

ONE FINAL LOOK AT THE MILLENNIAL HOLY LAND

Ezekiel 47: 1—48: 35 -- Pastor Richard P. Carlson

As we come to this final message from the prophet Ezekiel, I want to double back to Ezekiel 46: 9. There we read, “But when the people of the land come before the Lord at the appointed feasts, he who enters by way of the north gate to worship shall go out by way of the south gate. And he who enters by way of the south gate shall go out by way of the north gate. Now one shall return by way of the gate by which he entered but shall go straight out.” Beloved, even as we come to the Lord’s Table today on this first Sunday in April, God help none of us to leave as we came. We must not return from worship the way we came. Things should be different because we have been with Jesus and we have met with Him who is present here by His Spirit, even as He will stand in His glorified body in the millennial temple.

As I come to Ezekiel 47, I thank God that in the millennial kingdom, this non-swimmer standing before you, will be able to swim, with no difficulties. As we study this picture in Ezekiel 47: 1-12, it reminds me so much of Revelation 22. Ezekiel deals with a millennial river flowing out from the right side of the temple from south of the altar. Revelation deals with the eternal state still further ahead of us when John was shown a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Notice the river starts as a trickle from the top of the high mountain of God in Jerusalem. (v. 1-2) I wish I could be reminded of when I first learned to swim. It has never happened yet for me. I can hold my breath and sink to the bottom of the water. I remember as a teenager at Camp Nathaniel in Kentucky. I would do a stupid thing because I was embarrassed to admit in front of others that I couldn’t swim. Others would swim around in the deep end. I would do a frightening thing looking back. I would take a running start and dive into the deep end at an angle and come up far enough toward the shallow end that I could walk on the bottom. Fortunately, I never drowned. If only I could tell you how I went from fear of the water to faith that my body could float and of trust in swimming. It has never happened yet. I had a swimming expert in Bloomington, Illinois who taught swimming tell me that my body composition is such, as many others, he said, that I sink rather than float. Nevertheless, I know the routine, that swimming should start by learning to float. Believe me, I am looking forward to being in this millennial river that flows out from under the altar in the millennial temple. I look forward to swimming there without any problems in my glorified body that I will have when we the Bride return to earth to reign with Him 1000

years. This river speaks of many things to my soul, but I can only think of Jesus standing in the temple on the great day of the feast in John 7: 37-38. I wonder if in the millennial temple He will do the same and repeat His challenge, “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’” John 7: 39 adds, “But this Jesus spoke of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

In the millennial temple, these healing waters and this life giving stream coming from the Holy Spirit of God is beautiful. I once read a message by Pastor Brian Bell that speaks of the source, the course, and the force of these waters. There’s no use trying to reinvent the wheel. I love those words. I want to speak on these three aspects of this millennial river before wrapping up the rest of this amazing prophetic book in Ezekiel 47:13 to 48:35. What are they?

LOOK AT THE SOURCE OF THIS MILLENNIAL RIVER. (I.) In Ezekiel 47: 1, I read, “Then he brought me back to the door of the house/temple; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east. And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar.” Beloved, as you know today, Jerusalem has no natural river flowing down from it, like many ancient national capitals did. Yet here in the millennium, after the mountain of God has risen up following the massive earthquake when Jesus returns, here is flowing a supernatural river, flowing down from the altar of God, from the House, the Temple of God.

Whenever God is the source of a divine river, watch out. There is healing in that stream. There is life giving power, the power of the Holy Spirit. Where there is barrenness, there will now be fruit. Where there is bitterness, it will be healed. Barrenness will turn to a loveliness and where there is bitter sterility, there will be sweet productivity. As we launch into this chapter where the water starts, verse 2 as a trickle, be certain, God has some final lessons to teach us about Who He is, and Who He wants to be in us—a river of living water. I love to sing, “I’ve got a river of life flowing out of me, makes the lame to walk and the blind to see, Opens prison doors, sets the captive free, I’ve got a river of life flowing out of me, Spring up oh well, within my soul, spring up oh well, and make me whole, spring oh well and

give to me, Thy life abundantly. Consider the source. Look at where this river flows from. Secondly,

LOOK AT THE COURSE OF THIS MILLENNIAL RIVER. (II.)

Notice in verse 2, “And he brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around by the outside to the outer gate by way of the gate that faces east. And behold, water was trickling from the south side.” What direction is this millennial river going to flow? Did you say east? You’re right. Dead right. Even Dead is the right word if you’ve traveled to Jerusalem. What is straight east of Jerusalem? There is Jericho and the north end of the Dead Sea. Notice in verse 3, “When the man went out toward the east with a line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, make those millennial cubits. A millennial cubit is a normal cubit of 18 inches plus a hand span of 8 inches, so that’s 24 inches or 2 feet. A thousand millennial cubits is 2000 feet. That’s more than a third of a mile because a mile is 5, 280 feet. Look at verse 3. “And he led me through the water, water reaching the ankles. So stay the course with me. How deep is the water a third of a mile from the temple going east? It’s about 6 inches deep. Again, verse 4 he measured a thousand millennial cubits and he led me through the water, water reaching the knees at 2/3rds of a mile. Now the water is picking up tributary streams coming down from the top of Mt. Zion and the river is flowing to the Jordan Valley. It is increasing as it runs east, now it is 18–24 inches deep. Well, the man showed Ezekiel again the depth of the water at another 1000 millennial cubits, v. 4 so that’s over a mile now—and the water is reaching his loins or his waist. I get the feeling this building river is growing faster and flowing faster than any river in the amount of distance from where it starts.

Verse 5 states that he measured another 1000 millennial cubits, we’re up to 8,000 feet, a mile and a half and the river was too high for Ezekiel or you and me to ford. For the water had risen, enough water to swim in, a river that could not be forded. Apparently, Ezekiel swam with his guide, until v. 6, the guide said, “Son of man, have you seen this?” Then he brought Ezekiel back to the bank of the river. V. 7 tells us that when Ezekiel returned, behold on the bank of the river, there were very many trees on the one side and on the other side of the river as the river flowed on down to the Jordan plain, which is the deepest place on earth, below sea level. The Dead Sea, also called the Salt Sea, is a salt lake bordering Jordan to the east and Israel and the West Bank to the west. Its surface and shores are 1,388 ft. below sea level. The shore of the Dead Sea is the lowest elevation on the Earth's surface on dry

land. The Dead Sea is 1,237 ft deep, the deepest hyper-saline lake in the world. With 33.7% salinity, it is also one of the world's saltiest bodies of water. It is 8.6 times saltier than the ocean. This salinity makes for a harsh environment in which animals cannot flourish, hence its name—the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is 42 miles long and 11 miles wide at its widest point. It lies in the Jordan Rift Valley, and its main tributary is the Jordan River. That source of the Jordan River will not be the main tributary of this sea in the millennium. Talk about transformation. Follow with me into verses 8-12. Can you imagine the Dead Sea becoming a fresh water lake or sea? Verse 9 is striking. “And 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. Verse 10 tells us that this will be like “Miracle Mile,” on the North Platte River, but this will be 42 miles long of fishing paradise. Beloved, I confess, I am getting excited about the millennium. This feature of the millennium is down my alley. These fish will be many, big ones like the huge fish of the Great Sea—that’s the Mediterranean Sea.

Ezekiel knew this area. Engedi is a town midway down the western coast of the Dead Sea and it bears that name today. I have been there and floated on the salt water, but I got salt in my eyes that burned for hours. From Engedi back north to Eneglaim, known as Ain Feshka today, this is north near a fresh water spring near Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. A fisherman’s paradise. Wow! Do I love the Lord’s ideas?! Interestingly, verse 11, the swamps and marsh areas of the Dead Sea will not become fresh, they will be left for salt, which I love on my fried fish. Chuck Smith suggests that perhaps we might want to open a worm stand on the Dead Sea in the millennium. Notice verse 12 which sounds like a foretaste of glory in heaven in Rev. 22: 2 which we read earlier.

Beloved, do you see God’s redeemed balance of nature. It is the picture of a Spirit filled and Spirit controlled Christian life. I’ve been to the Dead Sea. To picture the area as mostly farmland is a miracle beyond belief. The source and the course of this river is like Pentecost, when God opened the floodgates of Glory and sent down His Spirit. The river is God’s channel to transform the Dead Sea, just like we as believers become God’s channels as He flows by His Spirit through us as consecrated believers to sinners, dead in trespasses and sins. Our job and our joy is to communicate new life and abundant life from Jesus to unbelievers walking in spiritual death, barrenness and unfruitfulness. Thirdly, and lastly,

LOOK AT THE FORCE OF THIS MILLENNIAL RIVER. (III.)

Ezekiel 47: 3-5 gives us the power and force which starts as a trickle and goes to the ankles, on to the knees, on to waist deep, and finally swimmers only. For babes in Christ, there are shallows for wading, for children, the knee deep water is plenty deep for splashing. For the Pastor Rich Carlson's in the millennium, the waist deep water will be for those of us learning to swim when we don't have body chemistry to let us drown when we sink. For the well trained swimmers, there is plenty of water to swim out into the deep where we can let the shore line go. As we mature, God wants us to go from putting our toes in the water of eternal life, to being puddlers, beginning swimmers, and finally well-trained swimmers and life guards for the Lord. The Holy Spirit wants us to grow into full Christian manhood and womanhood, enjoying the deep waters of His Holy Spirit.

Some young believers jump into the river of eternal life and go to the deep water right away. Other believers spend all their lives wading in the shallows rather than learning to enjoy the deep water. Fullness of joy is downstream a bit. The deeper the water, the deeper we go into the love of Jesus, yeilding to His Holy Spirit. This water and its power doesn't open up to the name it claim it folks. No, the force of the water is there if we just jump in. We don't have to beg and plead for more force. No, if we are in the deep water, there is no restraint of the Holy Spirit for how deep we can go into God and His grace and love. I see smiling faces all around these waters, beloved. Do you know Jesus and His love?

From Ezekiel 47: 13-23, we read about the divisions and geographical changes in the land. Under the Abrahamic covenant, Israel was promised the land in an unconditional promise. God made the promise again in Deuteronomy 30: 1-10. The land is divided equally between the 12 tribes, with Joseph receiving a double portion, v. 13 through his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. God then assigns our inheritance through Himself, Jehovah Shammah. He will keep His covenant to Abraham and give Israel all her land without it being contested again. The vital thing about this inheritance to Israel described further in Ezekiel 48: 1-35 will not be that the river or the borders of the river, but the presence, the glorious presence of Almighty God. Jehovah Shammah means, "The Lord is there," Ezekiel 48: 35.

Jehovah Shammah (The Lord is there) is one of 9 special names of God in the Old Testament. Jehovah Jireh "The Lord will provide/see to it" (Gen.22:14) Jehovah Rophe "The Lord who heals" (Ex.15:26) Jehovah Nissi

“The Lord our banner” (Ex.17:15) Jehovah M’Kaddesh “The Lord who sanctifies” (Lev.20:8) Jehovah Shalom “The Lord our peace” (Judges 6:24) Jehovah Tsidkenu “The Lord our righteousness” (Jer.23:6) Jehovah Rohi “The Lord my shepherd” (Ps.23:1) Jehovah Sabaoth “The Lord of hosts/armies” (Ps.46:7). You remember, Jehovah Shammah departed from Jerusalem because of the sins of the people. When Jesus returns in the second coming, He is back, Jehovah Shammah—The Lord is there. Ezekiel 48: 35. Now in the millennium, the Lord is back to dwell with us and with His people Israel. His blessing will be on His bride, but especially on Israel. Jesus will now be pre-eminent in Jerusalem, and His presence will command the attention of the world. So beloved, lift up your heads. Look up, suffering believers. Rejoice in the face of your discouragement. Jesus will soon come again. He will restore righteousness and institute a new sold out worship of Himself. Jesus will comfort every believer and wipe away every tear. Joy, peace, courage, comfort, gladness and song will be our eternal possession—not only for the millennium, but for all eternity. Amen.