) 36:22-23
 - G 2 His regathering of Israel 36:24
 - G 3 His cleansing of Israel 36:25
 - G 4 His giving Israel a new heart of flesh 36:26
 - G 5 His imbuing Israelis with His Spirit 36:27

¹³ Fulfilled prominently during the Millennium; perhaps most prominently in the New Earth (Rev. 21:1 ff.).

¹⁴ Complete fulfillment during the Millennium.

- G 6 Israel's security in the land given by God 36:28
- G 7 Israel's agricultural prosperity 36:29-30
- G 8 Israel's true repentance 36:31-32
- D 3 Yahweh's Cleansing of Israel's Souls and Restoration of Her Land
(*until they know He's Yahweh when He blesses*) 36:33-36
- D 4 The Increase of Israeli Population (until they know I'm Yahweh)
36:37-38
- C 5 The Valley of Dry Bones (Restoration and Regeneration 37:1-14)
 - D 1 The command to prophesy (*They'll know I'm Yahweh when I bless*)
37:1-6
 - D 2 The prophecy of flesh 37:7-8
 - D 3 The prophecy of breath and life 37:9-10
 - D 4 The interpretation: Yahweh to resurrect, restore, and regenerate
Israel (*until they know I'm Yahweh when I bless, vv. 13, 14*)¹⁵
37:11-14
- C 6 The Object Lesson of Two Sticks Become One: Reunification¹⁶ 37:15-28
 - D 1 The joining of two sticks 37:15-17
 - D 2 The interpretation: Yahweh to join the two houses of Israel into
one 37:18-20
 - D 3 The details of God's reunification plan: The New Covenant
 - E 1 The regathering of Israel from the nations 37:21
 - E 2 The reunification under one king 37:22
 - E 3 The Divine deliverance from idolatry, sin, and defilement
37:23a
 - E 4 The solidarity between God and Israel 37:23b, 27
 - E 5 David as King 37:24a, 25b
 - E 6 The obedience to God's laws 37:24b

¹⁵ This relates to the beginning of the Millennium.

¹⁶ Millennial fulfillment.

- E 7 The eternal possession of the land given to Jacob 37:25
- E 8 Yahweh's eternal covenant of peace with Israel 37:26
- E 9 Yahweh's dwelling with Israel 37:27
- E 10 Worldwide knowledge of Yahweh (*The nations will know I'm Yahweh when my sanctuary is in Jerusalem for ever.*) 37:28a
- E 11 Yahweh's temple in Israel forever 37:28b
- C 7 The Prophecy against the Invading Gog (of Magog) and His Allies 38 - 39
 - D 1 Yahweh's Sovereignty over Gog 38:1-9
 - E 1 His stance against God of the land of Magog 38:1-6
 - E 2 His summoning of the Gog military alliance against securely-dwelling Israel 38:7-9
 - E 3 Human Motivation: Gog's thoughts of plundering the wealthy Hebrews at the center of the world 38:10-13
 - D 2 Divine Motivation: Yahweh's plan to bring Gog against Israel to reveal Himself to the earth's nations (*They'll know I'm Yahweh when I judge, v. 16*) 38:14-16
 - D 3 Divine Mechanism: Adonai Yahweh against Gog (*They'll know I'm Yahweh when I judge, v. 23*) 38:17-23
 - D 4 Divine Antagonism: Adonai Yahweh against Gog (*"Those of Magog will know I'm Yahweh when I send fire." v. 6*) 39:1-6
 - D 5 Divine Motivation: Actions taken against Gog *so the nations will know God is Yahweh* 39:7-8
 - D 6 The Extent of Gog's Carnage 39:9-10
 - E 1 Seven years required to burn Gog's weapons 39:9-10
 - E 2 Seven months required to bury Gog's dead 39:11-16
 - E 3 Carnivores urged to eat Gog's flesh and drink his blood at Yahweh's table 39:17-20
 - D 7 Spiritual Results of Gog's Destruction 39:21-29
 - E 1 Knowledge 39:21-24
 - G 1 Israel's knowledge that Yahweh is their God 39:21-22

G 2 The nations to know Israel's exile was because of her sin 39:23-24

E 2 Reconciliation: between Yahweh and Israel (*They will know I am Yahweh their God through the exile / restoration process*) 37:25-29

B 2 The Millennial Temple and the Land 40-48 ¹⁷

C 1 The Temple 40-46

D 1 The Measurements of the Temple 40-42

E 1 The Gates 40:1-37

G 1 Introduction: The vision of the temple and the measuring man 40:1-4

G 2 The East Gate 40:5-16

G 3 The outer court of the East Gate 40:17-19

G 4 The North Gate, outer and inner courts 40:20-23

G 5 The porch of the South Gate, outer court 40:24-27

G 6 The South Gate, inner court 40:28-31

G 7 The East Gate, inner court 40:32-34

G 8 The North Gate, inner court (?) 40:35-37

¹⁷ Ezekiel 40-48 - The Millennial Temple and the Land: This is a signature passage of Scripture that is unquestionably a watershed in defining an exegete's [hermeneutical](#) and [eschatological](#) framework. Do interpreters take this passage literally, at face value, or do they arbitrarily assign it a metaphorical value? The Roman Catholic Church and most mainline Protestant Churches typically describe this section of Ezekiel as metaphorical. For example, here is [footnote 1](#), found at Ezek. 40:1 in the *The New American Bible*, the translation to be found on the Vatican website:

[40:1-48:35] This lengthy vision of the new Israel is dated (Ezekiel 40:1) April 28, 573 B.C. It is largely concerned with the new temple and the prescriptions to govern it, but other details of the restored commonwealth are included, forming a kind of program for the future. The literary form of the vision has been aptly termed "utopian": it is plain that the prophet did not expect a literal fulfillment of much of what he described. The passage doubtless underwent successive additions, both from the prophet and from later inspired writers.

In my view, the writers of the footnote are completely arbitrary and completely mistaken. I would say the opposite: "It is plain that the prophet *did* expect a literal fulfillment of what all that he described." How can one read through the massive amount of detail about the temple structure in the early chapters and conclude that is all to be taken metaphorically? That flies in the face of common sense. Why would Ezekiel write chapter after chapter of detailed measurements of something that did not need to be measured? Furthermore, the gratuitous opinion, given without a single justification, that "the passage doubtless underwent successive additions, both from the prophet and from later inspired writers" is baseless, and to be rejected out of hand. The [Amillennial](#) commentary here boggles the mind.

- E 2 The Facilities 40:38 - 42:20
 - G 1 The facilities for rinsing and slaughtering sacrificial animals 40:38-43
 - G 2 The chambers for singers and priests 40:44-46
 - G 3 The measurements of the central Inner Court 40:47
 - G 4 The porch and pillars of the Temple proper 40:48-49
 - G 5 The Temple Nave (main hall) 41:1-3
 - G 6 The Most Holy Place 41:4
 - G 7 The wall and side chambers of the Temple proper 41:5-11
 - G 8 The West Building and Temple proper 41:12-14
 - H 1 Separate area and building (east-west measurements)
 - H 2 Separate area and Temple front (north-south measurements)
 - G 9 The three-storied separate building: Measurement and description 41:15-20
 - G 10 The interior of the Temple 41:18-26
 - G 11 The priests' changing and eating chambers 42:1-14
 - G 12 The outside measurements of the Temple complex 45:15-20
- D 2 The Functions of the Temple 43:1 - 44:8
 - E 1 Yahweh's relationship to the Temple 43:1-12
 - G 1 The return of the Glory of Yahweh to the Temple from the east¹⁸ 43:1-5
 - G 2 Yahweh's intention to dwell among the sons of Israel forever 43:6-9
 - G 3 Yahweh's motive in describing the Millennial Temple: To shame Israel from their iniquities

¹⁸ Note the departure of the Glory of the Lord to the east gate (10:19) and to the mountain east of the city (11:24).

43:10-12

- E 2 The altar of the Temple 43:13-27
 - G 1 The altar's measurements 43:13-17
 - G 2 Instructions for consecrating the altar 43:18-27
- E 3 The usage of the Temple 44:1-8
 - G 1 Rules about entry and exit from the Temple 44:1-3
 - G 2 The Glory of Yahweh filling the House of Yahweh 44:4
 - G 3 Yahweh's reprimanding Israel for bringing uncircumcised Gentiles into the Temple 44:5-8
- D 3 The Workers in the Temple 44:9-31
 - E 1 Past idolatry prohibits Levites from serving as priests but not from ministering in Yahweh's House 44:9-14
 - E 2 Requirements and responsibilities of faithful Levitical Priests, sons of Zadok, in ministering to Yahweh 44:15-31
 - G 1 Their identity 44:15a
 - G 2 Their function 44:15b-16
 - G 3 Their requirements 44:17-22, 14-17
 - G 4 Their responsibilities 44:23-24
 - G 5 Their provisions 44:28-31
- D 4 The Offerings at the Temple 45 - 46
 - E 1 The prince's responsibility for offerings 45:1-17
 - G 1 The division of the adjacent land 45:1-8
 - G 2 Yahweh's exhortation to Israel's princes to be just 45:9-12
 - G 3 The prince's provision of public sacrifices out of taxes 45:13-17
 - E 2 Regulations for offerings 45:18 - 46:24
 - G 1 Feasts at which public offerings are made 45:18-25

- G 2 Entry and exit procedures for people and prince in sabbath and new moon offerings 46:1-12
 - G 3 Requirements for daily burnt and grain offerings 46:13-15
 - G 4 Regulations for the prince concerning acquisition and bequeathal of real estate 46:16-18
 - G 5 The kitchens in which priests are to boil and bake sacrifices 46:19-24
- C 2 The Land 47 - 48 **
- D 1 The Life-Giving River ¹⁹ 47:1-12
 - E 1 The water flowing from underneath the Temple 47:1-2

¹⁹ 47:1-12, Title - Life-Giving River: In their introduction to this section, Keil and Delitzsch state the following: When Jehovah shall have judged all the heathen in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and shall dwell as King of His people upon Zion His holy mountain, then will the mountains trickle with new wine, and the hills run with milk, and all the brooks of Judah flow with water; and a spring will proceed from the house of Jehovah, and water the Acacia valley. With these figures Joel (Joel 4:18) has already described the river of salvation, which the Lord would cause to flow to His congregation in the time when the kingdom of God shall be perfected. This picture of the Messianic salvation shapes itself in the case of our prophet into the magnificent vision contained in the section before us.

Keil and Delitzsch are theological and exegetical conservatives. Sadly, they exhibit the tendency of the majority of Protestant and Catholic commentators to resist taking what eschatological prophetic Scriptures say at face value. This life-giving river *does not* describe "the river of salvation" which the Lord will "cause to flow to His congregation in the time when the kingdom of God shall be perfected." It rather describes a literal fountain of water that springs from the temple and expands into a literal river which brings life to the literal Dead Sea. Why should the God who made literal water flow from a rock to assuage the thirst of the sons of Israel (Exod. 17:1-7; Num. 20:8-13) be unable to arrange a literal river that flows into the Dead Sea and rejuvenates it? The only reason commentators object to a literal rendering is that they exhibit a built-in bias against a literal interpretation and a built-in bias against the supernatural.

Let us, for the sake of the argument, suppose for a moment that these non-literalists are correct in stating that this is only a metaphorical river. (1) Why then did the man with the measuring rod take such great pains to show Ezekiel the precise origin of the spring within the temple and the precise point at which it exited the temple complex (47:1-2)? (2) Why did the man go to all the trouble of measuring a thousand cubits four times and have Ezekiel cross the river back and forth with him three times, both of them getting all wet (47:3-5)? (3) Why did the man bother to ask Ezekiel if he had seen what he had just shown him (47:6)? (4) Why did Ezekiel bother to note that there were many trees on either side of the river (47:7)? (5) Why did the man bother to tell Ezekiel of the precise route of the river as it flowed into the Dead Sea (47:8)? (6) Why did the man bother to predict that there would one day be a copious amount of fish in the river and in the Dead Sea (47:9)? (7) Why did the man bother to tell Ezekiel that there would one day be commercial fishermen spreading their nets from Engedi to Eneglaim alongside the Dead Sea (47:10)? (8) Why did the man bother to tell Ezekiel that the prodigious number of fish in the Dead Sea would compare favorably with the number of fish in the Mediterranean (47:10)? (9) Why did the man bother to tell Ezekiel that the swamps and marshes would remain salty (47:11)? (10) Why did the man bother to tell Ezekiel that the fruit trees on both banks of the river that bore fruit every month would be so productive precisely because they were watered by the river that emanated from the Temple (47:12)? (11) Why did the man bother telling Ezekiel that the nutrient-enriched fruit trees would be so productive that, while their fruit served as food, their leaves promoted physical health (47:12)?

The truth of the matter is that if these predictions were not to be taken literally, there is NO GOOD REASON FOR ANY OF THE DETAILS. They are utterly superfluous. And so, the view that this is not a literal river is shown to be a view not arrived at by exegesis, but solely on the basis of dogmatic considerations – an *a priori* bias against literalism and a rejection of the supernatural.

- G 1 The location: {1} Then he brought me ²⁰ back to the door of the house; 47:1a
- G 2 The novelty – flowing water: and behold, water was flowing ²¹ 47:1b
- G 3 The source of the water 47:1c
- H 1 From under the threshold: from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced east.
- H 2 From under the right side of the house: And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house,
- H 3 From south of the altar: from south of the altar.
- G 4 The pursuit of the water 47:2
- H 1 Exit through the north gate: {2} He brought me out by way of the north gate
- H 2 The walk to the east gate: and led me around on the outside to the outer gate by way of *the gate* that faces east.
- H 3 The trickle from the south side of the east gate: And behold, water was trickling from the south side.
- E 2 The ever-deepening river at multiples of 1000 cubits 47:3-6
- G 1 1000 cubits – ankle-deep water: {3} When the man went out toward the east with a line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits,²² and he led me through the water,²³ water *reaching* the ankles. 47:3

²⁰ 47:1 - he brought me: i.e., the man whose appearance was like bronze, and who carried a measuring line of flax and a measuring rod, first identified in Ezek. 40:3. He will use his measuring line to measure the river.

²¹ 47:1 - water was flowing: "The Letter of Aristias, dated about 100 B.C., contains reference to a spring on the temple mount inside the enclosure of the temple area" (Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, 2010 Edition, p. 230: <http://www.soniclight.org/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>).

²² 47:3 - a thousand cubits: About a third of a mile (Constable, *Notes on Ezekiel*, 2010 Edition, p. 230: <http://www.soniclight.org/constable/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>).

²³ 47:3 - through the water: However broad this little stream was, the man led Ezekiel through it, meaning across it. The water was ankle-deep.

- G 2 2000 cubits – knee-deep water: {4} Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water,²⁴ water *reaching* the knees. 47:4a
- G 3 3000 cubits – loin-deep water: Again he measured a thousand and led me through ²⁵ *the water*, water *reaching* the loins. 47:4b
- G 4 4000 cubits – a swimmable, unfordable river: {5} Again he measured a thousand; *and it was* a river that I could not ford,²⁶ for the water had risen, *enough* water to swim in, a river that could not be forded. 47:5
- G 5 The question of Ezekiel's guide: {6} He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen *this*?"²⁷ 47:6a

²⁴ 47:4 - through the water: The water was now knee-deep, but they were able to traverse the stream. The current was apparently insubstantial.

²⁵ 47:4b - led me through: The water was now apparently waist deep. Still, the pair were able to wade through it, the current still not being strong enough to prevent them from doing so.

²⁶ 47:5 - a river that I could not ford: This time Ezekiel calls the water a "river" (*nachal*, 5158a). NASB translates *nachal* as brook(s) 49X; valley(s) 43X; river(s) 18X. Apparently Ezekiel and the man both attempted to wade across, but they could not. The water must have been at least up to their necks or deeper. They would have had to swim to cross.

²⁷ 47:6 - "have you seen *this*?: The two are out in the river, either neck deep in water or treading water, and the man turns to Ezekiel and asks, "Have you seen this?" He is reminding Ezekiel of his responsibility to "declare to the house of Israel all that you see" (Ezek. 40:4). What is the significance of what Ezekiel has just seen? The significance is that when Jesus Christ returns to the land of Israel at His Second Coming, there will be tremendous changes, even in nature. Jesus Christ will return and sit on His throne in the newly rebuilt Millennial Temple (Ezek. 43:1-7). A spring of living water will emanate from His throne. That water will be so pure and life-giving that an abundance of fish will swim in the revived waters of the most alkaline body of water in the entire world, the Dead Sea (Ezek. 47:1-12)!

C. J. H. Wright, in *The Message of Ezekiel*, 2001, pp. 356-357, commenting on this life-giving river, opines, "There can be no doubt that, like the earlier vision, the whole account was recognized and recorded as a symbolic vision, not as a literal prediction of any future event." Then he quotes approvingly Joseph Blenkinsopp (*Ezekiel: Interpretation – A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 1990, p. 231) who states, "No amount of exegetical finesse or insistence on "what the Bible plainly says" can transform the poetry of this passage into a topographically and ecologically realistic account of an event in time." At that point, in a footnote, Wright explains his logic: "Among the features which point beyond literal physical possibilities are the source of the river well above the water table; the exponential increase in the river's volume within a short distance with no tributaries; the sudden appearance of orchards full of trees; the ability of the trees to bear fruit every month; the flow of the river directly eastwards from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea; and the purifying effect of the fresh water on the salinity of the Dead Sea, rather than the reverse."

Both Wright and Blenkinsopp betray their *a priori* anti-supernaturalism. They in their wisdom, claim, in effect, to know more than both Ezekiel, the man who guided him, and the God who inspired this Scripture. Because Scripture states something as fact that is outside their own experience of the laws of nature, they assign a metaphorical, rather than a literal rendering to the prophetic text.

Sadly, both of these amillennial writers seem blind to the fact that when Christ returns, the prophets predict profound even topographical changes that will take place here upon the earth. For example, Zechariah predicted that when Christ returns, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, to the east of Jerusalem. At about that time, "...the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. ⁵You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the

- G 6 The river-bank perspective: Then he brought me back to the bank of the river.²⁸ 47:6b
- E 3 The effects of the river 47:7-12
- G 1 Supporting many trees: {7} Now when I had returned, behold, on the bank of the river there *were* very many trees on the one side and on the other.²⁹ 47:7
- G 2 Rejuvenating the Dead Sea! 47:8
- H 1 The river's eastward flow: {8} Then he said to me, "These waters go out toward the

valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!" (Zech. 14:4-5). The valley created will provide all the east-west access the fountain from within the Temple that will be rebuilt will need to descend to the Jordan rift valley and the Dead Sea. In fact, Zechariah continued, "And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter" (Zech. 14:8). So Wright and Blekinsopp must explain away both Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Zechariah 14:4-8 and, as well, Joel 3:18, which states in part, "And a spring will go out from the house of the LORD to water the valley of Shittim." These profound changes at Christ's Second Coming will include alterations in nature, topography, international superiority, spirituality, economy, and even longevity. Note the following list of Scriptures which explicitly portray these types of changes: Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:1-16; 24:23; 25:1-10; 59:15-21; 60:1-5, 10-12, 17-22; 61:4-7, 11; 62:1-2; 65:18-25; 66:10-24; Ezekiel 34:26-30; 36:8-12, 30-36; 37:25-28; 40:1-2; 45:1-8; 48:8-14; Joel 2:18-32; 3:1-2, 12-21; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:1-14; 5:1-9; 7:9-20; Zephaniah 2:3-11; 3:8-20; Haggai 2:7-9; Zechariah 12:10-13:1; 14:4-8, 10-11, 16-19; Malachi 3:1-4.

Of course, these Scripture passages will not change the minds of Wright or Blekinsopp or their cohorts one whit. Of course, if one labels every prophetic Scripture that does not fit into one's eschatological theology as metaphorical instead of literal, no prophetic Scripture will *ever* change one's mind. In spite of all the Scriptures that maintain otherwise, these men, and others like them, do not even believe Jesus will reign here upon the earth. And why don't they? Precisely because, for the most part, they do not take these prophetic Scriptures literally. They do not let these Scriptures speak for themselves. Only as history unfolds in the future, I believe, will they be forced to admit they were wrong. God said it the way He meant to say it, and He meant what He said. Even today, for these brothers, the presence of the literal nation of Israel in a literal piece of real estate, the land of Israel, in the Middle East is an affront to their exegesis. And that is why they give their allegiance to the Palestinians, not the Israelis. Such is the sad fruit of Replacement Theology, to which they subscribe. Replacement Theology holds that the Church has historically and permanently replaced the nation of Israel for eternity. For more on the implications of Replacement Theology, see WordExplain's Glossary entry, http://www.wordexplain.com/glossaryr.html#Replacement_Theology; see also http://www.wordexplain.com/Review_Future_Israel.html.

²⁸ 47:6 - back to the bank of the river: In other words, the man and Ezekiel had ventured, in this virtual vision, some distance out into the river and found they could not ford, but were having to swim. Having made his point, the man led Ezekiel back to the bank of the river, both of them presumably dripping wet.

²⁹ 47:7 - very many trees on the one side and on the other: The man led Ezekiel back to the river bank to focus his attention on the proliferation of trees. They would have been situated within a mile or two of Jerusalem to the east. The average annual precipitation in Jerusalem is today around 22 inches per year, with the rain falling almost entirely between October and May. It would not be surprising to see trees along the river, but Ezekiel noted the abundance of trees on both sides of the river. He stated not only that there were trees, but that there were *many* of them; not just many, but *very* many! Why should Ezekiel bother to offer these details about the great number of trees on both sides of the river if he did not wish his readers to understand him in a literal fashion? Clearly this is a life-giving river, proceeding as it does from the very throne of the Divine/Human King enthroned in the temple (Ezek. 43:6).

eastern region³⁰

- H 2 The river's descent into the Jordan valley: and go down into the Arabah;
 - H 3 The river's flow southward into the Dead Sea: then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea,
 - H 4 The river's freshening effect: and the waters of the sea become fresh.³¹
- G 3 Supporting fish 47:9-11
- H 1 The presence of aquatic creatures in the river and the Dead Sea: {9} "It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live."³²

³⁰ 47:8 - toward the eastern region: The waters will flow eastward to the Jordan Valley through the split in the Mount of Olives supernaturally imposed upon the present day topography. See Zechariah 14:4-8 and Joel 3:18. That is the inescapable conclusion of sound exegesis, Blenkinsopp notwithstanding (see the note on 47:6).

³¹ 47:8 - and the waters of the sea become fresh: Literally, the waters become healed (niph'al perfect of *rapha*, 7495). This term is used again in 47:9. The waters of the Dead Sea presently are 33.7% saline, making it 8.6 times saltier than the ocean, and one of the saltiest bodies of water in the world. It cannot support life. Yet the life-giving waters of the river emanating from the Millennial Temple will heal this lake 42 mile by 11 mile lake. C. J. H. Wright spoke (see the note on 47:6) of Ezekiel's portrayal of "the purifying effect of the fresh water on the salinity of the Dead Sea, rather than the reverse" as one of the reasons why a literal understanding of this text is unfeasible. It is common knowledge that today, of course, the fresh waters of the Jordan empty into the alkaline Dead Sea in a region so arid that the waters of the Dead Sea evaporate faster than the fresh waters of the Jordan can dilute them. And so the Dead Sea gradually grows more and more alkaline. But if language means anything at all, the man instructing Ezekiel predicted that *the present course of nature will change*. If, to refute Wright's logic for a moment, the man *had meant* for his words to be taken literally, and not metaphorically, how would he have stated the matter differently than he did? The trouble with Wright's position is that he is exegesis under a uniformitarian hermeneutic. He seems to ignore the fact that in the Day of the Lord, God will enter into human history directly and change things even in nature that have heretofore been operating uniformly.

Peter spoke concerning mockers who will deny the return of Christ in the last days (2 Peter 3:3-18). These mockers will take a uniformitarian approach, saying "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation" (2 Pet. 3:4). Two great facts of history and one coming fact of eschatology escape the notice of these mockers. By God's word, the heavens and the earth came into existence long ago; by God's word the original earth was destroyed by water, and by God's word the present heavens and earth are doomed to a fiery, explosive, catastrophic destruction. That, my friends, is not uniformitarianism!

I am not claiming that Wright and Blenkinsopp disbelieve these three events. Frankly, I do not know where they stand. Nor am I labeling them mockers. But I am labeling them as uniformitarians. It is presently outside the realm of their experience that God directly enters into human history and makes changes in topography and nature. To them, nature must apparently always keep operating as it has. And therefore they deny the literalness of that which Ezekiel clearly predicts. If the waters of the Dead Sea did not become fresh, but remained alkaline as they are today, where would be the miraculous element? It would be non-existent. But the man's whole point, and Ezekiel's whole point is that miraculous things are going to happen some time in the future. The most likely time frame is the return of Christ to set up His kingdom here upon earth. For a further explanation of uniformitarianism, see <http://wordexplain.com/glossary.html#Uniformitarianism>.

³² 47:9 - will live: This will be a life-giving river because it will flow from the Temple, having been made life-giving by the Creator. In other words, there will be a supernatural quality to this river that non-literalists, for whatever reason, are loathe to acknowledge. This river prefigures the River of the Water of Life spoken of in

47:9a

H 2 The presence of a great many fish in the river and the Dead Sea: And there will be very many fish,³³ for these waters go there and *the others* become fresh;³⁴ so everything will live where the river goes.³⁵ 47:9b

Revelation 22:1-2. Nevertheless, the two rivers are not to be confused. The life-giving river in Ezekiel 47:1-12 will flow from the temple in Christ's Millennial Kingdom, in which sin and death, though muted, still remain. People will still eat fish (Ezek. 47:10) and people will still die, though longevity will be the norm (Isa. 65:20-22). In the New Heavens and the New Earth, sin, death, and the curse will be forever banished (Rev. 21:1-8; 22:3), and there will be no temple (Rev. 21:22).

³³ 47:9 - and there will be very many fish: Just as Ezekiel had noted that there were trees – many – very – (47:7), now he observes that in the rejuvenated Dead Sea there will be fish – many – very!

³⁴ 47:9 - become fresh: Literally, be healed (*rapha*, 7495), the term used previously in 47:8. The meaning is that the waters of the Dead Sea become healed.

³⁵ 47:9 - so everything will live where the river goes. Keil and Delitzsch (K & D), in their efforts to interpret this account of the river metaphorically ("in a spiritual and symbolic sense," as they term it), cite several reasons for doing so. In so doing they are disagreeing with a commentator named Volck who interprets the passage literally as applying to the Millennium. Have briefly stated in my own words their objections, and then responded to them at the end of this note.

(1) How can a life-giving river be harmonized with animal sacrifice? In other words, how does a literal, life-giving river, which suggests "a glorification of nature" (using Volck's words), "harmonize with its issuing from a temple in which bullocks, rams, calves, and goats are slaughtered and sacrificed?"

(2) How can a glorified nature be reconciled with the eating of fish? K & D represent Volck as follows:

Volck is still further of opinion that, with the spiritual interpretation of the temple spring, "nothing at all could be made of the fishermen;" because, for example, he cannot conceive of the spiritual interpretation in any other way than as an allegorical translation of all the separate features of the prophetic picture into spiritual things.

To this objection, K & D respond,

But he has failed to consider that the fishermen with their nets on the shore of the sea, once dead, but now swarming with fish, are irreconcilably opposed to the assumption of a glorification of nature in the holy land, just because the inhabitants of the globe or holy land, in its paradisaically glorified state, will no more eat fish or other flesh, according to the teaching of Scripture, than the first men in Paradise. When once the wolf shall feed with the lamb, the leopard with the kid, the cow with the bear, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, under the sceptre of the sprout from the stem of Jesse, then will men also cease their fishing, and no longer slaughter and eat either oxen or goats.

(3) How can a literal interpretation of this life-giving river be reconciled with Joel 3:18? This Scripture reads as follows: "And in that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; and a spring will go out from the house of the LORD to water the valley of Shittim." K&D's point is that we do not literally believe that the mountains of Israel will drip with sweet wine, or that the hills will flow with milk, so why should we believe in a literal river?

My response is as follows: First, with regard to the whole time frame of Ezekiel 40-48, non-literal commentators routinely make the mistake of assuming that Ezekiel 40-48 symbolically represents the same eschatological time-frame as that depicted in Revelation 21:1-22:5, which is depicted as "New Heaven" and "New Earth." It manifestly does not. Ezekiel 40-48 depicts what will happen when Christ returns to earth to set up His earthly kingdom. It does refer to the Eternal State, which is what John was viewing in Revelation 21-22. The differences are too numerous to equate the two. More about that later. And now, with regard to each of the points of K & D:

(1) The sacrifices in the Millennial Temple will be a memorial of the Death of Christ, just as our present day observance of the Lord's Table is a memorial of His death two thousand years ago. Memorial sacrifices are not incompatible with a life-giving river in the Millennium, in which death is not yet banished. Neither are they incompatible with the message of the Book of Hebrews, namely, the all-sufficiency of the death of Christ.

(2) By the same token, a harmonized nature (Isa. 11:6-9), in which the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the goat,

- H 3 The presence of commercial fishermen as demonstrating the abundance of fish in the river and the Dead Sea: {10} "And it will come about that fishermen will stand beside it; from Engedi³⁶ to Eneglaim³⁷ there will be a place for the spreading of nets."³⁸ 47:10a
- H 4 The variety and quantity of fish in the river and the Dead Sea will compare favorably with the Mediterranean Sea: Their fish will be according to their kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea, very many.³⁹ 47:10b
- H 5 The salty character of the swamps and marshes: {11} "But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for

the calf and the lion, the cow and the bear, and the toddler and the cobra peacefully coexist does not preclude that humans will eat fish in the Millennium (Ezek. 47:10). After all, if the resurrected Christ could eat fish in His resurrected state (Luke 21:41-43; John 21:9), why should not we eat fish during the Millennium?

(3) With regard to the imagery of Joel 3:18, I acknowledge that Joel employed metaphors. But the metaphors have a meaning that accurately and primarily describes the Millennial earth, not the joys of salvation. By "mountains dripping with sweet wine" we are to understand that in the Millennium, the grapes will be in such abundance and so luscious that grape juice will indeed drip down on the mountain sides. And by the "hills flowing with milk," we are to understand that the pasture lands of Israel during the Millennium will be so fertile and rich with nutrients that cows and nanny goats and ewes will virtually be dripping milk from their udders as they await feeding time or milking time. Of course, such fertile conditions will produce joy at the utter magnitude of Christ's salvation, which will encompass the physical realm as well as the spiritual realm.

³⁶ 47:10 - Engedi: Even today "En Gedi is the largest oasis along the western shore of the Dead Sea. The springs here have allowed nearly continuous inhabitation of the site since the Chalcolithic period. The area was allotted to the tribe of Judah, and was famous in the time of Solomon (Josh 15:62). Today the Israeli kibbutz of En Gedi sits along the southern bank of the Nahal Arugot" (<http://www.bibleplaces.com/engedi.htm>).

³⁷ 47:10 - Eneglaim: This city / site is mentioned only here in all the Bible. Scholars are uncertain as to whether it is situated on the northern edge of the Dead Sea, somewhere in the vicinity of the mouth of the Jordan, or whether it is south of the Dead Sea, not far from the ancient Biblical cities of Gomorrah, Zoar, and Admah (<http://bibleatlas.org/eneglaim.htm>). K & D reported that Jerome considered Eneglaim to be at the northern edge of the Dead Sea. K & D also reported a conjecture that Eneglaim is to be identified with Ain el-Feshkhah, a spring at the northern edge of the west coast, and where the ruins of some buildings are located.

³⁸ 47:10 - fishermen ... Engedi ... Eneglaim ... spreading of nets: These details help cement the literal hermeneutic as the only viable method of interpretation. What possible value could there be in including these details if Ezekiel's guide did not mean them to be taken literally? In Christ's Millennial Kingdom, there will be a literal river flowing from a literal temple flowing into a literal Dead Sea so rejuvenated that literal fisherman will catch literal fish and spread their literal nets out to dry from literal En Gedi to literal Eneglaim. What is the significance? That the coming of the Creator to reign from Jerusalem even on a still sin-cursed earth produces dramatic physical differences on this planet. Christ's coming Kingdom will have dramatic physical and material as well as spiritual implications.

³⁹ 47:10 - Their fish will be according to their kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea, very many: The variety and quantity of fish to be found in the rejuvenated Dead Sea will compare favorably with the variety and quantity of fish to be found in the Great Sea (Mediterranean). Naturally, the fish in the future Dead Sea will be fresh-water fish, while those in the Mediterranean will be salt-water. Again, there is no possible merit in comparing the fish in the future Dead Sea to the fish in the Mediterranean if Ezekiel's guide did not mean to be taken literally.

salt.⁴⁰ 47:11

G 4 Supporting fruit trees 47:12

- H 1 Their situation on both banks: {12} "By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other,⁴¹
- H 2 Their type – fruit trees: will grow all *kinds of* trees for food.⁴²
- H 3 Their durability: Their leaves will not wither⁴³ and their fruit will not fail.
- H 4 Their unusual productivity
- J 1 The frequency – monthly bearing: They will bear every month⁴⁴

⁴⁰ 47:11 - swamps ... marshes ... left for salt: The whole area around the Dead Sea is presently very alkaline. "Even though there are many springs around the Dead Sea, most of them have a high salt content" (<http://www.bibleplaces.com/engedi.htm>). So in Ezekiel's day there were apparently salty swamps and marshes. When Christ returns and alters nature, the salty swamps and marshes will be left as environments for their own unique habitat and biosphere. This is consistent with the view that even in the Millennium, conditions, though vastly improved, will not be perfect. There will still be death, though it will apparently be unusual and thought to be disciplinary (Isa. 65:20). If the amillennial, non-literal interpretation be true; if Ezekiel's vision as recorded in Ezek. 47:1-12 is merely symbolical of the Eternal State as recorded in Rev. 21:1-22:5, what is the purpose of the alkaline swamps and marshes? To symbolize imperfection in the Eternal State? Impossible! The only viable hermeneutic is a literal one, and the only feasible time is Christ's Millennial reign upon earth.

⁴¹ 47:12 - on one side and on the other: Ezekiel's guide predicted to him that, in the (eschatological) future, fruit trees would line both sides of the river. He was speaking of Christ's Millennial Kingdom. Fruit trees on both sides of the river on the Millennial Earth prefigure the situation in New Jerusalem (during the Eternal State), in which a single Tree of Life grows on both sides of the River of the Water of Life (Rev. 22:1-2). Non-literalist scholars try to merge these two rivers, but they are not the same, although they both have life-giving qualities.

⁴² 47:12 - trees for food: Fruit trees. In a normal stand of trees, taller hardwoods would block sunlight from smaller fruit trees and the fruit trees would not thrive. These appear to be an orchard planted along either side of the river.

⁴³ 57:12 - Their leaves will not wither: Withering can be caused by lack of moisture and also by change of climate. The rainy season in Israel extends from October through May (<http://www.science.co.il/Israel-climate.php>) But there is a constant source of water for these fruit trees, so moisture is adequate year around. Deciduous fruit trees grow all over Israel (http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2001/9/Flora%20and%20Fauna%20in%20Israel). But the fruit trees which Ezekiel's guide predicted highly unusual. So invigorating is the water that, even though temperatures grow colder during the winter months, these fruit trees never lose their leaves!

⁴⁴ 47:12 - bear every month: There is no tree on earth known to man today that bears fruit every month. This obviously is a supernatural trait endowed by the Creator in connection with the life-giving river. The Tree of Life in New Jerusalem also bears fruit each month (Rev. 22:2). It may be, however, that the tree in New Jerusalem bears twelve different kinds of fruit, a different kind each month, an advance over these Millennial fruit trees alongside the river in Ezekiel. (The text in Rev. 22:2 reads, literally, "tree of life bearing fruits twelve, according to each month yielding the fruit of it." Had John meant only one kind of fruit, he would likely have stated, "bearing fruit twelve," etc.)

- J 2 The source of the productivity: because their water flows from the sanctuary,⁴⁵
- H 5 Their purpose
 - J 1 Of their fruit: and their fruit will be for food
 - J 2 Of their leaves: and their leaves for healing."
- D 2 The Boundaries of the Land 47:13-23 ⁴⁶
 - E 1 Yahweh Adonai's instructions to divide the land equally among the twelve tribes, giving Joseph two portions 47:13-14
 - E 2 The four boundaries of the land 47:15-20
 - E 3 The command to divide the land by lot among Israel and resident Israeli-domiciled aliens 47:21-23
- D 3 The Division of the Land 48 ⁴⁷
 - E 1 Horizontal portions for the tribes from Dan to Judah 48:1-7
 - E 2 The Priests' portion, including the Temple 48:8-12
 - E 3 The Levites' portion 48:13-14

⁴⁵ 47:12 - because their water flows from the sanctuary: The miraculous productivity of these fruit trees is directly attributable to the source of the water – the sanctuary where dwells the Great King. Those who reject a literal interpretation of these verses do not give sufficient credit to the presence of Jesus the Messiah on the Millennial earth. When Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, the wine was noteworthy for its quality – it was the best wine of the wedding (John 2:9-10)! Jesus will cause water to emanate from the sanctuary, and it will be miraculously nutritious. Again, the miraculous, monthly bearing of multiple fruit trees alongside the life-giving river in Ezekiel 47 should not be confused with the miraculous single fruit tree situated in New Jerusalem that also bore each month, but a different kind of fruit each month. There is a difference in productivity, and a difference in the water source. In Ezekiel, the water is said to come from the sanctuary. In New Jerusalem there will be no sanctuary (Rev. 21:22). The water source in New Jerusalem is the throne of God and of the Lamb, not a sanctuary (Rev. 22:1).

⁴⁶ Ezek. 47:13-23 - The Boundaries of the Land: The Roman Catholic Commentary ([footnote 3](#)) on this section reads as follows: “[47:13-20] These boundaries of the restored Israel correspond to those of the Davidic kingdom at its fullest extent, the so-called "ideal boundaries" of the promised land; cf Numbers 34:3-12.” The expression in quotation marks, “ideal boundaries,” is code for “Not to be taken literally.” Again, the position of the RCC editors is baseless. These boundaries are meant to be taken literally, and in fact they will be literally fulfilled.

⁴⁷ Ezek. 48:1-35 - The Division of the Land: The Roman Catholic Commentary on this section reads as follows: “[48:1-29] This distribution of the land among the tribes does not correspond to the geographical realities of Palestine. It is a description of the ideal order, like that in Ezekiel 47:1-12.” The RCC commentators are in error for assuming that the conditions of the Holy Land during the Millennium will be just like they are now. Scripture clearly teaches otherwise (Zech. 14:1-8, 10; Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1-2).

- E 4 The common use for the city 48:15-20
- E 5 The Prince's portion (East and West sides of the holy allotment) 48:21-22
- E 6 The division for the remaining tribes of Benjamin to Gad 48:23-29
- E 7 The gates and name of the city 48:30-35

EXPANDED ANALYSIS OF EZEKIEL

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APPENDIX A: Lessons from Ezekiel

1. The work of serving God may be difficult, with few responses 2:1-7; 3:4-11
2. God will equip me to serve Him 2:8 - 3:15
3. God may bring judgment (or chastening) in my life until I know He's Yahweh 6:8 - 7:27
4. National sins bring national judgment 7:14-19
5. Do we Christians anguish over the sin of others in our church or circle? 9:3b-4
6. God will not allow His glory to be besmirched by human sin 9 - 11
7. Praise be to Gog that His New Covenant guarantees new spirits and soft, obedient hearts 11:14-21, etc.
8. God's judgment of sin is horrible 12:17-20
9. False prophets will ultimately be exposed as charlatans 12:21-25
10. When God judges sinners, righteous people suffer also 14:12-20
11. God will never permit faith to die out 14:21-23
12. God is in control (Gog's debacle) 38 - 39