

Ezekiel's Vision

Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12
SS Lesson for 11/30/2025

Devotional Scriptures: John 9:1-7

OUTLINE

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Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Key Verse: Ezekiel 47:12

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

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- Flowing water of the Holy Spirit that washes and renews (Titus 3:4-7)
- Flowing from the throne of Jesus (Rev 22:1)
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- Healing waters that God stirs (John 5:2-4)
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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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' 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.

Key Verse: Ezekiel 47:12

Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine."

Major Theme Analysis

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

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

1 Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar.

2 He brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gateway that faces east; and there was water, running out on the right side.

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

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

10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." 11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" 13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Flowing water of the Holy Spirit that washes and renews (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.

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

1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb

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

16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

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

5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." 6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

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

3 And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water came up to my ankles.

4 Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; the water came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; the water came up to my waist.

5 Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed.

Depth and expansion of the water (3-5)

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

50 Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

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

23 In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

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

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

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

16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

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

6 He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river.

7 When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other.

8 Then he said to me: "This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed.

9 And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes.

12 Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine."

Trees by the water (6-7)

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

9 And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

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

16 The trees of the Lord are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. 17 There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the pine trees.

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

3 Consider Assyria, once a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches overshadowing the forest; it towered on high, its top above the thick foliage. 4 The waters nourished it, deep springs made it grow tall; their streams flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field. 5 So it towered higher than all the trees of the field; its boughs increased and its branches grew long, spreading because of abundant waters. 6 All the birds of the air nested in its boughs, all the beasts of the field gave birth under its branches; all the great nations lived in its shade. 7 It was majestic in beauty, with its spreading boughs, for its roots went down to abundant waters. 8 The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor could the pine trees equal its boughs, nor could the plane trees compare with its branches, no tree in the garden of God could match its beauty. 9 I made it beautiful with abundant branches, the envy of all the trees of Eden in the garden of God. 10 "Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Because it towered on high, lifting its top above the thick foliage, and because it was proud of its height, 11 I handed it over to the ruler of the nations, for him to deal with according to its wickedness. I cast it aside

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

20 "Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. 21 Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, 22 I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. 23 I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. 24 I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the Lord have spoken. 25 "I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of wild beasts so that they may live in the desert and sleep in the forests in safety. 26 I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. 27 The trees of the field will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops; the people will be secure in their land. They will know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslaved them.

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

11 Then I asked the angel, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?" 12 Again I asked him, "What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?" 13 He replied, "Do you not know what these are?" "No, my lord," I said. 14 So he said, "These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth."

Healing waters (8-9)

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

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. 3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. 4 For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.[]

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

10 Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."

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

"On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.

Blessing of Trees of Life (12)

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

2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

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

7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

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

14 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable

God promised Abraham that He would give a particular piece of real estate to his descendants (Genesis 12:7). Later He reiterated this promise and became more specific about its boundaries (Genesis 15:7; Genesis 15:18-21; Genesis 17:8; Numbers 34:1-12). He also told the Israelites that they would only be able to occupy the land to the extent that they followed Him faithfully (Deuteronomy 7:12; Deuteronomy 8:2). If they proved unfaithful, He would not only limit their possession of the land but even drive them out of it (Deuteronomy 28). Ezekiel prophesied that God would bring the Israelites back into the land (Ezekiel 36:24-30). He would give them a different attitude, and they would follow Him faithfully. Then they would finally, as never before, enjoy the full extent of the land He had promised their forefathers (cf. Deuteronomy 30). He also promised that they would never lose possession of the land, because they would remain faithful to Him (ch. 39). The assurance of the fulfillment of these ancient promises, which date all the way back to Abraham, concludes Ezekiel. It is a fitting climax to this section assuring future blessings for Israel (chs. 33-48) following the return of God's glory to the land (chs. 40-48). This section has two main parts: the description of a river that would flow through and heal the land (Ezekiel 47:1-12) and the description of Israel's boundaries and tribal allotments during the Millennium (Ezekiel 47:13 to Ezekiel 48:35).

Verse 1

Ezekiel's guide, who appears to have been his original guide in this vision (Ezekiel 47:3), brought him back to the main entrance to the temple proper. Ezekiel saw water flowing to the east from under the temple threshold. It apparently flowed to the south of the stairs on the right side of the temple as one faces east.

The Letter of Aristias, dated about 100 B.C., contains reference to a spring on the temple mount inside the enclosure of the temple area. [Note: Cooke, pp. 517-18.] There may already be a natural water source at this site.

Verse 2

The man then brought Ezekiel through the north gate to the outside of the outer wall of the temple enclosure. Just south of the east gate he saw water trickling to the east, a continuation of the stream that he had observed inside the temple enclosure.

Verses 3-5

The "man" took his measuring line (cf. Ezekiel 40:3) and measured 1,000 cubits (about one-third of a mile) east from the wall along the watercourse. He led Ezekiel across the river (Heb. nahal), and it was ankle deep. Another 1,000 cubits farther east they crossed again, and this time the water was knee-deep. Another 1,000 cubits, and it was up to his waist. Another 1,000 cubits, and it was so deep that they could not cross it standing up. It was so deep they would have had to swim across.

This description suggests that some major topographical changes will have occurred east of present-day Jerusalem by this time. Other revelation supports this conclusion (cf. Ezekiel 34:26-30; Ezekiel 36:8-12; Ezekiel 36:30-36; Ezekiel 37:25-28; Ezekiel 45:1-8; Ezekiel 48:8-14; Joel 3:18; Zechariah 13:1; Zechariah 14:4-8). The water will follow the contours of the altered terrain, not the past or present landscape. Zechariah

recorded that the water flowing from Jerusalem will divide with half of it going west to the Mediterranean Sea and half east to the Dead Sea (Zechariah 14:8). Ezekiel described only the branch that flowed east.

Verses 6-7

The guide made sure Ezekiel saw this. Then he brought him back to the edge of the river. Many trees were growing on both sides of the riverbank. Rivers, by their nature, give life.

Verses 8-9

The man explained that the river continued east and emptied into the Arabah, the Jordan valley, and eventually into the Dead Sea. Presently this involves a drop in elevation of over 3,700 feet (from the temple mount at 2,430 feet above sea level to the Dead Sea at 1,290 feet below sea level). These waters purified the waters of the Dead Sea and made it a live sea. The Dead Sea presently contains 24-26 percent minerals compared with normal seawater that contains 4-6 percent. [Note: Ibid., p. 520.] This is the reason no fish or other aquatic life live in it. The water of this river would give life to all the creatures that would gather in swarms along its banks and to the fish that would swim in it.

"The Dead Sea today is a symbol of barren desolation. This future change is a visible reminder that God can turn death to life. Our God specializes in changing the unchangeable!" [Note: Dyer, in *The Old . . .*, p. 697.]

Verses 10-11

The Dead Sea would become so full of many varieties of fish that fishermen would fish for them from Engedi, on the west side of the sea about midway north to south, to Eneglaim, possibly on the northwest shore near Qumran or on the eastern side. The entire Dead Sea region would not become fresh, however; the swamps and marshes would remain saline, perhaps to provide salt and or other minerals for the people.

Verse 12

Fruit trees would grow all around the Dead Sea. They do not do so now. They would remain continually healthy and productive. These trees would be so fruitful that they would bear fruit every month of the year. People would eat their fruit and use their leaves for medicinal purposes. This formerly desert region would blossom like a rose (cf. Ezekiel 36:35; Isaiah 35:1-2; Isaiah 35:6-7; Joel 3:18; Romans 8:19-22).

This river is similar to two other rivers in the Bible: the river that flowed out of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:10) and the river that will flow in the New Jerusalem during the eternal state (Revelation 22:1-2; cf. Psalms 46:4; Psalms 65:9; Joel 3:18; Zechariah 14:8). Like the river in Revelation the one in Ezekiel will flow from the throne of God; He is the source of both rivers. However, there will be a temple in the millennial earth, but there will not be one in the eternal state (Revelation 21:22). The river in Revelation also flowed down the street of the city, but Ezekiel mentioned no city to the east of the temple, just one to its south (Ezekiel 45:6). It seems that Ezekiel and John saw two different rivers, but the purpose of both rivers was the same. God will be the source of fertility, blessing, and health in the Millennium and throughout eternity.

The river that Ezekiel saw was a real river with life-giving and healing properties. But like the rivers in Genesis 2 and Revelation 22 it also has symbolic significance. Many interpreters spiritualize the entire passage and see no literal fulfillment in the future. [Note: E.g., Taylor, p. 278.] It represents the spiritual life and healing that flow to humanity from the throne of God (cf. John 4:14; John 7:37-38). [Note: See Davidson, pp. 349-50.]

"The river is like the blood of the Messiah from the cross of Calvary that began as a trickle (John 19:34). Finally, the blood, like the river, became a flood of redemption for all people (Revelation 1:5). So the flow from Calvary became a fountain of redemption for all people including Israel (see Zechariah 13:1-6; Revelation 1:5-6). Just so, the water of life that the prophet saw coming from the threshold came forth gently, then began to flow, and finally became a mighty river of life healing all in its wake." [Note: L. Cooper, p. 411.]

"All blessings, material and spiritual, will emanate from the presence of the Lord with His people." [Note: Feinberg, p. 272.]

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow!" [Note: The Doxology.]

The boundaries and principles of allotment of the land 47:13-48:35

"There are two special areas of attention in this passage: (1) the concern that God's people occupy their full boundaries, and (2) the concern that Gentiles will have an inheritance." [Note: Stuart, p. 414.]

(Adapted from URL: <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/dcc/ezekiel-47.html>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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).