



The Oaks Baptist Church Grand Prairie, Texas

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

Even before her circumstances improved, Hannah's renewed vision changed her perspective and her attitude

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

God, please renew my vision so I can focus on Your constant presence and live with an eternal perspective in all circumstances

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

And Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the Lord; My horn is exalted in the Lord. I smile at my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation

(1 Sam 2:1 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", May 12, 2021)

Series: Enduring Beliefs of the Church

UNIT 1: Our God and the Holy Scriptures

NEXT WEEK

God's Word

(Ps 19:7-13; 2 Tim 3:14-15)

Ezekiel's Vision Ezek 47:1-9, 12

Lesson Background and Introduction

The presence of water is a sign of life. This inescapable fact invites powerful comparisons and imagery in the Bible (examples: Jeremiah 2:13; John 7:37-39). Today's lesson offers one of the most powerful of those. Most of the contextual information in the previous lessons from Ezekiel still applies and need not be repeated here. What's changed about the context is a shift from addressing the Judahites's then-present situation in Babylon to a vision of the future. All of Ezekiel 40-48, about 20 percent of the entire book, relates this vision. Understanding the meaning and significance of the vision is crucial to appreciate this great book fully. The imagery of the "water of life" river and its surroundings has parallels elsewhere in the Bible. Revelation 22, in particular, offers several points for fruitful comparison. The vision is meant to encourage God's people. The exile had decimated their homeland. Their capital had been razed. Their temple was destroyed. The exiles now lived in a strange land under a foreign power. While the prophets had predicted a return (Jeremiah 29:10-14), many feared they would never see Judah again. Ezekiel's visions offer these exiles reason to hope. The visions concern a new city and a transformed homeland. The glory of this new Jerusalem and Judah will be greater than what was lost. The vision opens in Ezekiel 40:1 with a record of the date. By comparison with various texts and calendars, that date would likely be around 573 BC. As the reader moves through the text from 40:1, Ezekiel is seen to receive details concerning a restored city and temple. These prophetic images include particulars regarding the officials to serve in the new temple, allotment of land, and instructions regarding offering procedures for Passover and other special days. Then we arrive at chapter 47.

The most significant word picture found in today's passage is that of water. The Old Testament uses water imagery to convey the message that God's "water of life" is never stagnant but always available, active, and life-giving (Psalms 1:3; 36:8; 84:5-6; Isaiah 12:3; 41:18; 43:19; 66:12; Jeremiah 31:9). Jesus used the imagery of water on various occasions to depict the abundant life he came to bring. When he attended the Festival of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, he declared, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them" (John 7:37-38; compare 4:10, 14). Jesus was not quoting a single, particular Old Testament passage, but the general message derived from several passages, including our text for today. Interestingly, the climax of the Festival of Tabernacles featured the pouring out of water as part of the symbolism. It was in such a setting—perhaps during the pouring-out ceremony itself—that Jesus made his promise of living water. One observer noted that the water-pouring ceremony at this feast in Jesus' day was interpreted in various Jewish traditions as a symbolic anticipation of the outpouring of the Spirit in fulfillment of various Scriptures, including Ezekiel 47:1-9. The Gospel of John says that Jesus used "living water" to refer to the Spirit (John 7:39). This means that we can now enjoy the benefits of the spiritual refreshment from the Holy Spirit. We see Ezekiel's vision reaching its clearest and ultimate expression in Revelation 22. There the apostle John saw a certain river as the source of life. Trees on either side of John's river were fruitful, just like Ezekiel's. And the leaves of the trees that John saw were a source of healing, again just like Ezekiel's. Such parallels indicate how Ezekiel's great vision should be understood. It does not appear that the temple layout shown to that prophet was ever intended to be followed by the exiles who returned or by any other group of God's people. Since the vision portrays something unique and miraculous, we must allow God himself to declare how its fulfillment is to be understood. That is what the New Testament does for us. It points to a fulfillment initiated by Jesus' first coming and climaxed by his second coming. At Jesus' return, his holy city will become inhabited for eternity by his people. It is a city built by God himself (Hebrews 11:10).

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Vision of the Water's Flow (Ezek 47:1-2)

Flowing water from the Temple and Altar (1-2)

Flowing water as described by Jesus (John 4:10-14)

Flowing water of the Holy Spirit that washes and renewes (Titus 3:4-7)

Flowing from the throne of Jesus (Rev 22:1)

Flowing from the throne of grace (Heb 4:16)

Its course - from the altar of sacrifice (Rev 21:5-6)

Vision of the Water's Depth (Ezek 47:3-5)

Depth and expansion of the water (3-5)

Ankle deep - the step of faith that saves (Luke 7:50)

Knee deep - the prayer of dependence on God (John 16:23-24)

Loin Deep - spiritual power (Eph 3:16-21)

Too deep - Holy Spirit controlled (Gal 5:16-18)

Vision of the Water's Healing (Ezek 47:6-9. 12)

Trees by the water (6-7)

Trees like those in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:9)

Trees of the Lord (Ps 104:16-17)

Trees that seem to be good, but could be cast aside (Ezek 31:3-11)

Trees that represent Israel (Ezek 34:20-27)

Trees that represent God's anointed servants (Zech 4:11-14)

Healing waters (8-9)

Healing waters that God stirs (John 5:2-4)

Healing waters based on obedience to God's directions (2 Kings 5:10)

Healing waters that are part of God's promises (Zech 13:1)

Blessing of Trees of Life (12)

Trees bearing twelve crops of fruit (Rev 22:2)

Overcoming the world brings the right to eat from the tree of life (Rev 2:7)

To those who wash their robes, God gives the right to the tree of life (Rev 22:14)