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Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson reviews God’s restatement of His promise of land to Israel as part of A Transformed Inheritance. The study’s aim is to recognize that God sometimes gives us things that He may take away temporarily or permanently. The study’s application is to gain a greater appreciation for God’s choices in blessing us and to learn not to begrudge others for the blessing and gifts God gives to them. (Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary).

Key Verse: Ezek 47:23

And it shall be that in whatever tribe the stranger dwells, there you shall give him his inheritance,” says the Lord God.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

God promised Abraham (cf. Gen. 13:14-17; 15:17-21) and his descendants the land of Palestine, and that promise has never been rescinded. Israel’s experiencing blessing in the land was conditioned on her obedience (Deut. 28), but her right to possess the land has never been revoked. When God inaugurates His New Covenant with Israel in the future, she will be restored to her place of blessing in the land (cf. Ezek. 36-37). To prepare the people for this new occupation, God defined the boundaries of the country. He said, Because I swore with uplifted hand (a gesture that often accompanied oath-taking; cf. Ex. 6:8; Neh. 9:15; Ps. 106:26; Ezek. 20:5, 15, 23, 42; 36:7; 44:12) to give it to your forefathers, this land will become your inheritance. Israel’s borders during the Millennium will be similar to those promised her during the time of Moses (cf. Num. 34:1-12).

The northern boundary of the land... will run east from the Great Sea, the Mediterranean, starting somewhere north of Tyre and Sidon (more precisely, “Mount Hor,” Num. 34:7). The boundary line will go by the Hethlon road past Lebo Hamath to Zedad, Berothah, and Sibraim... as far as Hazer Hatticon... on the border of Hauran. The location of Hethlon is unknown, but many associate it with the modern town of Heitela, northeast of Tripoli in modern Lebanon. Lebo Hamath has sometimes been identified with the city of Hamath on the Orontes River in modern Syria. The word “Lebo” is then taken to mean “by the way of” rather than as a proper name. However, this identification is problematic because Hamath is about 100 miles farther north than the other cities mentioned by Ezekiel. It is better to take “Lebo” as a proper name and to identify Lebo Hamath with the modern town of Al-Labwa in the Biqa Valley. Zedad should probably be identified with the town of Sadad about 25 miles north of Damascus. The locations of the towns of Berothah and Sibraim are not known, but are said to lie on the border between Damascus and Hamath. Hamath (not the same as Lebo Hamath) is north of Damascus. So these cities are north of Damascus on the border between the territories held by Damascus and Hamath, probably near the town of Zedad. Hazer Hatticon (Ezek. 47:16) is probably another name for Hazer Enan (v. 17). It is located on the border between Syrian Damascus and the province of Hauran. Hauran may possibly be identified with a district east of the Sea of Galilee north of the Yarmuk River. Some say Hazer Enan is modern-day Al-Qaryatayn, an important desert oasis northeast of Damascus. So the northern border will stretch east from the Mediterranean Sea north of the modern city of Tripoli and will include what was then the northern border of Syria. The eastern border will extend between Hauran and Damascus. The edge of Israel’s territory will arch back from Hazar Enan along the southern border of Syria till it reaches the Jordan River south of the Sea of Galilee. From there it will go along the Jordan between Gilead and the land of Israel, to the eastern sea and as far as Tamar. The eastern border will be the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. Gilead and the Trans-Jordan area to the east of the Jordan will not be included in Israel’s future inheritance. The exact location of Tamar, to which the eastern boundary will continue, is uncertain, but it may be south of the Dead Sea. The southern border of Israel’s millennial kingdom will extend from Tamar as far as the waters of Meribah Kadesh, then along the Wadi of Egypt to the Great Sea. Since “the waters of Meribah Kadesh” were at Kadesh Barnea (cf. Num. 27:14), the southern border will stretch southwestward from Tamar to Kadesh Barnea. From there it will go to the “Wadi of Egypt.” This is probably the Wadi el-Arish (cf. Num. 34:5), not the Nile River. The words “of Egypt,” not in the Hebrew, are supplied as an explanatory addition. The western border of the Promised Land will be the Great Sea, the Mediterranean. The
border will go along the shoreline from the Wadi el-Arish in the south to a point opposite Lebo Hamath in the north. The land will be distributed according to the tribes of Israel.

This is the prelude to the division of the land (chap. 48). Ezekiel also included regulations for allotting land to resident aliens who will want to associate with Israel. Being considered native-born Israelites... they are to be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. Though foreigners had always been allowed to live in Israel (cf. Lev. 24:22; Num. 15:29), in the Millennium they will be allowed to enjoy other privileges previously granted only to Israelites (cf. Isa. 56:3-8). Though the Millennial Age will be a time of blessing for believing Israel, believing Gentiles will also enjoy God’s blessing.

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Strangers. We teach children not to talk to strangers. They are people we do not know; therefore, we are uncertain whether they are "safe." At my current occupation, I am forced to wear a lanyard with the most horrific 2-by-3-inch picture of myself. I detest my ID badge and often remove it once I have passed security. Unfortunately, when my supervisor notices that I am not wearing my badge, she will call in a rather loud voice, "Danger! Stranger! Danger! Stranger!" Even though I have worked at the same place for more than five years and work closely with my supervisor, if I am not wearing my badge, I am a considered a stranger.

Israel had strangers living in their land. These people were not natural-born Israelites but individuals who had settled among the Israelites. The United States of America has a lot of "strangers": we call them aliens. They journey to this country and live among us. Our country makes provision for those who are not citizens of the United States to become citizens. Nevertheless, when these aliens have children who are born in America, the children are automatically citizens of the United States, with all the rights and privileges that come with citizenship. The Lord wanted to make it known that He cares for the strangers. Truth be told, God knows no strangers, for He forms each person in his mother’s womb. Therefore, God decreed that every stranger—every person who was not an Israelite—who had made his home among the Israelites would receive the same inheritance of land as a natural-born Israelite. God said to treat the strangers just as if they had been born in Israel. It is easy to wonder why such information is included in the Bible. As people who are not natural-born Jews, it is very important that we understand that God enables us to receive an inheritance from Him. When we accept Jesus Christ into our lives by grace through faith, believing that our sins are forgiven through His death and resurrection, we are born into the kingdom of God. The gospel came first for the Jew and then for the Gentile. The Lord did not want to leave the Gentiles out of His plan. Just as He will enable the strangers in Israel to obtain an inheritance, so He makes it possible for us, as Gentiles, to become a part of the kingdom of God and live eternally with Him. This is good news, but there is more! As citizens of the kingdom of God, we have the protection of the King. In Isaiah, the Lord said, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me" (Isa 54:17). Our citizenship allows us certain rights and privileges that are not offered elsewhere. Along with the security of the King, in God's kingdom we are also offered eternal life, continual forgiveness, renewing mercy, sustaining grace, and persistent faith coupled with hope. May we be thankful for all that God has graciously bestowed on us!

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

No matter what family you belong to, serious issues always seem to present themselves when an estate is to be divided and distributed. Conflict arises as to who is to receive what and how much. Nothing seems fair, especially to a family member who is not in line to receive any inheritance whatsoever—even when the deceased has left a detailed will.

Family members have been known to grab all there is to grab of the estate, whether it be money, land, or personal possessions. I am certain that at least 80 percent of the readers of this commentary can identify with this scenario. The sharing of the unearned, inherited wealth that could follow is often the furthest thing from anyone’s mind. But if there is any instance where such sharing is to be considered, should it not be in a context of having received unearned assets (compare Matthew 10:8)? Ancient Judah was exiled from her land in the sixth century BC; God’s people had lost their inheritance due to national idolatry and other sins. Ezekiel offered hope to an exiled people through divine vision of an
inheritance renewed and restored. It was an unearned inheritance, to be shared with the “foreigners” (strangers) who lived among the Judeans.

Today’s lesson text picks up where last week’s left off. Therefore the background is the same, and that information need not be repeated here. Even so, more can be said about the literary context. Our text belongs to the larger block of Ezekiel 40-48. The form is that of a divine vision in apocalyptic style. This block as a whole is a counter-vision to the disaster of Ezekiel 8-11, where God’s glory departed from the temple in Jerusalem: the Lord’s glory returned to a new “temple,” in 43:1-5 (lesson 9). There God was again enthroned as king over his people (43:7; compare 34:23-31; 37:26-28). The promise of restoration to the land (20:42) was seen as being fulfilled in a divine vision by a detailed look at the new temple and in the division of the land among the 12 tribes of Israel (chap. 47 and 48). The literary structure of Ezekiel 40-48 is important. References to a “city” bookend this segment (see 40:2 and 48:30-35), and the city is ultimately called “The Lord is there” (48:35). After a preamble in 40:1-4, the text falls into three parts: (1) 40:5-43:27, the Lord’s return to reside in the new temple; (2) 44:1-46:24, Israel’s proper response to the holy “portion of the land” in their midst; and (3) 47:1-48:29, apportionment of the newly healed land among the 12 tribes within idealized boundaries, with resident “foreigners” sharing. This larger context will help us discern the proper interpretation and application of today’s text.

From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

Dividing land and establishing boundaries is always a delicate process. Legal disputes often ensue. Occasionally a boundary line is moved an inch or two after a great deal of legal turmoil and at great personal expense. Not surprisingly, hard feelings and other deep, relational issues continue long after the litigation and strife—all over inches of land. It was chaotic when God’s people returned from Babylon to reclaim family properties. God had issued these land portions centuries earlier as tribal allotments. But over the seventy-year exile, trees and other natural boundaries that had served as border markers had disappeared. As is common, creeks and rivers changed their courses. New markers had appeared, some deceitfully added by those who encroached on the properties while the Babylonians led God's people away as captives (Obad. 1:1-10).

In Ezekiel 47:13-23, the prophet shifted from the paradise-like description of water sources to focus on the topic of dividing properties and establishing land boundaries. In particular, Ezekiel discussed the importance of sharing property with aliens who had no property of their own but wanted to be part of Israel: "And they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel" (Ezek. 47:22). Significantly, all God's people were landless aliens at the time God sent this message through the Prophet Ezekiel. If the message about sharing land was not clear enough, the prophet restated the point in more specific terms: "[Aliens or foreigners] shall have a inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel" (Ezek. 47:22). For those who might have started splitting legal hairs to favor native-born Israelites, the prophet drove home the point with rigorous specificity: "In what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord God" (vs. 23). Not all received this message well.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Inheritance (Ezek 47:13-14)

13 Thus says the Lord God: "These are the borders by which you shall divide the land as an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph shall have two portions.
14 You shall inherit it equally with one another; for I raised My hand in an oath to give it to your fathers, and this land shall fall to you as your inheritance.

An inheritance with equality (13)

Equality in God's kingdom (Luke 12:32)

32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.
Equality through being co-heirs (Rom 8:17)

17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Equality through all receiving a crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Equality through all being poor in the eyes of the world (James 2:5)

5 Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

Equality because it can never perish for all believers (1 Pet 1:3-4)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you.

An inheritance that is guaranteed by God (14)

Guaranteed because God established it (2 Cor 1:21-22)

21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Guaranteed because we have been sealed (Eph 1:12-14)

12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

Guaranteed because God has vowed it (Heb 7:22)

22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

Guaranteed because God prepared it (2 Cor 5:5)

5 Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

The Borders (Ezek 47:15-21)

15 This shall be the border of the land on the north: from the Great Sea, by the road to Hethlon, as one goes to Zedad, 16 Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim (which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath), to Hazar Hatticon (which is on the border of Hauran). 17 Thus the boundary shall be from the Sea to Hazar Enan, the border of Damascus; and as for the north, northward, it is the border of Hamath. This is the north side. 18 On the east side you shall mark out the border from between Hauran and Damascus, and between Gilead and the land of Israel, along the Jordan, and along the eastern side of the sea. This is the east side. 19 The south side, toward the South, shall be from Tamar to the waters of Meribah by Kadesh, along the brook to the Great Sea. This is the south side, toward the South. 20 The west side shall be the Great Sea, from the southern boundary until one comes to a point opposite Hamath. This is the west side. 21 Thus you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel.
An Immovable, Uncrossable Boundary (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

The deed to the parcel of land I own lists the state, the county, the township, the fractional range, the section, and a definite point located in the subdivision. The property lines are measured in feet, and the directions are given in degrees and minutes. All this is depicted on a plat map. I don’t think the location and size of my property could be described with more precision! It has not always been so. On the American frontier, it was common for properties to be recorded with reference to geographical features. “Beginning at the willow tree on the north bank of Cedar Creek, go west 239 feet to an oak tree, then north 356 feet to a large stone…” Confusion resulted when unscrupulous people cut down trees or moved rocks! To help prevent this in the Northwest Territory, the U.S. Congress passed the Land Ordinance of 1785, which established official surveyors. The Old Testament has been described as “a book of boundaries.” Many boundaries therein are physical (example: Psalm 104:9); others are spiritual in nature (examples: Leviticus 10:10; Ezekiel 44:23). The problem was that people had an evil tendency to try to move (or remove) both kinds of boundaries (examples: Job 24:2; Ezekiel 22:26). Today’s text shows us that God has the right to redraw boundaries. He also moved boundaries for the New Testament era (examples: Mark 7:19; Colossians 2:16, 17). But God also has established for eternity a boundary that is not only immovable but uncrossable (see Luke 16:26; Revelation 21:27; 22:14, 15). Make sure you’re on the desirable side of it—no fence straddling permitted! —J. B. N.

Boundaries we have today

Moral - strict obedience to God’s Word (James 2:10)

10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

Racial - unity with all people (Acts 10:28)

28 He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean

Spiritual - keep away from earthly sinful nature (Col 3:1-5)

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. 5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Physical - getting outside own territory (Matt 28:19-20)

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The Provisions for Strangers (Ezek 47:22-23)

22 It shall be that you will divide it by lot as an inheritance for yourselves, and for the strangers who dwell among you and who bear children among you. They shall be to you as native-born among the children of Israel; they shall have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. 23 And it shall be that in whatever tribe the stranger dwells, there you shall give him his inheritance,” says the Lord God.

Strangers treated as adopted (22)

Adopted through predestination (Eph 1:5)

5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—
Adopted through redemption (Rom 8:23)

23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Adopted to receive full rights as children of God (Gal 4:4-5)

4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Adopted because of receiving a Spirit of sonship (Rom 8:14-17)

14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Adopted through the gospel (Eph 3:6)

6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Adopted through God's grace (Titus 3:4-7)

4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Strangers dwelling in unity (23)

Unity through the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:5-6)

5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Unity through being in agreement (1 Cor 1:10)

10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Unity through being firm in one spirit (Phil 1:27)

27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel

Unity through being like-mindedness (Phil 2:2)

2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Unity into one faith (Eph 4:4-6)

4 There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Unity through love (Col 3:14)

14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.
Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from John Gill

(From John Gill's Exposition of the Whole Bible)

This chapter gives an account of the vision of the holy waters, and of the borders of the holy land, and the division of it to Israelites and strangers. The waters are described by the original and spring of them, Ezekiel 47:1, by the progress and increase of them, Ezekiel 47:3, by the healing and quickening nature of them, and the places where they were so, and were not, Ezekiel 47:8, and by the trees which grew upon the banks of them, Ezekiel 47:6. The borders of the holy land are fixed, Ezekiel 47:13, the northern border, Ezekiel 47:15, the eastern border, Ezekiel 47:18, the southern, Ezekiel 47:19, and the western, Ezekiel 47:20, which is to be divided by lot to the tribes of Israel, and the strangers that sojourn among them, Ezekiel 47:21.

Verse 13

Thus saith the Lord God, this shall be the border,... Of the land of Israel, as described in the following verses; which being different from, and much larger, and more extensive, than it was in the times of Moses or Joshua, or than it was either before or after the captivity in Babylon, shows that this must be understood either of the land of Canaan, as it will be when possessed and inhabited by the Jews, upon their conversion in the latter day; or rather of the church of Christ, which is far greater than it was under the former dispensation; and especially it will be still more extensive hereafter, when Christ's kingdom will be from sea to sea, and his dominion from the river to the ends of the earth; and from the rising of the sun to the setting of the same, his name shall be great among the Gentiles. This subject is reissued from Ezekiel 45:1 after the insertion of various things of moment and importance there, a reserve upon the division of the land is made of a holy portion of it, for the sanctuary; for the priests, the ministers of it; for the Levites, the ministers of the house; and for a possession of the city, and of the prince; and the rest to be given to the house of Israel, the boundaries of which, are here fixed:

whereby ye shall inherit the land, according to the twelve tribes of Israel; by which are meant, not literal Israel, or according to the flesh, these being not all Israel, or the children of God, and so not heirs, and shall not inherit; but spiritual Israel, or the special people of God, that shall dwell in the church, and enjoy all the privileges of it; these are the sealed ones of all the tribes of Israel, an equal number out of each tribe; see Revelation 7:4. Joseph shall have two "portions" for his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and in virtue of the birthright which fell to him on the forfeiture of it by Reuben; he was an eminent type of Christ, with whom the saints are joint heirs; and who has two portions, one for himself as Mediator, and another for them.

Verse 14

And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another,... That is, the twelve tribes shall equally inherit it; one tribe shall not have more, and another less, but each alike: this was not the case, at the division of the land, in the times of Moses and Joshua; for to such tribes as were very numerous a greater inheritance was given; and to those that were fewer in number a lesser inheritance, Numbers 26:54, and upon the return from the Babylonish captivity, as the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were the largest, and indeed the only tribes that returned as such, they had the share of the land; but as this respects the dispersion, it signifies, that those who are true Israelites indeed shall share in the same Gospel church state, the privileges and immunities of it alike, with all the blessings of grace and eternal glory; they being all one in Christ Jesus, Galatians 3:28,

concerning the which I lifted up my hand to give it unto your fathers; that is, swore that he would give unto them the land of Canaan; typical of the Gospel church state and the heavenly glory; which are as sure to all the seed, by the word and oath of God, as that was:

and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance; by lot, by the appointment of God, and a goodly one it is, Psalm 16:6.

Verse 15

And this shall be the border of the land toward the north side,... The description of the borders of the land begins on the north side; because the Gospel, and the interest of Christ, would be, as they now are, chiefly in the northern part of the world, before the latter day glory takes place, and from thence spread into the other parts of it:
from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad; the line of this border shall begin at the Mediterranean sea, commonly called the great sea, and so proceed to Hethlon, a city in Syria Damascus, and from thence to Zedad; of which see Numbers 34:8, the description is taken all along from the places which were on the border of Canaan, or in countries adjacent to it, which plainly point out the enlargement of it.

Verse 16

Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim.... The line of the northern border should be drawn on by Hamath, the same with Antioch in Syria, since called Epiphania, as Jerom observes, from Antiochus Epiphanies; and go on by Berothah, a city of Hadadezer king of Zobah, 2 Samuel 8:8, the same with the Barothena of Ptolemy, placed by him in Syria; and from thence the line would be carried on to Sibraim, a city in Arabia Deserta:

which is between the border of Damascus; the chief city in Syria: and the border of Hamath; before mentioned. Calmet imagines it to be that which Ishmael Abulfeda calls Hovvarin; which he says is a village of the country of Ems or Hamath, to the southeast of the city.

Hazarhatticon, which is by the coast of Hauran; this seems to be explanatory of Sibraim, which lay between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; and therefore is called the middle town or village, as "Hazarhatticon" signifies; and lay by the coast of Hauran, which Jerom calls a town of Damascus, with which it is mentioned. Ezekiel 47:18, from whence the country adjacent is called Auranitis, as this place is here by the Septuagint. The Targum calls Hazar the fish pool of the Agbeans; but for what reason, and what is meant by it, I know not.

Verse 17

And the border from the sea shall be Hazarenan, the border of Damascus..... Which was the furthermost part and end of the northern border, as fixed by Moses, Numbers 34:9,

and the north northward, and the border of Hamath; if this is carrying on the border further, it seems to be another Hamath, distinct from the former, Ezekiel 47:16,

and this is the north side: of the land, and the description of the northern border of it, from the Mediterranean sea to Hazarenan.

Verse 18

And the east side ye shall measure Hauran..... The line of the eastern border of the land shall begin at Hauran or Auranitis; see Ezekiel 47:16, which lay to the south of Damascus: and it follows,

and from the land of Israel by Jordan, from the border unto the east sea; and so from Damascus, the metropolis of Syria; and likewise from Gilead, a mountain and country beyond Jordan; and also from that part of the land of Israel near to Jordan; and so from the northern border to the east sea, or sea of Galilee or Tiberias:

and this is the east side: of the land, or the eastern border of it, reaching from Hauran to the lake of Gennesaret, or to the Salt sea, the sea of Sodom; see Numbers 34:10.

Verse 19

And the south side southward from Tamar..... Not Jericho, as the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi, called by this name from the palm trees which grew near it; according to Jerom, this is Palmyra, so called for the same reason; but it is rather Engedi, called Hazazon Tamar, 2 Chronicles 20:2, the line of the southern border began here, and went on,

even to the waters of strife in Kadesh; to the waters of Meribah in Kadesh; so called, from the strivings of the children of Israel with the Lord there, Numbers 20:1,

the river to the great sea; it proceeded by the river of Egypt, the river Sihor, the Nile, which is before Egypt, Joshua 13:3 and so on to the Mediterranean sea:

and this is the south side southward; the south side of the land, and the southern border of it.

Verse 20
The west side also shall be the great sea from the border,.... From the border of Egypt, and the river of it, to the Mediterranean sea, is the west side of the land, and the western border of it; hence the western point is often expressed in Scripture by the sea:

till a man come over against Hamath; Antioch in Syria; see Ezekiel 47:16.

this is the west side; of the land, and of the western border of it.

Verse 21
So shall ye divide this land unto you,.... As thus bounded, east, west, north, and south:

according to the tribes of Israel; See Gill on Ezekiel 47:13.

Verse 22
And it shall come to pass,... In the last days, under the Gospel dispensation:

that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you; who were Israelites, both by natural descent, and by the Spirit and grace of God: the gospel was first preached to Israel after the flesh, and made effectual to the conversion of many of them; and the first churches were made up of them, and they shared all the blessings and privileges thereof; as they also will in the latter day, when converted:

and to the strangers that sojourn among them; not such as were strangers to spiritual and divine things; for this would contradict the rule in Ezekiel 44:9, but converted Gentiles, so called because of their natural descent and civil state, being, with respect to both, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; yet were to be, as they have been, and will be, taken into the same Gospel church state with the believing Jews:

which shall beget children among you; not only in a natural, but in a spiritual sense; be the means of begetting many souls again to the lively hope of a glorious inheritance:

and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; that is, the children begotten by the Gentiles shall be considered all one as those of the children of Israel, being born again of the same Spirit and grace; and so have an equal right to the same privileges, and to which they shall be admitted:

they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel; this is a new thing, and what in a literal sense was never granted; for though in the times of Moses and onward, and by his direction from the Lord, such as have been called proselytes of the gate, and proselytes of righteousness, have been admitted to various privileges, by conforming to certain rules, rites, and ceremonies, yet never were allowed to have any inheritance in the land; and, after the captivity, Ezra and Nehemiah drove out the strangers, who by affinity with some had got among them: but this respects Gospel times, and the coalition of Jews and Gentiles in the same church state; where there is no difference, but Christ is all in all; where they are admitted to the same ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper; partake of the same blessings of grace, and promises of the word, and have an equal right to the heavenly inheritance: Ephesians 3:6, is the best commentary on this passage; which contains the same mystery the Apostle Paul was acquainted with,

that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel; See Gill on Ephesians 3:6. See Ephesians 2:12.

Verse 23
And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth,.... Whosoever particular congregation or church these strangers and sojourners (as all the Lord's people are in this world, and even in their church state), or those Gentiles before described, shall be nearest unto, and to which they shall propose themselves for communion, they shall be readily admitted:

there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord God; allow him a name and a place; put him in the possession of all church privileges and immunities; look upon him as a member, a brother, a fellow citizen, as an heir together of the grace of life, and as equally entitled to the inheritance of the saints in light; and for this they have the authority and order of Jehovah himself.

(Adapted from URL: http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/geb/view.cgi?book=eze&chapter=047)
Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The Old Testament gives us many examples of new beginnings. In Exodus 32, God’s newly freed people worshipped a golden idol (bull image), even while Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments, the second of which forbade that very act. God came close to destroying the people and starting over with Moses (Exodus 32:10), but Moses intervened and God relented (32:11-14). After this incident God would forever be known as “the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin” (34:6, 7). Jonah was told to proclaim judgment against the Ninevites, who were considered the greatest of sinners in his day. After God’s “persuasion,” Jonah did preach to them, but to his consternation they repented. Jonah became angry because he knew that God was compassionate (Jonah 4:2). Not only did God allow new beginnings for his own people, he also offered new beginnings for the Gentile pagans, the “foreigners.” Sometimes people did not accept God’s offer of a new beginning. Such was the case for the northern kingdom of Israel as told through the prophet Hosea. God instructed him to marry “a promiscuous woman” (Hosea 1:2). After three children were born, each given symbolic names, Hosea’s wife left him for a life of prostitution slavery. Hosea bought her back at the Lord’s insistence and waited to see if she would be faithful (3:1-3). The implication is that Hosea’s wife never truly returned to faithfulness, a sad imitation of Israel. The northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed in 722 BC. Isaiah cried out for a new beginning for an exiled people (Isaiah 40-66). This was fulfilled in the ultimate sense by the suffering servant, Jesus (53:11, 12). He delivered us from slavery to sin by his atonement on the cross (Romans 3:25). Jeremiah’s prophecies are mostly judgmental in nature. But in the section called “Book of Consolation” (chap. 30-33), the prophet noted God’s offer of a radical new beginning: a new covenant whereby everyone could know the Lord intimately and know that their sins have been forgiven (Jeremiah 31:31-34). A new beginning indeed! King David, a man after God’s own heart, sinned greatly by committing adultery and murder. But he confessed his sin, and Nathan assured him that “the Lord has taken away your sin” (2 Samuel 12:13). Even though David suffered the consequences for those sins the rest of his life, he did indeed experience a new beginning. He could write, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). With this accomplished, David wanted to share his new beginning (see Psalm 51:13). So should we!

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. We must realize that the land and people of Israel play a special role in God’s eternal plan (Ezek. 47:13-14)
2. God’s promises may seem long in coming, but they are certain (Ezek. 47:15-20; cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:18-21)
3. While most of the world has forgotten God’s promises to Israel, God has not; and neither should we (Ezek. 47:21)
4. Ultimately, it is the Creator of the world who determines who inherits it (vs. 22)
5. While God is the God of Israel in a special sense, His concern is for all people (vs. 23)