

EZEKIEL

Hard to Heart

"This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land"
45:1-25

When Israel first entered the Promised Land, there was a 'lot' (pun intended) of drama when Joshua got around to distributing portions of land to the various tribes.

The practice of casting lots is mentioned 70 times in the Old Testament and seven times in the New Testament. In spite of the many references to casting lots in the Old Testament, nothing is known about the actual lots themselves. They could have been sticks of various lengths, flat stones like coins, or some kind of dice; but their exact nature is unknown. The closest modern practice to casting lots is likely flipping a coin.

The practice of casting lots occurs most often in connection with the division of the land under Joshua (Joshua 14-21) (GotQuestions.org)

None of the Biblical illustrations of casting lots had to do with games of chance. Every time it was used, the Israelites depended on the Lord 100% to reveal to them His will. It was an impartial way to find God's will when choices had to occur.

While this was commonly done in Old Testament times and during the early part of the New Testament, it is no longer the way we determine God's will. People during that period of time didn't have the permanent indwelling of God the Holy Spirit or a completed Bible. The one instance of casting lots in the New Testament after the resurrection of Jesus was by the eleven apostles to choose a replacement for Judas. While some criticize them, I see no problem with the method.

In fact, in the future Millennial Kingdom Jesus will again distribute the land by lot only without the drama. That distribution begins here in chapter forty-five.

Ezekiel 45:1 "Moreover, when you divide the land by lot into inheritance, you shall set apart a district for the Lord, a holy section of the land; its length shall be twenty-five thousand cubits, and the width ten thousand. It shall be holy throughout its territory all around.

In the division of the land Israel is to present to the Lord a portion of the land as a sacred district, 25,000 cubits (about 8.3 miles) long and 20,000 cubits (about 6.6 miles) wide.

The Lord is the Creator of the universe. He has vast territories to His name. Why does he need a small plot of land on the Millennial earth?

He doesn't need it so much as Israel needs to give it to Him. It's like when you go somewhere and bring back something for someone. It's thoughtful; it's a gesture of love.

Even now, giving to God is a thoughtful gesture that reflects your love. That's why I resist any teaching that says there is a definite, certain percentage of your money that you *must* give to God. No, you give to God as you see fit. *But realize that giving reflects how much you're thinking about Him!*

Ezekiel 45:2 Of this there shall be a square plot for the sanctuary, five hundred by five hundred rods, with fifty cubits around it for an open space.

Ezekiel 45:3 So this is the district you shall measure: twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand wide; in it shall be the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place.

Ezekiel 45:4 It shall be a holy section of the land, belonging to the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, who come near to minister to the Lord; it shall be a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary.

Ezekiel 45:5 An area twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand wide shall belong to the Levites, the ministers of the temple; they shall have twenty chambers as a possession.

Ezekiel 45:6 "You shall appoint as the property of the city an area five thousand cubits wide and twenty-five thousand long, adjacent to the district of the holy section; it shall belong to the whole house of Israel.

Within this land area will be the Temple complex Ezekiel had just described in chapters 40-43. This rectangle of land will be divided into two equal portions, each about 8.3 miles long and about 3.3 miles wide.

- The first portion, in which will be located the sanctuary, will be allotted to the priests for their houses as well as a holy place for the sanctuary.
- The second portion will be allotted to the Levites, who serve in the temple, as their possession for towns to live in.

In Old Testament times the priests and the levites were scattered throughout Israel. It allowed them to be available to minister to the people when they weren't serving in the Temple. In the future kingdom we're told that "... the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14). Thus the priests and the levites can concentrate on their Temple service.

Jesus stopped to minister to those who were most lowly. A woman, for example, who snuck-up on Him to touch the hem of His garment did not go unnoticed. If we want to be like our Lord then we, too, must allow for interruptions by the least of these.

At the same time it is true that there *are* weightier matters. We ought to serve one another in such a way that we relieve, rather than add to, the burden of ministry on others.

Ezekiel 45:7 "The prince shall have a section on one side and the other of the holy district and the city's property; and bordering on the holy district and the city's property, extending westward on the west side and eastward on the east side, the length shall be side by side with one of the tribal portions, from the west border to the east border. Ezekiel 45:8 The land shall be his possession in Israel; and My princes shall no more oppress My people, but they shall give the rest of the land to the house of Israel, according to their tribes."

We saw in our last study that "the prince" is King David in his resurrected body serving as a co-regent with Jesus.

By the way, this pairing of David and Jesus makes for an interesting apologetic argument. In Matthew 22:41-45 we read the following.

Matthew 22:41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Matthew 22:42 saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David."

Matthew 22:43 He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'LORD,' saying:

Matthew 22:44 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, TILL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES YOUR FOOTSTOOL" '?

Matthew 22:45 If David then calls Him 'LORD,' how is He his Son?"

Then, in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, we read this:

Revelation 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David..."

Only if Jesus were the eternal God come in human flesh could He be **both** the root (ancestor) and the offspring (descendant) of David. Only if Jesus were the eternal God come in human flesh could David call his son Lord.

At the mention of David and his future righteous reign the prophet is given a word to speak to his contemporaries and those who would follow.

Ezekiel 45:9 'Thus says the Lord God: "Enough, O princes of Israel! Remove violence and plundering, execute justice and righteousness, and stop dispossessing My people," says the Lord God.

Ezekiel 45:10 "You shall have honest scales, an honest ephah, and an honest bath.

Ezekiel 45:11 The ephah and the bath shall be of the same measure, so that the bath contains one-tenth of a homer, and the ephah one-tenth of a homer; their measure shall be according to the homer.

Ezekiel 45:12 The shekel shall be twenty gerahs; twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, and fifteen shekels shall be your mina.

Ezekiel's audience was in exile, held captive in Babylon. The captivity would end in seventy years and there would be a lot of history from the end of the sixth century BC til the coming of Jesus. The Jewish leaders were being exhorted to be fair and to carry out the Lord's will with righteousness.

We're not exiles or captives, but we are pilgrims and strangers awaiting the resurrection and rapture of the church. We might have a lot more living to do before Jesus calls us home. Let's live as we ought to in these last days!

Here is how the apostle Peter described it.

2 Peter 3:11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

2 Peter 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

2 Peter 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

2 Peter 3:14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;

2 Peter 3:15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation...

Towards God we are to be diligent to maintain the peace He's made with us. Towards ourselves as it were, we are to be without spot and blameless. Towards others, especially nonbelievers, we are to "consider" that God is "longsuffering" with them, not willing any should perish, but that all would come to Him to be saved.

It might interest you to see, in the next set of verses, that one thing will remain just as certain as it is today. *There will be taxes!*

Ezekiel 45:13 "This is the offering which you shall offer: you shall give one-sixth of an ephah from a homer of wheat, and one-sixth of an ephah from a homer of barley.

Ezekiel 45:14 The ordinance concerning oil, the bath of oil, is one-tenth of a bath from a kor. A kor is a homer or ten baths, for ten baths are a homer.

Ezekiel 45:15 And one lamb shall be given from a flock of two hundred, from the rich pastures of Israel. These shall be for grain offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings, to make atonement for them," says the Lord God.

Ezekiel 45:16 "All the people of the land shall give this offering for the prince in Israel.

Ezekiel 45:17 Then it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings, at the feasts, the New Moons, the Sabbaths, and at all the appointed seasons of the house of Israel. He shall prepare the sin offering, the grain offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings to make atonement for the house of Israel."

The prescribed portion is to be proportionate to each individual's wealth or lack of it. They are each to give a 60th of their wheat and barley, one percent of their olive oil, and 1 sheep from every 200 of their flocks.

This is a tax that will be required of all the people for use by the prince in Israel. As the people's representative, he will collect their gifts and use them to maintain the Temple sacrifices, including burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings at the festivals, the New Moons, and the Sabbaths.

Ezekiel 45:18 'Thus says the Lord God: "In the first month, on the first day of the month, you shall take a young bull without blemish and cleanse the sanctuary.

Ezekiel 45:19 The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering and put it on the doorposts of the temple, on the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and on the gateposts of the gate of the inner court.

Ezekiel 45:20 And so you shall do on the seventh day of the month for everyone who has sinned unintentionally or in ignorance. Thus you shall make atonement for the temple.

Perfect conditions cannot affect the fact that human beings are born dead in trespasses and sins. The sacrifice of animals in the Millennium will drive home the point that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus.

Ezekiel 45:21 "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten.

Ezekiel 45:22 And on that day the prince shall prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bull for a sin offering.

Ezekiel 45:23 On the seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the Lord, seven bulls and seven rams without blemish, daily for seven days, and a kid of the goats daily for a sin offering.

Ezekiel 45:24 And he shall prepare a grain offering of one ephah for each bull and one ephah for each ram, together with a hin of oil for each ephah.

Ezekiel 45:25 "In the seventh month, on the fifteenth day of the month, at the feast, he shall do likewise for seven days, according to the sin offering, the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the oil."

The annual feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread will last seven days, during which the people will eat bread made without yeast. The prince will

provide the sacrifices for that period. The fact that the prince is to make a sin offering for himself shows that he is *not* Jesus Christ.

The third feast will begin in the seventh month on the 15th day. This is the Festival of Tabernacles, also a seven-day celebration, the last feast in Israel's yearly calendar.

There is no mention of the Feast of Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, or the Day of Atonement being observed in the Millennium.

One reason might be that those three feasts are unnecessary in the future.

- Pentecost was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit was given to the church in the first century. In Acts we read that the Day of Pentecost was fully come!
- Trumpets will be fulfilled in the resurrection and rapture of the church when we hear the trumpet of God and are translated to Heaven!
- Jesus has already provided the once-for-all atonement for sin.

The feasts that Ezekiel does mention speak of Israel's unique relationship to God.

- Passover and Unleavened Bread point Israel back to the death of Jesus Christ.
- Tabernacles is all about their new position in the Millennial Kingdom on earth.

There is a trend among evangelicals to return to Judaism. It sounds innocent enough. Listen to this excerpt from the NY Times.

In a San Antonio chapel last August, after reciting their wedding vows and exchanging their rings, Sally and Mark Austin prepared to receive communion for the first time as husband and wife. Just before they did, their minister asked them to sign a document. It was a ketubah, a traditional Jewish marriage contract.

In so doing, the Austins are part of a growing phenomenon of non-Jews incorporating the ketubah, a document with millennia-old origins and a rich artistic history, into their weddings. Mrs. Austin, in fact, first learned about the ketubah from her older sister, also

an evangelical Christian, who had been married five years earlier with not only a ketubah but the Judaic wedding canopy, the huppah.

“Embracing this Jewish tradition just brings a richness that we miss out on sometimes as Christians when we don’t know the history,” said Mrs. Austin, 29, a business manager for AT&T. “Jesus was Jewish, and we appreciate his culture, where he came from.”

In an opinion piece based on this trend, a British journalist stated, “evangelicals have become increasingly admiring of the sacramental richness of Judaism.”

Recently a small Calvary Chapel shut its doors because the pastor has embraced this new trend and is now observing the Sabbath and other things typically Jewish.

I’m with James and the Jerusalem council on this! In the first century there were those who insisted a Gentile must convert to Judaism in order to be saved. Here is what we read in Acts.

Acts 15:13 ... James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me:

Acts 15:14 Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.

Acts 15:15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

Acts 15:16 'AFTER THIS I WILL RETURN AND WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID, WHICH HAS FALLEN DOWN; I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL SET IT UP;

Acts 15:17 SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, EVEN ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME, SAYS THE LORD WHO DOES ALL THESE THINGS.'

Acts 15:18 "Known to God from eternity are all His works.

Acts 15:19 Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,

Acts 15:20 but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.

Acts 15:21 For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

In other words, if you are a Gentile, you aren’t to pursue Judaism. Just don’t do things to offend Jews.

We are not missing anything by enjoying freedom from rites and rituals, diets and days. Don't be misled back to the Law.

