

AM Ezekiel 47:1-12 Life flows from the Lord

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[0 : 00] The book of the prophet Ezekiel, Ezekiel chapter 47, the first 12 verses, as I say, found on page 888 in our Bibles.

So let us hear the word of the Lord. Then he brought me back to the door of the temple. And behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the temple faced east.

The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. Then he brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east.

And behold, the water was trickling out on the south side. Going on eastward with a measuring line in his hand, the man measured a thousand cubits.

And then he led me through the water, and it was ankle deep. Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, and it was knee deep. Again he measured a thousand, and it was waist deep.

[1 : 21] Again he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass through. For the water had risen, it was deep enough to swim in a river that could not be passed through.

And he said to me, Son of man, have you seen this? Then he led me back to the bank of the river. As I went back, I saw on the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other.

And he said to me, this water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah and enters the sea. When the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh.

And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea might become fresh, so everything will live where the river goes.

Fishermen will stand beside the sea from Engedi to Enedleim. It will be a place for the spreading of nets. Its fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the great sea.

[2 : 35] But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh. They are to be left for salt. And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food.

Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail. But they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary.

Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing. This is God's word, and we pray that the Lord will add his blessing to those of us who read it.

In this morning's passage of scripture, the prophet Ezekiel is continuing in a guided tour of the foretold temple.

Now this tour began in chapter 40, and went into extreme detail. It showed everything from the canteens where the priests were to be fed, through to the door that the monarch or the prince should enter and leave by.

[3 : 48] Having been taken around the temple once, and been told its various dimensions, its size, in chapter 47, Ezekiel is shown a trickle of water emerging from below the threshold, below the door.

Now, here we could note that most churches have problems with water getting into them and not getting out. But, as we'll see, this water flowing out from the temple is exactly what we should desire for our church.

Turning to Ezekiel chapter 40, at the first verse, we can read, In the 25th year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the 10th day of the month, in the 14th year, after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me to the city, that is, thought to be Jerusalem.

In visions of God, he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south.

When he brought me there, behold, there was a man whose appearance was like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand. And he was standing in the gateway, and the man said to me, Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears.

[5 : 24] And set your heart upon all that I will show you. For you were brought here, in order that I might show it to you. Declare all that you see to the house of Israel.

The Lord was showing the prophet the holy city, and all that would one day come to pass in that place, and he had a very specific purpose. Ezekiel was then to pass this on to the other exiles.

The temple that he was shown, the temple that he walked around, was of course the great temple of Jerusalem, the place I mentioned right at the beginning, where God dwelt, where the Ark of the Covenant was placed, where worship was offered, where sacrifices of animals were made.

And in precise detail, the temple was measured and planned. It would appeal to any architect today. The plans were incredibly precise.

And yet, having been taken around the temple already, Ezekiel notices the water. But what was it, and why was it flowing from the temple?

[6 : 42] Well, if we were to look at the words of the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 2, verse 3, we can read, Many people shall come and shall say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways, and that we may walk in his paths.

For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Zion, or Jerusalem, was the place where God revealed his holy law to his people.

It was there that he was to flow into all of the world. We'll see something similar in the instruction that Jesus gave to his disciples in Luke chapter 24, where in verse 47, we read the interesting instruction that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in Jesus' name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

The gospel goes to all the world, beginning in that place. Therefore, we should understand, as I believe Ezekiel would have done, that this water illustrated God's grace and his mercy and his law, which we have summed up in the gospel of Jesus.

Now, as the water flowed out of the temple, we can see how quickly it deepened, after only a thousand cubits, and a cubit is about 18 inches, so not all that far.

[8 : 29] The trickle, as we see in verse 3, had become ankle deep. We're shown that no extra water was flowing into it.

It wasn't like there were various tributaries flowing in and making the water deep. This was the same water, but now, instead of just being a trickle, it was a good two or three inches deep.

Leading him another thousand cubits, the water becomes knee deep. It is about a foot of depth. And only a thousand cubits later, in verse 4, was up to the prophet's waist.

Only a thousand cubits later, the water was so deep that it was impassable. In only about 180 yards, the trickle had become a torrent, with no additional water from anywhere else.

What are we to make of this? Well, all of the commentators I've read seem to agree that the water is illustrative of the gospel, which spread outwards from Jerusalem, as we know, and in rapid time, it too turned from a trickle to a torrent.

[9 : 45] The Lord, as we can read in Acts chapter 2, added to their number day by day, those who were being saved. We can read how literally thousands of people were converted in the space of just a few minutes.

The trickle, which began with those 11 disciples, because we can't count Judas among them, soon became huge. The very fact it spread so quickly is testament, I believe, to the fact that the Lord's blessing and favour was resting upon those early Christians.

Because where the gospel spread, the church grew. Where the church grew, more people came to Christ. First, Matthew Henry says, that in the history of the church, in the history of the growth of the Christian faith, we can see all of this within these flowing waters from the temple.

Now, alongside the miracle, for that is surely what it is, of the water growing from a trickle to a torrent in such a short space of time, is the miraculous life that comes from it.

Turn with me to verse 6, where we can read, Then he, that is the man, the man of bronze, led me back to the bank of the river.

[11 : 11] As I went back, I saw, on the bank of the river, very many trees, on the one side, and on the other. And he said to me, this water flows toward the eastern region, and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea.

And when the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh. To begin with, we can see how the water flows into the sea.

This trickle, which had become a torrent, flows into the sea, and the water becomes fresh. Now, a number of commentators I read, suppose, that the sea, that is being spoken of here, is in fact, the Dead Sea.

Named the Dead Sea, because it is so salty, well, they say you can, just lay back, and float in it. And yet, this thing, which started off, no, no more really, than a dripping tap, is shown, to turn the entire sea fresh.

Just imagine, the quantity of water, you would need, to displace, all of the salt, in the Dead Sea, and turn it fresh. And yet, the healing properties, of this water, appear to know, no end.

[12 : 28] Furthermore, in verse 9, we can read, that wherever the river goes, every living creature, that swarms, will live. There will be, very many fish, for this water goes there, that the waters of the sea, may become fresh, so everything will live, where the river goes.

Not only, does this water, therefore, bring freshness, to purify, but it also brings life, in abundance. Jesus himself, was described, as the living water, in John's Gospel, at chapter 7.

And he said, that he came, so that his people, may have life, and have it abundantly, in chapter 10. This image, of abundant life, points us, at the same time, to the beautiful, verdant, life-giving, Garden of Eden, in Genesis, and, to the promised kingdom, the promised city, which we can find, in Revelation, right at the end, of the New Testament.

Let's just turn, if I can find it, to Revelation, chapter 22. It is, surely the most amazing, image, and such an encouragement, to us.

Revelation 22, verses 1, to 5. Then the angel, showed me the river, of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne, of God, and of the Lamb, through the middle, of the street, of the city.

[13 : 58] Also, on either side, of the river, the tree of life, with its twelve kinds, of fruit, yielding fruit, every month. The leaves, of the tree, were for the healing, of the nations.

No longer, will there be anything, accursed, but the throne, of God, and of the Lamb, will be in it, and his servants, will worship him. And so on it goes, this beautiful image, of the promised city, which we are led to, if we follow, the course, of this river.

The water, purifies, it sustains life, it sustains even, the trees, that grow on the bank, which themselves, we can read, produce fruit, to feed, and that fruit, will never wither.

Even the fish, that swim, in the great waters, themselves, provide life, and livelihood, to the fishermen, who fish. There is enough, for all of those, who are in the city, all flowing, from that tiny trickle, though greater, than a dripping tap.

Now here we should note, that this, this promised life, is not, universal. Even though, the water, brings life, and healing, we can read, in verse 11, that its swamps, and marshes, will not become fresh, they are to be left, for salt.

[15 : 25] Even though, the water, will surely lap, at the bank, of these salt marshes, they will not, turn fresh, and you could ask, why? You could say, is God not, strong enough?

Far from it, we know, that the Lord is, strong enough, he is able, to turn the sea fresh. But there will, sadly, always be, some people, who will not, hear the gospel, call.

People, who cut themselves, off, from the pure, fresh water, of life, and instead, choose to continue, to drink, of the salty, sea water, of the world, which far, from being refreshing, actually, just increases, the drinker's thirst.

We can, read, something of this, in the larger catechism, at question 30, if we're interested. God has elected, some people, to everlasting life, and then, there are some, who will never hear, who will never turn, to the gospel.

The salty marshes, are illustrative, of this. We cannot, as Christians, believe, in, in, in, in a universalism, we cannot believe, that just everyone, is going to go to heaven, because God is lovely, because that is not, what is revealed to us, in scripture.

[16 : 45] Now, as I said, this flowing water, leads us, at one and the same time, to Genesis, and Eden, and Fords, to the new Jerusalem. It was a, a revelation, to Ezekiel, of what was to happen, when the Messiah, came.

Because in Jesus, as the living water, we are shown, perfection, and we are led, to everlasting life. But there is more, there is, there is another way, we can understand, this passage.

Because, while we have, so far seen, how the Lord Jesus, is the living water, and how we can link, that living water, which flowed from him, to the water, that came out, of the temple, we can also see, how Jesus, became the temple itself.

That's a, slightly bizarre thing, to say, but bear with me. If we turn, to John's gospel, John's gospel, at chapter 19, and read, from verse 31, I think you'll, see, where I'm leading.

John 19, at verse 31, says, since, it was the day, of preparation, and so that the bodies, these are the three, bodies, that were on, the hill, at Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus, is being there too, so that these bodies, would not remain, on the cross, for the Sabbath, because that Sabbath, was a high day, the Jews, asked Pilate, that their legs, might be broken, and that they might, be taken away, their legs being broken, to speed up their death.

[18 : 26] So the soldiers came, and broke the legs, of the first, and of the other, who had been crucified, along with Jesus, but when they came, to Jesus, and saw, that he was already dead, they did not, break his legs, but one of the soldiers, pierced his side, with a spear, and at once, there came out, blood, and water, he who saw it, has borne witness, his testimony, is true, and he knows, he's telling the truth, that you also may believe, for these things, took place, that the scripture, might be fulfilled, not one of his bones, will be broken, and again, they will look on him, whom they, have pierced, when Jesus, the Lord Jesus, was on the cross, when the sins of the world, were laid, on his shoulders, the cross, and the Lord himself, became the place, of sacrifice, the place, where offering, would atone, for sin, at this point, we can read, how the Lord Jesus, who had already, given up the ghost, and had already, left this earth, his side, was pierced, and from it, issued forth, blood and water, from the lifeless body, and yet, this water, was not just bile, and bodily fluids, but was the very living water, that flowed, from the temple, because when Jesus died, he was both, the sacrificial victim, and he was the water, that flowed from Jerusalem, into all the world, and while, the volume of water, there in his body, would have not been, would have been about the same, as the volume of water, in our body, this flow, this water, that fell, would grow, and grow, and grow, it would deepen, and deepen, until it was impassable, by man, as it flew, into all the world, in this prophetic vision, revealed, to Ezekiel, in chapter 47, we can therefore, see, the future, of the Christian church, we can see, the future, of every Christian, who turns, to the Lord Jesus, we can see, our future, in this water, we see, the growth, of the Christian faith, even in times, like this friends, where, we hear, those, those stories, don't we, we hear, the reports, that the Christian faith, is dying out, that Scotland, is becoming more, and more secular, that fewer, and fewer people, are trusting, in the Lord Jesus, and yet, we can see, how this water, far from just, drying out, deepens, and deepens, and deepens, the course, of the gospel, the continuity, of the church, the spread, of the Christian faith, is therefore, assured, we can remember, how, when Jesus said, you are Peter, and on this rock,

I will build my church, he then went on, to say, that even, the gates of hell, could not, overpower it, we can also, remember, how, right at the end, of the Bible, in the book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus, speaks, to individual churches, showing, at the very least, that the church, will continue, until the second coming, of Jesus, there is no, threat, that the Christian church, will die out, there is no threat, that Christianity, will lead us, to a dead end, because this water, which flows, out of the temple, was at one and the same time, both an encouragement, to Ezekiel, to pass on, to his brothers, and sisters, who were in exile, who were missing, their temple, who had seen it destroyed, in front of their eyes, the Lord was promising, that one day, they would leave, their forced, eviction, from the land, they would return, the temple, would be rebuilt, worship, would be offered, and we can also see, the promise, of the Lord Jesus, the promise, of the Messiah, who was, most surely, to come, friends, we should take heart, because in this passage, of Ezekiel, as I say, we see the future, of the Christian church, and the gospel, but we also see, where our, ultimate end is, because as we begin, to see the trickle, of water, and we start, to follow it, and we see, it becomes deeper, and deeper, as we try, to cross it, and find, that it's now, impassable, we are actually, on the journey, toward, that city, that we read of, in Revelation, where the water, flows, down the middle, of the street, where it provides life, where there is, great joy, where people are, with the Lord, forever, more, this is, therefore, one of the many, assurances, of eternal life, that we can find, in the New Testament, it is the assurance, that following, the narrow path, that the Lord Jesus, offers us, will lead us, to eternity, we can also see, from this reading, that the church, will continue, that warnings, that warnings, of its demise, are unfounded, and linked to this, that the gospel, will, and does, bring life, in places, where no life, is currently found, remember, the valley, of the dry bones, where the Lord, shows, the prophet, the prophet, this pile, of corpses, this pile, of bones, they weren't even, corpses, they didn't have, any flesh on them, and he says to him, son of man, can these bones live, and the prophet, replies,

Lord, you know, showing, that it is the Lord, and he alone, who has the power, to give life, out of death, and so, as we read, of this water, which issued, from God's house, from God's temple, we can see, how life, follows, the gospel, brings life, even in those places, where no life, is currently, to be found, therefore friends, let us greatly, rejoice, for this is, the Lord's doing, and it is, marvelous, in our sight, let us pray, our most gracious, and heavenly father, in our news, at the moment, we see, so much suffering, we see, people dying, as a result, of natural disaster, we see floods, tearing towns, and cities apart, in southern Spain, we see, ongoing wars, and rumors of wars, we see, political strife, both at home, and abroad, and we are, maybe known, to say, where is God, in all of this, and yet, father, as we read, your word, we can see, time after time, the encouragement, that you give, to your people, that your name, that your truth, that your gospel, will endure, to the ends, of the earth, and that your people, will endure, for eternal life, we thank you, we thank you then, that the water, which issues from the temple, was no accident, of plumbing, it was no, drip, that needed to be stopped, but was instead, the beginning, of the living water, that we see, in Jesus Christ,

Christ, we thank you, that wherever, that water goes, wherever the gospel, of Christ goes, life is sure, to follow, we thank you, father, for the many ways, in which the gospel, is taken, to all the ends, of the earth, the way, that so many nations, of the world, have bibles, in their own language, how even, in places, of greatest oppression, places, where the Christian faith, is squashed, by regimes, people continue, to be drawn, into a faith, in Jesus Christ, we thank you, father, for the work, which was done, in previous generations, where free church ministers, and missionaries, took the gospel, to India, and to Peru, and to South Africa, we thank you, that in these cases, they planted, that local people, watered, and tended, and that you, gave the growth, and that in pockets, all around the world, there are people, who continually, lift their eyes, to the heavens, who offer you praise, and who live, according to your laws, we do pray, father, for those, in this community, who are sick, those, who are suffering, those, whose earthly lives, will soon, draw to an end, we thank you, for those cases, where the living water, of Jesus Christ, has touched their life, that they know, that death, is nothing to be feared, that eternal life, is gain, and not loss, and we pray, that as we, this morning, in this place, have been in receipt, of the living water, of Jesus, that we might in turn, take it out, into all the world, that the thirsty world, outside, may drink, and be revived, and be refreshed, and be filled, and be nourished,

Father, we do pray, for our land, we thank you, that for so long, Scotland was known, as the land of the book, and we thank you, that even in times, of great persecution, the reformed faith, continued to grow, through the bravery, of those who were, covenanters, for those, who split, in, from the establishment, in the 19th century, for those, who continued, the evangelical faith, ever since, we pray therefore, for our church, for the free church, of Scotland, for its ministers, its elders, its deacons, its members, spread throughout, Scotland, and further afield, we thank you, for the many ways, that you continue, to bless them, and that they continue, to be a blessing, to those around them, we pray, more and more, that faithful men, may preach your gospel, that you would, call people, to the ministry, that you would, encourage people, in their ministries, in daily life, we thank you, for those, who week in, and week out, fill this pulpit, we thank you, that the word, is handled, rightly and truly, in this place, and that people, are fed, father we love you, and we ask, that you might, reveal to us, something as you did, to Ezekiel, that we may see, this living water, issuing forth, that it may be, an encouragement to us, a source of refreshment, and a source of great joy, we commit this, and all of our other prayers, into your most loving, and gracious hands, trusting, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord,

[30 : 34] Amen. Our final item of praise, this morning friends, is found in, Psalm 63, in Sing Psalms, which is at page, number 80, in our Psalters, Psalm 63, and we sing, verses 1, to 8, and this Psalm again, is a reminder to us, that even in, places where there appears, to be no life, where there appears, to be just, dryness, and barrenness, that the Lord, will refresh, and will revive, that the Lord, will encourage, and strengthen, because he, and he alone, is our help, he offers us shade, he lifts us, by his right hand, and to him, our souls may cling, and so as we're able, we stand to sing, Psalm 63, O God, you are my God alone, I seek your face, with eagerness, and else, yes.

yes. Yes. Excuse me, who are you, I seek your face, for a candle, to be eagerness, so we're going, so I'll give you,