

In the last division of Ezekiel's prophecy there are distinct themes. "Chapter 34 emphasized the rulers; chapter 35, the enemies; chapter 36, the nation converted; chapter 37, the nation resurrected; chapters 38–39, the land; and chapters 40–48, the sanctuary. Chapters 38–39, it is generally recognized, constitute one prophecy" (Feinberg, 218).

There are many different views as to what these chapters mean and where they fit in history. Based on Revelation 20, I favor the view that chapters 38 and 39 occur at the end of millennium, the thousand year rule of Christ upon the earth. Revelation 20:7-8 says, "When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore." If this connection to Revelation 20 is correct, the invasion will take place "after Israel has been restored to their land, a fact set forth prominently in these chapters" (Feinberg, 219).

Ezekiel 38

38:1 *And the word of the LORD came to me saying,*

38:2 *"Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him,*

38:3 *and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.*

Gog is the ruler of the land of Magog, but as verse 2 makes clear he is also a leader (a prince) over the peoples of Meshech and Tubal. Attempts at identifying these nations today prove to be nothing more than speculation; the most that can be said is that these are the enemies of Messiah in the end times.

The verses that follow picture a battle that takes place between Gog and Yahweh.

NOTE: The most controversial term is "Rosh." The normal meaning of the word in Hebrew is "head" or "chief." Some understand it as a proper noun ("Rosh") referring to a particular country with that name. So the question asked is Ezekiel speaking of the "head prince"? Or, is he speaking of the prince of a place called Rosh?

The above translation is the NAS which sees "Rosh" as the name of a country.

Thus, 38:2, 3 = the prince of **Rosh**, Meshech, and Tubal

[the prince [נְשִׂיאַ]] of Rosh [רֹשׁ] chief, head, or "Rosh"]

The ESV translates "rosh" as "chief."

Thus 38:2, 3 = "the **chief** prince of Meshech and Tubal"

I tend to agree with the ESV since the word is nowhere else used as the name of a place in either the Bible or anywhere outside of the Bible (see Alexander, 930), but no one can be sure.

38:4 "I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them splendidly attired, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords;

38:5 Persia, Ethiopia and Put with them, all of them with shield and helmet;

38:6 Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north with all its troops-- many peoples with you.

Verses 4-6 leave the impression that Gog has the backing of an impressive military power with vast military resources. They are portrayed as wealthy (splendidly attired) and well-armed (v. 4). But Gog does not wage war alone; He is allied with seven more nations: Meshech, Tubal (38:2), Persia, Ethiopia, Put (38:5), Gomer, and Beth-togarmah (38:6; Gen. 10:2-3). The countries mentioned are in the northern and southern extremes of Israel's world, from the fringes of Israel's awareness, suggesting a universal world conspiracy (Block, 441). The number of allies also totals seven, exactly the same number found in Ezekiel's oracles against the nations in chapters 25-32. Given the prominence of the number seven, it is likely that it is deliberate, symbolizing totality or completeness (Block, 441). Revelation 20:8 also says that Satan will come to "deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war." The "four corners of the earth" is an idiom meaning from all parts of the world.

"This combination of features suggests that Ezekiel envisions a universal conspiracy against Israel. The description creates the impression of a formidable foe, able to attack whoever and wherever he pleases. But how different is the appearance from the reality. Verses 4-6 are emphatic in affirming Yahweh's total control over the movements of Gog" (Block, 442). This truth is announced in three short declarations in verse 4: (1) I will turn you around, (2) I will put hooks in your jaws, (3) I will bring you out.

38:7 "Be prepared, and prepare yourself, you and all your companies that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them.

38:8 "After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them.

38:9 "You will go up, you will come like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you."

In 38:7 Yahweh summons Gog to prepare himself and take charge over his allies and serve as their guardian.

Verse 8 makes it clear that as Ezekiel writes, the events spoken of aren't coming soon; they will not take place until "after many days . . . in the latter years." The rest of verse 8 gives a hint of clarification. The events predicted will take place after the land has recovered from war (restored from the sword) and the people have been regathered from among the nations. The target of Gog also comes to light; it is the mountains of Israel.

“Yahweh’s marching orders for Gog are spelled out. Although Jeremiah had also spoken of the enemy advancing from the north like storm clouds at Yahweh’s command (4:12-13), Ezekiel’s use of ‘storm,’ points to inspiration from Isaiah 10:3: ‘what will you do on the day of punishment, in the storm that will cover the land?’ Storm means literally ‘devastation’, but its pairing with ‘cloud’ suggests a destructive ‘storm cloud,’ a metaphor for a sudden invasion by vast numbers of troops” (Block, 444). Revelation 20:8 says, “the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.”

38:10 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan,

38:11 and you will say, 'I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates,

38:12 to capture spoil and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world.'

38:13 "Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish with all its villages will say to you, 'Have you come to capture spoil? Have you assembled your company to seize plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to capture great spoil?'"

Verses 10-13 state the motives of Gog. “In that day” links these verses to what has preceded (38:8).

Verse 11 states for the first time what Gog’s motives for attacking Israel are; Israel appears to be helpless at the hand of its aggressors and Gog sees them as an easy target for booty (v. 12). Gog is driven by greed; he has no conception that his desires are playing into the divine plan of God. The description of Israel fits perfectly into what one would expect during the millennium.

In verse 12 Israel is called the center of the world. In a secular world this makes no sense, but from a biblical perspective, Jerusalem will be the heart of the Messianic empire. Zechariah 8:3 says, “Thus says the LORD, 'I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.'”

Revelation 20:9 adds more specifics: “they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city [Jerusalem].” God will allow them to march all the way to Jerusalem before they are destroyed.

Those who trade with Israel will question Gog’s motive (38:13), but it is unclear if they want to join Gog in its greedy pursuits, or if they oppose him.

38:14 "Therefore prophesy, son of man, and say to Gog, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "On that day when My people Israel are living securely, will you not know it?"

**38:15 "You will come from your place out of the remote parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great assembly and a mighty army;
38:16 and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. It shall come about in the last days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog."**

Verses 14b-16a highlight the initiative of Gog; 16b describes Yahweh's involvement.

Verses 14b-16a are clear that Gog takes note that Israel is living securely (will you not know it? God asks) and Gog's advancements are against God's people. Note that twice the people are called "My people" by Yahweh, and the land is called His land; with the land/people/deity relationship restored (see notes on 36:16 ff.), an attack on Israel is an attack against Yahweh.

Like 38:8, verse 16 identifies the time period as "the last days," literally, "at the end of the days." "It is pushed off into the distant future, after Yahweh's people have been re-gathered from the diaspora, have settled in their homeland, signs of blessing have become evident, and they have begun to enjoy their peaceful and tranquil state" (Block, 450).

38:16 tells us of Yahweh's purpose: "... so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes." In other words, "Yahweh's purpose in bringing on the hordes of Gog is to convince the nations of his presence and his person. He is not satisfied with his own people drawing this conclusion from their full restoration as his people; as the Sovereign of all nations he desires that all know him, specifically his holiness" (Block, 450-451).

38:17 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Are you the one of whom I spoke in former days through My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days for many years that I would bring you against them?"

38:18 "It will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," declares the Lord GOD, "that My fury will mount up in My anger.

38:19 "In My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel.

38:20 "The fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all the creeping things that creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence; the mountains also will be thrown down, the steep pathways will collapse and every wall will fall to the ground.

38:21 "I will call for a sword against him on all My mountains," declares the Lord GOD. "Every man's sword will be against his brother.

38:22 "With pestilence and with blood I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone.

38:23 "I will magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the LORD."

Verses 17-23 form the last literary frame of this section.

God asks Gog if he considers himself the fulfillment of previous prophecies (v. 17). The intent of the question is unclear. Some think this means that Gog was prophesied about earlier and that former prophets foretold this invasion (Psa. 2:1-3; Isa. 29:1-8; Joel 2:20; 3:9-21; Zech. 12:1ff.; 14:2-3). Others think the question is to point out Gog's relative unimportance. They say that Gog is *not* specifically mentioned in the former prophets, and that's the point; the nations whom God *had* prophesied about before were Assyria and Babylon, not Gog. Assyria and Babylon served as God's agents of judgment, but this was not the case of Gog. The prophecy about Gog is simply that he is to be brought in and destroyed so God can display his holiness among the nations; Gog is not a tool of God, he is an object of God's wrath.

Verses 18 to 23 change from the second person of direct address ("you") to the third person ("he"). In these verses Yahweh vents His anger against Gog. "Yahweh's emotional reaction to Gog's invasion is obvious as He explodes, heaping up expressions for anger unparalleled in the book, if not in the entire Old Testament. Fortunately for Israel, the wrath previously poured out on them will now fall on their enemy" (Block, 457).

In 38:4 Gog was seen as one dragged by God with hooks in his jaw. Now, the invasion of Gog is said to be an invasion of his very own will. Both are true. God's action is also the will of Gog. Gog is not dragged against his will, but in accordance with it.

Verses 19-20 describe the effects of the divine wrath, "first on the invaded territory itself, and then on the cosmos. Yahweh begins by warning of a massive earthquake that will rock the land on which Gog has his sights . . . But verse 20 declares that the reverberations of the quake will be felt throughout the earth, indiscriminately, causing all living things to quake and leveling the landscape. With its epicenter in the land of Israel, the quake will bring down mountains and cliffs, symbols of divinely grounded stability, and crumble walls, symbols of strength fabricated by human hands" (Block, 457).

In verse 21 Yahweh announces specifically the summoning of the sword against Gog. Unlike the sword Yahweh had wielded against Israel (viz. Nebuchadnezzar), the sword He sends against Gog is in His own hand. Revelation 20:9 says that fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

Ezekiel 39

39:1 *"And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.*

39:2 *and I will turn you around, drive you on, take you up from the remotest parts of the north and bring you against the mountains of Israel.*

39:3 *"I will strike your bow from your left hand and dash down your arrows from your right hand.*

39:4 *"You will fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field.*

39:5 *"You will fall on the open field; for it is I who have spoken," declares the Lord GOD.*

39:6 *"And I will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD.*

39:7 *"My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.*

39:8 *"Behold, it is coming and it shall be done," declares the Lord GOD. "That is the day of which I have spoken.*

"Yahweh has set himself in opposition to Gog. By a series of eight sharp, hard-hitting declarations, Yahweh outlines the strategy against the foe: he will turn Gog around, drive him on, lead him up from the remotest part of the north, bring him to the mountains of Israel, knock his bow out of his left hand, force him to drop his arrows from his right hand, deliver his corpse as food for all the beasts and birds of prey, and torch the lands from which Gog and his allies have come" (Block, 461).

Verses 7 and 8 tell us the purpose of Yahweh's acts; Israel will know His holy name and His name will not be profaned among the nations anymore.

39:9 *"Then those who inhabit the cities of Israel will go out and make fires with the weapons and burn them, both shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, war clubs and spears, and for seven years they will make fires of them.*

39:10 *"They will not take wood from the field or gather firewood from the forests, for they will make fires with the weapons; and they will take the spoil of those who despoiled them and seize the plunder of those who plundered them," declares the Lord GOD.*

Verses 9 -20 describe the aftermath of the great battle between God and Gog. Israel will go out to clean up the mess.

In verse 9-10 they take spoil from the dead and destroy the weapons of war. This is another way of describing the termination of all war brought about by God.

Isaiah 2:3-4: And many peoples will come and 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 concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.

Micah 4:3: And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war.

39:11 "On that day I will give Gog a burial ground there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea, and it will block off those who would pass by. So they will bury Gog there with all his horde, and they will call it the valley of Hamon-gog.

39:12 "For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land.

39:13 "Even all the people of the land will bury them; and it will be to their renown on the day that I glorify Myself," declares the Lord GOD.

39:14 "They will set apart men who will constantly pass through the land, burying those who were passing through, even those left on the surface of the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search.

39:15 "As those who pass through the land pass through and anyone sees a man's bone, then he will set up a marker by it until the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog.

39:16 "And even the name of the city will be Hamonah. So they will cleanse the land."

39:11-16 expands upon the theme of cleansing the land by the people. "On that day" is another signal that the event is future.

"The corpses of the enemy strewn about the mountains of Israel present the Israelites with a series of problems. First, since these are the bodies of Yahweh's enemies and the foes of his people, shall they be dignified with a proper burial, or be left out in the open, exposed to scavenging animals and the elements, as 37:1–10 had portrayed the bones of Israel? Israelite law required that all dead, including criminals, be given a prompt burial (Deut. 21:22-23). Second, given the vast numbers of the slain, which burial ground has room for all these bodies? Third, since the victims are all foreigners, shall they be buried within the land of Israel, or be deposited outside its borders to preserve the sanctity of the land? The aim of verses 11–13 is to answer these questions" (Block, 468).

Verse 11 states that the enemies of Israel should be buried, and they are to be buried "in Israel." The place that they are to be buried is called "the valley of those who pass by," a name that generates ideas of the netherworld.

It is to be a mass burial and the place of the burial will receive a new name, "the valley of Hamon-gog," which appears to be a word-play in Hebrew for the Valley of Hinnom, the place where animals and criminals were buried outside of Jerusalem.

Verses 12-13 describe the effects of the burial of Gog's remains; the disposal of the corpses will result in the purification of the land.

In verses 14-16 it says that people will be appointed to supervise the burial of the enemies' remains. Even when a bone is found it will be marked and transported back to the site where the rest of the armies were. All the people of Israel will be involved in the process of burial (v. 13), and God will be glorified in Israel's midst.

39:17 "As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Speak to every kind of bird and to every beast of the field, "Assemble and come, gather from every side to My sacrifice which I am going to sacrifice for you, as a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood.

39:18 "You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, as though they were rams, lambs, goats and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan.

39:19 "So you will eat fat until you are glutted, and drink blood until you are drunk, from My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.

39:20 "You will be glutted at My table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all the men of war," declares the Lord GOD.

Verses 17-20 are poetic in nature though disturbingly grotesque. God invites the birds and beasts to a banquet – to feast on the flesh of men.

39:21 "And I will set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them.

39:22 "And the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God from that day onward.

39:23 "The nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity because they acted treacherously against Me, and I hid My face from them; so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and all of them fell by the sword.

39:24 "According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I dealt with them, and I hid My face from them.""

Verses 21 and 22 are transitional; they look back at the war that had just been spoken of. The comments in 21b are interpretive, describing the significance of that event. The war will display the justice of God (His judgment) as well as His power (they will know it was done by His hand).

Verses 23-24 describe what the nations will learn by the way He has dealt with Israel. The nations had concluded that Israel's deportation from the land was due to God's inability to defend his people against Nebuchadnezzar and God's name was profaned among them (36:20). After Gog is defeated it will be

clear that this was not the case. The nations will know that Israel was defeated and taken into exile because God had hidden His face from them (39:23) and handed them over to their adversaries.

39:25 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name.

39:26 "They will forget their disgrace and all their treachery which they perpetrated against Me, when they live securely on their own land with no one to make them afraid.

39:27 "When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations.

39:28 "Then they will know that I am the LORD their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them again to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer.

39:29 "I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," declares the Lord GOD.

In verse 25 God states what He will do for Israel and then He tells them why. He will restore their fortunes and have mercy on them. He will cause them to forget their disgrace. They will live securely in the land. God does this out of a concern for His holy name.

In the end, the exile will make Israel know that God is their Lord (39:28 – “Lord” translates the Hebrew “Yahweh” which is the title God uses in relationship to Israel and the covenant He made with them).

Once more we rely on Daniel Block’s excellent summary of this passage (NICOT, 493). In these chapters we see:

First, Yahweh is the unrivaled Lord of human history. He raises up nations; he puts them down. Their activities are always subservient to his agenda.

Second, Yahweh's reputation is linked to the status and welfare of his people. So long as they are mired in bondage and subservience to alien powers, his holiness and glory stand in question. The ultimate vindication of his name is assured, however, and his people will be preserved in accordance with his promise.

Third, Yahweh keeps his covenant. He does not forget the commitments he has made to his people and will not abandon the faithful in their hour of need. As a seal of his commitment, he pours out his Spirit on them. The implications that this covenantal interpretation of the pouring out of the Spirit has for the progress of the Holy Spirit’s activity in the book of Acts are tantalizing and deserve further comment. It is remarkable that with every stage of the advance of the gospel, and the incorporation of new groups of people into the church, reference is made to the extraordinary manifestation of the Spirit’s presence: (1) The Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 2:4 33, 38); (2) the Samaritans (8:14–17); (3) Gentile proselytes of Judea (10:44–48 cf. 9:16);

(4) Gentiles of Asia minor (19:1–6). Each event signals a new phase and scope in the breadth of the embrace of the new covenant instituted in Christ. Furthermore, when Paul speaks of being sealed with the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30), he is speaking of the possession of the Holy Spirit as divine confirmation of the covenant. This alone is the basis of the believer's security.

Fourth, above all else, Yahweh is a God of grace and mercy. He reaches out to those who have rebelled against him and offers not only forgiveness but the full benefits of covenant relationship.

Fifth, for the believer, the experience of divine grace is a humbling experience. Far from feeding egotistical ambitions and misguided thirst for self-esteem, or from blinding one to one's sinful past, it evokes in the recipient intense feelings of unworthiness.

Ezekiel 40-48

The book of Ezekiel concludes on a glorious note, with a vision of Yahweh returning to His temple and establishing His residence in His city in the midst of His people.

Ezekiel 40:2 identifies the genre of these chapters as "divine visions" which links them to the inaugural vision in 1:1 and the earlier temple vision in 8:1. The parallels among these texts require that the same hermeneutical principles be employed here as in the previous interpretations of the visions of God.

After a long discussion of the dimensions of the temple (chapter 40:1 ff.) Ezekiel is led to the east gate.

Ezekiel 43

43:1 Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east;

43:2 and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory.

43:3 And it was like the appearance of the vision which I saw, like the vision which I saw when He came to destroy the city. And the visions were like the vision which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face.

43:4 And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east.

43:5 And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.

43:6 Then I heard one speaking to me from the house, while a man was standing beside me.

43:7 He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever. And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry and by the corpses of their kings when they die,

After touring the temple, Ezekiel is taken by his tour guide to the east gate. There he sees the glory of God returning. God's glory is so bright that the earth itself reflects His light (43:2). The visual display is accompanied by the sound of many waters.

The words given to describe the spectacle are carefully selected. Ezekiel says that he sees "the glory of the God of Israel." The wording emphasizes the significance of the event; God is returning to His land and His glory is a visible manifestation of His presence.

God could have entered the temple at any gate, but the east gate lies in a straight line with the Holy of Holies. What is being described here is an exact reversal of the events that transpired in Ezekiel 10-11. In that passage, Ezekiel saw God depart, hover briefly over a mountain east of the city, and then disappear in the horizon. Ezekiel 10 and 11 picture God leaving His people; chapter 43 pictures His return. Ezekiel likens the vision to that which he had in 1:1 and 1:24 (43:3).

He is next swept along in the vision and sees the divine glory resting in the Holy of Holies (43:5).

43:7 witnesses the enthronement of Yahweh and hears God's declaration of kingship over Israel. God will dwell among His people and be their king.

Skipping ahead to chapter 44 we read,

Ezekiel 44

44:1 Then He brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces the east; and it was shut.

44:2 The LORD said to me, "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the LORD God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut.

The east gate through which Yahweh had entered is to remain closed (but also see 46:1ff.). Prior to Yahweh's arrival, there had apparently been no restrictions on passage through this gate. Once Yahweh has made His grand entrance into His temple, however, no one else may enter through the same gate; it has become holy. Secondly, the closed gate declares the permanence of Yahweh's residence within the temple.

Ezekiel 47

47:1 Then he brought me back to the door of the house; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced east. And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar.

47:2 He brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate by way of the gate that faces east. And behold, water was trickling from the south side.

47:3 When the man went out toward the east with a line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he led me through the water, water reaching the ankles.

47:4 Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, water reaching the knees. Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, water reaching the loins.

47:5 Again he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not ford, for the water had risen, enough water to swim in, a river that could not be forded.

47:6 He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he brought me back to the bank of the river.

47:7 Now when I had returned, behold, on the bank of the river there were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

47:8 Then he said to me, "These waters go out toward the eastern region and go down into the Arabah; then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea, and the waters of the sea become fresh.

47:9 "It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there and the others become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes.

...

47:12 By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing."

In chapter 47 Ezekiel was brought to the temple's entrance. There he noticed a small stream of water moving eastward from under the south side of the temple entrance threshold. The stream passed by the south side of the altar of sacrifice in the inner court, through the outer court, and out of the temple complex along the south side of the outer eastern gate. Near the temple the water was just trickling (the word Ezekiel uses to describe it is the sound that water makes when gurgling out of a bottle).

Then the escort led Ezekiel to explore the extent of the river. He was using a measuring line to mark off intervals at about one third of a mile each. At each interval the messenger took Ezekiel out into the stream to examine its depth. The depth increased at each interval from ankle deep, to knee deep, to waist deep, and finally it became so deep that someone would have to swim to keep his head above water. Eventually, the stream became a river of such magnitude that it could not be forded.

When Ezekiel returned, the river was lined on both sides with trees bearing every kind of fruit. The leaves of the trees didn't wither and bore fruit every month the year. The fruit provided food and healing (v.12).

Everything that came in contact with it teemed with life; “every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish.” Even the salt marshes and the Dead Sea, into which the river flowed, became fresh.

“The river is similar to the rivers in the Garden of Eden and the eternal state. In Genesis 2:8-10 God provided a river that gave life to the land in the perfect environment. That life-giving river dried up with the fall of man. Now, in Ezekiel and the Revelation, the full redemption of the land would be completed (cf. Rom. 8:19-22). Once again the divine life-giving waters would flow from the source of God's residence, the temple, and heal the land” (Alexander, 990).

Revelation 22:1-4 describes a similar scene: “Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.”

The difference between the two accounts is that Ezekiel saw the river issuing from the temple, while John saw it coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The point of both is that the source of redemption and healing come from God and his throne.