

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 22: The River from the Temple; the Lord Is There -- Ezekiel 47:1-48:35

We come to the climax of the whole book. Ezekiel is brought back to the door of the house, and there he sees water issuing out from under the threshold of the temple, flowing eastward. From the very dwelling of God a river begins, and everything that follows in the book has been moving toward this moment of life pouring out from the presence of the LORD.

The man with the measuring line leads Ezekiel through the water, and it deepens: to the ankles, to the knees, to the waist, and at last to a river that cannot be passed over, waters to swim in. Wherever the river goes it brings life and healing; the trees on its banks bear fruit every month, and their leaves are for healing. Even the salt sea is made fresh where the river reaches it.

After the river, the book closes with the boundaries of the land and the gates of the city, twelve gates named for the twelve tribes of Israel, the people of God gathered and named at the entrances of the city. And then the final words of the entire prophecy, the new name of the city: the LORD is there, Yahweh Shammah. The book that began with judgment and a departing glory ends with God present, dwelling among His people forever.

We will read the river as the life-giving stream of the gospel and the Holy Spirit, and the closing name as the great hope of Scripture: God dwelling with His people in Christ now and forever. This is not a forecast of a literal future stone temple and restored sacrifices, but the consummation of God's purpose to dwell with redeemed humanity, fulfilled in Christ, in His church, and at last in the eternal state.

Group Discussion: Read Ezekiel 47:1-48:35 aloud, then trace the river from the threshold outward as it deepens and brings life, healing, and fruit. Spend the heart of the class on John 7:37-39 and Revelation 22:1-2, where the river is opened up, and on Revelation 21:3 and the name Immanuel for the closing words. Help the class feel that the book ends not in stone but in the everlasting presence of God with His people.

Personal Reflection: Read Ezekiel 47:1-12 slowly, then read John 7:37-39, Revelation 22:1-2, and Revelation 21:1-4 in one sitting. Ask the Lord where the river of His Spirit needs to run deeper in you, from ankles toward waters to swim in. Write down one dry or dead place in your life that you long for the gospel to make alive, and pray over it by name.

Read Ezekiel 47:1-48:35

Study Questions

1. Where does the river in Ezekiel 47:1-2 begin, and what is the significance that life-giving water flows out from under the threshold of the temple, from the very dwelling place of God?
2. Where in your own life is the water still only ankle-deep, and where do you long for it to rise to waters you cannot cross on your own?
3. The river deepens from ankles to knees to waist to a river that cannot be passed over (47:3-5). What does this deepening picture about the life and power that flows from God's presence?
4. Can you trace how God has taken you into deeper water over time, and where are you tempted to stay where you can still touch the bottom?
5. Wherever the river goes it brings healing, makes the salt sea fresh, and gives fruitful trees whose leaves are for healing (47:6-12). What does this teach about the reach and effect of what flows from God's dwelling?
6. Whose dry or salty life around you might the river reach through you this week, and are you a channel for it or a dam against it?

7. The land is bounded and the city has twelve gates named for the twelve tribes (48:30–34). What does it picture that the people of God are named and gathered at the very gates of the city of God?
8. Are you living as one who belongs at the gates of the city of God, named among His people, or as a stranger who keeps Him at a distance?
9. The whole temple vision climaxes here: the river of the gospel and the Spirit (John 7:37–39; Revelation 22:1–2) flowing from God’s dwelling, and the city’s new name, the LORD is there (48:35). How does this bring the entire vision of chapters 40–48 to its true fulfillment, God’s everlasting dwelling with His people in Christ and in His church and consummated in the eternal state (Revelation 21:3), rather than a literal rebuilt temple with restored sacrifices that would deny the finished work of the cross?
10. If the book ends with the LORD is there, where is the one place in your life you have been keeping Him out, and what will you do this week to live as one with whom God dwells?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: John 7:37–39, rivers of living water, the Spirit given to those who believe; Revelation 22:1–2, the river of the water of life from the throne, with the tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations; Revelation 21:1–4, the dwelling of God with men, He will dwell with them and be their God; Matthew 1:23, Immanuel, God with us; Joel 3:18, a fountain coming forth from the house of the LORD

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