

## Countering Replacement Theology

Strong arguments that counter replacement theology can be found in Ezekiel 40-48. The specific names, places, and measurements given in these chapters point to a literal fulfillment of God's promise of land given to Abraham's descendants, the boundaries which stretch from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18). This specific promise is repeated and confirmed.

"[God] has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac. Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, 'To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion of your inheritance.'" (Psalm 105:8-11, NASB).

Ezekiel was taken into the future to see how this promise will be fulfilled. He recorded what he saw in great detail. Each of the twelve tribes will receive a portion of land in designated sections (Ezekiel 47:13-48:29). The holy allotment will be in the midst along with the Temple (Ezekiel 48:8-14). A city will be located to the south of the Temple (Ezekiel 40:2, 48:20). The city will have three gates on each side named for the 12 tribes of Israel (Ezekiel 48:30-35).

Those who hold to replacement theology want to spiritualize these specifics, or ignore them all together. On the other hand, those who present arguments against replacement theology usually don't discuss these passages either. Some have considered that the city Ezekiel saw was the New Jerusalem, but this interpretation has been rejected because of the issue of size.

"John, in the Revelation, gives a description of the heavenly city of Jerusalem [Revelation 21:2-4]....At first glance it appears that this heavenly city of Jerusalem is the earthly city of Jerusalem, described by the prophet Ezekiel or Isaiah. Closer examination, however, reveals that this is not the case....The earthly city of Jerusalem, as described by Ezekiel, is not anywhere near that large (see Ezekiel 48:35)." *Israel's Glorious Future, The Prophecies and Promises of God Revealed*, Dr. Harold Sevens, Chosen People Ministries, 1996, p. 80.

John's measurement of 12,000 stadia or approximately 1342 miles (Revelation 21:16) has traditionally been interpreted to be a linear measurement in each direction (length, width, and height). However, the 1342 miles could be a total of the three dimensions. If this interpretation is correct, then it is possible to harmonize the size of the city seen by John with the size of the city seen by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 48:30-35)\*. This critical piece clarifies how a literal interpretation makes sense and answers many questions. For instance, Ezekiel says, "The name of the city from that day shall be, 'The LORD is there'" (Ezekiel 48:35). The New Testament promises believers that once we are raptured, "So shall we always be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:17). The question arises, "During the Millennium, where is the church?"

If Ezekiel's city is the New Jerusalem then raptured believers are forever with the Lord in this eternal city whose name is, 'The LORD is there'. Throughout the Millennium, the church is right there in the midst of the city along with Israel. The puzzle is solved by the city's size, and especially by its height. John says that the city's foundations or levels are named for the twelve apostles pointing to the inclusion of the church (Revelation 21:14). It is a visual manifestation of how Gentiles are grafted in to "the rich root of the olive tree" (Romans 11:17-18). God's city is a perfect picture of the unity of God's people. The New Jerusalem will be the home base for both Old and New Testament saints. Inside God's city "the righteous made perfect" includes Abraham (Romans 4:3) along with "the general assembly and church of the first born" (Hebrews 12:22-23). The church age saints inherit the promise of land given to Abraham (Isaiah 57:13; Galatians 3:29) while at the same time all land promises to Israel will be fulfilled.

\*According to Ezekiel 48:30-35, each side of the city is 4,500 rods. A rod is roughly a measurement of 12 feet. Including the border around the city (Ezekiel 48:17) each side would be about 5,000 rods or 11.36 miles.