

Bible Studies

Ezekiel 47



Read Ezekiel 47v1-12

This passage is part of a series of visions Ezekiel received about a new temple. (chapters 40-48.) The temple Ezekiel describes is very different from either Solomon's temple, or the temple that stood in Christ day. It is much larger and has a different layout. The temple ceremonies are also radically changed. A temple fitting its description has never been built. Both Jews and Christians have struggled to interpret these chapters and to reconcile them with the rest of Scriptural teaching.

Among Christians are two views espoused; **1** That these are the blueprints for a temple to be built in the millennium. **2** That the visions speak figuratively of believers as God's temple. (the two views are not necessarily exclusive). A new temple speaks of a new way to approach God, the New Covenant that God has made with us through Christ's death.



Read Revelation 22v1-6 Zechariah 14v2-9

Again this is part of a larger vision, this time of the New Jerusalem. The visions are similar, although in Revelation there is no temple v22. John's vision seems to apply to a time called the 'eternal state' i.e. After Christ's return when we are with God for eternity. John is also drawing a parallel to the Garden of Eden. However to an extent, it also talks about *life in the Spirit* now.

Where does the river flow from? Ezekiel 47v1,2&12

There are two answers to this question, both are true, but both lead to slightly different interpretations. Ezekiel says it is flowing from the temple. But he also mentions that it flows from the sanctuary, south of the altar.



What do you think the temple represents? What do you think the altar/sanctuary represents?

John has a similar vision, **Where does his river start?** Rev 22v1
It seems to me that the river's source is the presence of God, the sanctuary, and it flows out from believers into the world.

The river flows from the temple in Jerusalem through the Judean hills and into the dead sea.

What is the effect of the river on the land?

What is the effect of the river on the Dead Sea?

Why is the Dead Sea called the Dead Sea?

The Dead Sea is an *inland port of drainage*, the Jordan flows into it, but nothing flows out. The water evaporates leaving behind all the impurities, consequently there is no fish or plant life in the Dead Sea. It is dead! The river brings it abundant life.

What contrast does Ezekiel want us to understand?

What do you think the fish and fishermen represent?

It could be that Ezekiel just wants to emphasize the extent of the abundant life. But Jesus spoke of the Kingdom being like a net catching fish, Matthew 13v47. He also spoke of us being fishers of men. So the fish are people saved for the kingdom.

What do the leaves of the tree bring?

The fruit of the tree could be many things, but the fruit of the Spirit seems applicable. John describes these trees as the tree of life. The leaves bring healing. This is spiritual healing, healing from sin and the restoration of peace.

"But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." Jeremiah 17v7-8, Psalm 1v3

What is the overall impression you get from reading this passage?



Read Ezekiel 47v2-5

We have seen that Ezekiel's river brings life.

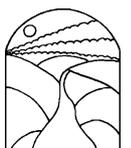
What else does Ezekiel's river do in this passage?

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Ezekiel's river grows! Ezekiel measures it every 500m, each time it is deeper.

What were the four measurements?

What is the river?

Ezekiel does not tell us what the river is, but he does tell us where the river comes from and the effects it brings. There are two possibilities. Again they are not mutually exclusive.



The river that flows from God and from the New Covenant believer is the spread of the Gospel. On the day of Pentecost it was a trickle, today it is a river. Ezekiel's river grew exponentially, so has the Church.

If this is true what effect does the Gospel have on the world it flows through?



Read John 7v37-39, John 4v13-14
What did Jesus describe as a river flowing out from us?

The river then is the Spirit of God

till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. Isaiah 32:15

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants Isaiah 44:3

What effect does the Spirit have on the dry ground?

What is the dry ground?



What effect is the Holy Spirit intended to have in our lives?
What effect are we intended to have on the world around us?

When we talk of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, we tend to think in terms of our being filled and the need to remain full of the Spirit. Of the Holy Spirit flowing into us.

What was Jesus emphasis in John 7v37-39 and 4v13-14?

We like to think of the Holy Spirit flowing into us, but Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit flowing out from us.

Which did Ezekiel think of?

What is the difference? What effect will this difference have?

You would have to say it is a difference in attitude. Is the Holy Spirit for me, out of me, or through me. If you concentrate on the Holy Spirit as an experience for me, then you will only see the effects of the Holy Spirit within you. But if you think of the Baptism of the Spirit flowing from you, you will look to affect the world you live in.



Which do you think God intended?
Who are the Fruit and the Gifts of the Spirit for?
If we keep the Baptism in the Holy Spirit as an internal thing, will we ever reach the potential God has for us?

Can the Holy Spirit flow out of you, unless He is flowing into you?

I think this is one of those strange spiritual paradoxes; the more that flows out, the fuller you become. Unless you flow out, you never become full.



Paddling or swimming.

If the out pouring of the Spirit which starts as a trickle, becomes a mighty river, where are we? Are we ankle deep or are we swimming in the flow. Have we become satisfied with a little flow of the Spirit or are we seeking more?

In Ezekiel the river grew with distance. This could mean time or experience. In the vision this growth seemed natural and cumulative. Did you notice that Ezekiel's way of measuring the river, was to get *in* the river?

What do you think this means for us?

How are we going to grow in the things of the Spirit?

