

Ezekiel 45:6-8, 47:1-12, 48:15-35 - Yahweh Shammah And The River Of Life

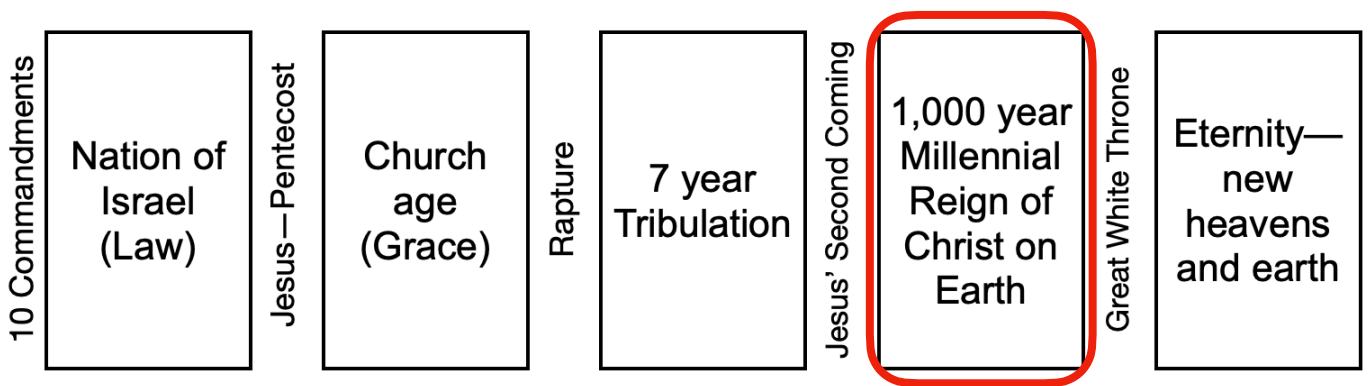
Memory Verse

Ezekiel 36:26-27 NKJV

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Introduction

Ezekiel chapters 40-48 describe places, buildings, land allocations, and worship that are a part of Jesus' Millennial Kingdom, when He comes back to earth from heaven and He reigns for a thousand years on a beautifully renovated earth. The chart below shows when this fits in God's plan of the ages (red outline). The vertical writing represents the events that mark the transition from one time period (or dispensation) to the next.



Outline of Ezekiel 40-48

Chapter 40—The measurement of the courts of the temple

Chapter 41—The measurements of the temple

Chapter 42—The outer court being described

Chapter 43—The glory of God returns to the temple and the altar described.

Chapter 44—Only the sons of Zadok will be allowed to go into the inner court; the other priests were not faithful.

Chapter 45—Describes how the land around the temple/city is divided up, and that the Passover will be one of the feasts observed each year.

Chapter 46—Describes the sacrificial offerings that will be made, and how the temple will be closed throughout the week and only open on the sabbath.

Chapter 47—Describes the river of living water that flows from the temple, and the boundaries of the Land of Israel.

Chapter 48—Describes the divisions of the lands given to each of the 12 tribes of Israel, and the gates of the city of Jerusalem.

Revision

So far we have seen in Ezekiel chapters 40-44:16:

- The angel give the measurements and pattern for the Millennial Temple to Ezekiel (40-42)
- God (Jesus) comes to take His rightful place on the throne which is inside the temple, which He calls "My Throne". The throne represents authority over all creation. (43:1-12)

- The altar for burnt offerings and the instructions for its consecration including animal sacrifices (43:13-27)
- The shut eastern gate and the prince. The outer eastern gate of the temple complex will be shut forever because Jesus went in there, *and He will never leave—a picture of our eternal security*. The prince (very likely king David) will have access to the chamber of the gate where he will eat before the LORD. (44:1-3)
- Only the family of priests who had been faithful in Ezekiel's day, the sons of Zadok (whose name means righteous), would be allowed to serve in the temple itself. They would enjoy the glorious, delightful, heavenly, and extraordinary privilege of ministering and fellowshiping in the direct presence of the LORD Jesus in the temple itself. The other priests who had followed the rest of the nation into idolatry in Ezekiel's day would be limited to serving the people, as they loved to do when they offered sacrifices to the idols on behalf of the people. Each of us must choose—*will I be a man pleaser or a God pleaser—will I be motivated by what pleases God, or by what pleases man*. (44:4-16)
- Real holiness starts in the heart and is expressed in; who we marry, our appearance, teaching and doing what is right from the Word of God, and most importantly total surrender to the LORD God so that we are trusting and walking in His strength (rest) and not our own (sweat). (44:17-27)
- God promised that He would be the priest's inheritance, that He would provide for them. The same is true for the believer today. Will I trust that God will provide for all my needs, and that what He has waiting for me is far greater and far more glorious than anything that this world can offer me. (44:28-31)
- Worship is willing obedience motivated by gratitude and love for God (see Genesis 22). For my life to be an acceptable act of worship (see Romans 12:1), I must be:
 1. Just and righteous (godly and not worldly) in thought, word, and deed (45:8-12)
 2. Willing to Sacrifice - it must cost me something, the cost being giving up what I want so I can do what God wants (45:13-17)
 3. Contrite (penitent, repentant) - keep short accounts with God and others (45:18-20)
 4. Full of gratitude as I remember all that God has done and will do for me (45:21-25)
 5. Resting in the Lord (the Sabbath reality), meaning I live by grace and rely on His power (faith in God, not law keeping by self-effort) (46:1-11)
 6. Feeding on God's Word daily so I don't forget (46:12-15)
 7. Set free—the year of Jubilee or Liberty is a picture of Christ setting me free from the bondage of sin (46:16-18)
 8. In fellowship with God and others—private and public worship (46:19-24)
- The distribution of the land of Israel—the 12 tribes and the holy district (45:1-8, 47:13-48:35)

Introduction

Last week we started looking at the holy district, a 13 km square section of land in the centre of Israel that was divided three ways. The northern section will be set aside for the Levites, the middle section for the priests of Zadok and the temple, and the southern section for the city of Jerusalem. This week we cover:

1. The land for the city (45:6, 48:15-20)
2. The land for the prince (45:7-8, 48:21-22)
3. The gates of the city and its name—Yahweh Shammah (48:30-35)
4. The river of life (47:1-12)

1. The land for the city

Ezekiel 45:6 NKJV

“You shall appoint as the property of the city an area five thousand cubits wide [2.5 km] and twenty-five thousand long [13 km], adjacent to the district of the holy section; it shall belong to the whole house of Israel.

Ezekiel 48:15-20 NKJV

¹⁵ “The five thousand cubits in width that remain, along the edge of the twenty-five thousand, shall be for general use by the city, for dwellings and common-land; and the city shall be in the centre. ¹⁶ These shall be its measurements: the north side four thousand five hundred cubits [2.5 km], the south side four thousand five hundred, the east side four thousand five hundred, and the west side four thousand five hundred. ¹⁷ The common-land of the city shall be: to the north two hundred and fifty cubits, to the south two hundred and fifty, to the east two hundred and fifty, and to the west two hundred and fifty. ¹⁸ The rest of the length, alongside the district of the holy section, shall be ten thousand cubits to the east and ten thousand to the west. It shall be adjacent to the district of the holy section, and its produce shall be food for the workers of the city. ¹⁹ The workers of the city, from all the tribes of Israel, shall cultivate it. ²⁰ The entire district shall be twenty-five thousand cubits by twenty-five thousand cubits, foursquare. You shall set apart the holy district with the property of the city.

45:6 and 48:19 It shall belong to the whole house of Israel ... The workers of the city, from all the tribes of Israel, shall cultivate it: The city of Jerusalem itself would be the heritage or possession of all Israel, not any one particular tribe.

48:19 The workers of the city: Also notice that the people living in the city will have to both work and/or grow their own food. There will be no social security. If you don't work, then you won't eat, which is how it should be (see 2 Thessalonians 3:10). There will be a communal area either side of the city for growing food, and it seems that each family will be expected to provide for themselves. It seems that there will be no poor during the Millennium; all people will be given provision to be able to provide for themselves.

v 16-17 These shall be its measurements: The city of Jerusalem itself will be about 2.5 km square, or 6.25 km² (v 16 - 4,500 cubits per side). It will have a strip of common land about 125 metres wide around all four sides (v 17 - 250 cubits). East and west of the city of Jerusalem will be land for cultivation, each side measuring about 5km (10,000 cubits) by 2.5 km (5,000 cubits), it's use being to grow food for the multi-tribal population of those living in Jerusalem (v 18-19). We'll learn more important information about the city of Jerusalem later.

Again, we can see that the Millennial Jerusalem can't be the same as the New Jerusalem that is a part of the New Heavens and Earth; the Millennial Jerusalem is so much smaller—2.5 km square compared to 2,200 km square and high for the eternal New Jerusalem.

“Notice once again the great minuteness of detail. This is more than strange, it is inexplicable, if all the statements are to be taken symbolically. As far as we are aware, no such abundance of details occurs anywhere else in Scripture outside the instructions for the construction of the tabernacle and its priestly service, which no orthodox expositor feels called upon to interpret other than with strict literalness. Then it is only consistent to do the same here.” (Feinberg)

2. The land for the prince

Ezekiel 45:7-8 NKJV

7 “The prince shall have a section on one side and the other of the holy district and the city’s property; and bordering on the holy district and the city’s property, extending westward on the west side and eastward on the east side, the length shall be side by side with one of the tribal portions, from the west border to the east border. 8 The land shall be his possession in Israel; and My princes shall no more oppress My people, but they shall give the rest of the land to the house of Israel, according to their tribes.”

Ezekiel 48:21-22 NKJV

21 “The rest shall belong to the prince, on one side and on the other of the holy district and of the city’s property, next to the twenty-five thousand cubits of the holy district as far as the eastern border, and westward next to the twenty-five thousand as far as the western border, adjacent to the tribal portions; it shall belong to the prince. It shall be the holy district, and the sanctuary of the temple shall be in the centre. 22 Moreover, apart from the possession of the Levites and the possession of the city which are in the midst of what belongs to the prince, the area between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin shall belong to the prince.

The prince (Ezekiel 44:1-3) receives two large sections of land either side of the holy district. Both sections of land are about 13 km north to south. The western section borders the western side of the holy district, and extends all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. The eastern section of the land given to the prince borders the eastern border of the holy district and extends all the way to the dead sea (see diagram). The northern borders will be the land belonging to the tribe of Judah, and the southern borders will be the land belonging to the tribe of Benjamin.

The prince is most likely King David (see Ezekiel 34:24, 37:25).

v 8 **My princes shall no longer oppress My people:** As we saw previously, the kings, civil leaders, and priests were often corrupt, and oppressed the people. God will not tolerate any corruption among leaders during Christ’s Millennial Reign.

3. The gates of the city and it’s name—THE LORD IS THERE [Yahweh Shammah]

Ezekiel 48:30-35 NKJV

“These are the exits of the city. On the north side, measuring four thousand five hundred cubits ³¹ (the gates of the city shall be named after the tribes of Israel), the three gates northward: one gate for Reuben, one gate for Judah, and one gate for Levi; ³² on the east side, four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates: one gate for Joseph, one gate for Benjamin, and one gate for Dan; ³³ on the south side, measuring four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates: one gate for Simeon, one gate for Issachar, and one gate for Zebulun; ³⁴ on the west side, four thousand five hundred cubits with their three gates: one gate for Gad, one gate for Asher, and one gate for Naphtali. ³⁵ All the way around shall be eighteen thousand cubits; and the name of the city from that day shall be: THE LORD IS THERE [Yahweh Shammah].

The twelve gates represent the twelve sons born to Jacob; Levi is included and Joseph is used to represent the tribes of both Ephraim and Manasseh (see diagram). This is in contrast to the division of the land, where Levi was not given land, but both Ephraim and Manasseh were.

In Old Testament times, cities would only have one main entrance so it would be easier to defend. This city with 12 gates is very unusual considering what Ezekiel was accustomed to. Also, the twelve gates “beautifully symbolises at the same time in visible form the unity and harmony in the nation so long divided. All the ancient rivalries, contentions and jealousies will be gone, and blessed unity will prevail.” (Feinberg)

Once again, this Millennial Jerusalem is different to the Eternal New Jerusalem. “All this is suggestive of, but not the same as, the eternal state as described in Revelation 21:12–14. The whole passage leads us to compare Revelation 21, with its description of a new heaven and a new earth and the vision of the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It too had twelve gates, named after the twelve tribes of Israel, but it also had twelve foundations inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” (Taylor)

v 35 **And the name of the city from that day shall be: THE LORD IS THERE [Yahweh Shammah]:** “**The Lord is There:** Throughout the larger section of Ezekiel 40–48, the name of the city of Jerusalem is never specifically mentioned. Here we discover why; God will give the city a new name. It will be known as *Yahweh Shammah*, “Yahweh is There.” In that day, the overwhelming character and idea of Jerusalem would be that God was there. ...

The principle will carry on into the eternal state. *And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.* (Revelation 21:3)” (David Guzik)

v 35 **THE LORD IS THERE**—Yahweh Shammah or “The Lord is present”, what does it mean? “The name tells of complete satisfaction; that of God, and that of man. God is at rest among His people. His original purpose realised. Man is seen at rest in God, his true destiny reached.” (Morgan)

This is important in more than one way. Firstly, it is yet another assurance to the nation of Israel that God would never leave them. Secondly, it speaks of the kind of spiritual intimacy that the nation of Israel, and whoever else desires to, will have with God. This is what God has been desiring of His people Israel for a long time.

The Millennial kingdom, at least in Jerusalem, will be characterised by complete and utter contentment and satisfaction. This is also what God wants each believer to experience in this world right now.

Application: Yahweh Shammah—God is with each believer—the Holy Spirit in us

Yahweh Shammah is very similar to another name for God, Emanuel, which means “God with us”. *We should never forget that God’s great desire and delight is to be where His people are.*

Isaiah 7:14 NKJV

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel

Matthew 1:23 NKJV

Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

Yahweh Shammah fulfils God's eternal plan for mankind: "The name "YHWH-Shammah" may very well be the most exciting and comforting name God has given us. Why? Because in "YHWH-Shammah" is the promise and pledge of God completing the work He began in us at creation, to bring us to our final rest and glory; for as the Catechism says: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.""
(www.myredeemerlives.com)

Remember that God was with Adam and Eve in their perfection, walking with them and talking with them everyday in the cool of the evening. Sin subsequently separated man from God, but God is working to restore this mankind's broken relationship with Him.

What does this mean for us in our every day lives? "God is present and with you all the time. He is your Yahweh Shammah—the Lord is there. He is with you when you get a bad doctor report. He is there when you have to make major life-changing decisions. When you are lonely He is there. When you are tempted He is there. When you are joyful He is there. He is always there for us, offering His comfort, His love, His guidance, and His strength." (www.scripturalgrace.com)

This is a beautiful way for God to finish the book of Ezekiel—the final word is, Yahweh Shammah—the Lord is there. What a comforting promise to a very disobedient people. New Testament believers have been given the same confidence that God will never leave them either, no matter how unfaithful.

Hebrews 13:5-6 NKJV

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "***I will never leave you nor forsake you.***"⁶ So we may boldly say: "***The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?***"

There are two main points I would like us to understand here. Firstly, how is it possible for a believer to **conduct** themselves **without covetousness** or greediness? This covetousness or discontentment takes two forms; lusting after or desiring or craving the things of this world, and/or believing that they can't be happy and content until a certain problem or difficult circumstance in their life is resolved—a work, family, health, relationship, or any personal issue.

The answer is very simple—to **conduct** myself **without covetousness** I must **be content with such things as I have**. *Being content necessarily means that I'm already completely satisfied and therefore cannot be covetous—if I already have everything I want or need, then there is nothing else to want or need. Conversely, if I am covetous or not fully satisfied it necessarily means that I'm not content.*

The second point regards the "*key that unlocks the door to contentment and a fulfilled life, no matter what our circumstances.*" The Bible doesn't just say, "suck it up, just accept your imperfect and often difficult life—drink a cup of concrete and harden up". It doesn't just simplistically tell us to "don't worry, be happy", and it doesn't just tell us to, "become a monk and spend your entire life unsuccessfully attempting to rid yourself of your natural human desires by sheer willpower." No, God has given believers a much better solution, a much easier way to experience complete satisfaction and contentment.

The key to contentment is in the words, “**be content with such things as you have.**” This begs the question, “What things does the believer already have?” The answer to this is nothing less than totally mind-blowing and life changing once we comprehend it—“**I will never leave you nor forsake you.**” ⁶ **So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”**

Consider this: For God to promise the believer that He will never leave them, it must mean that He is already present with them, He is their Yahweh Shammah. God’s solution for our contentment is to give us something so much more greater, better, and wonderful than anything this world can offer, that we simply don’t look to temporary things to satisfy us, because we already have something, or more accurately, Someone, Who is more than able to meet our deepest needs and longings—God has given us Himself—the Holy Spirit lives in the heart of every believer.

So in Hebrews 13:5-6 we have several reasons why the believer should always be content:

1. God is always with them and will never leave them—the promise of eternal security
2. Since they have God’s help (**the Lord is my helper**), then they don’t need the world’s help, strength, might, refuge or protection
3. They don’t need to fear anything in this world because they are protected by God (**I will not fear. What can man do to me?**)

So with God as their Yahweh Shammah, the ever present God, the believer has all the strength and protection they could ever want. But there’s so much more. It is often said that a man’s greatest needs are to be loved and accepted, and to have hope. In God’s presence, with the Holy Spirit living in our hearts, the believer can experience love, acceptance into God’s family, and hope to a limitless degree—only limited by their willingness to receive. This is implied and assumed in the Hebrews passage, but is made clear in others.

Romans 5:5 NKJV—Hope and love accompany God’s presence

Now **hope** does not disappoint, because the **love** of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Galatians 4:6 NKJV—Adoption into God’s family: full acceptance

And because you are **sons**, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “**Abba, Father!**”

1 Corinthians 2:9-10, 12 NKJV—God freely gives us so much more than the world

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. ... ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

How sad that many times believers don’t recognise or appreciate God’s presence nearly as much as they should. How is it possible that believers can so often ignore or be so unaware of such a wonderful God who is ever-present with them? How is it possible that believers can ever imagine that God has deserted them in the hard times. How deeply must believers grieve the Holy Spirit with their unfamiliarity, lack of faith in God’s promises, and emotional distance or coldness.

However, this contentment is something that must be *learned*. Like Paul, we must learn to be content—*we must both learn to recognise God's presence and also accept it by faith when we can't feel Him.*

Philippians 4:11-13 AMP

Not that I am implying that I was in any personal want, **for I have learned how to be content** (satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or disquieted) in whatever state I am.

12 I know how to be abased and live humbly in straitened [poverty stricken] circumstances, and I know also how to enjoy plenty and live in abundance. **I have learned in any and all circumstances the secret of facing every situation**, whether well-fed or going hungry, having a sufficiency and enough to spare or going without and being in want.

13 **I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me [I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me; I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency].**

Paul is saying that he is self-sufficient from the world because he has found his sufficiency in Christ—"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Notice that Paul had to learn how to be content, which is really the same as learning to rest and trust in Christ *in all different kinds of circumstances*—this is the secret to contentment.

So how do I learn to be content and fully and completely satisfied in this life? I will never be satisfied or content until I understand that Jesus is all I need. However, I will never understand that Jesus is all I need until Jesus is all I have, because I have been conditioned by the world, family, school, and my flesh to believe that I need many other things to be content and satisfied. Thus, for God to help me to learn to be content, He must take away from me those things that I rely on so that I learn not to trust in those things. It's so easy to trust in or find satisfaction in our families, friends, jobs, financial security, and accomplishments instead of Christ. Now we come to look at probably the greatest example of someone who was trained by God in the art of contentment. Let's see how God taught Jacob how to be content; how to trust, rest in, and rely on Him.

Genesis 28:10-19 NKJV—*Jacob is forced to leave his family and is all alone*

Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. ¹² Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

¹³ And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed [Seed] all the families of the earth shall be blessed. ¹⁵ **Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go**, and will bring you back to this land; **for I will not leave you** until I have done what I have spoken to you."

¹⁶ **Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."** ¹⁷ **And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"**

¹⁸ Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹ And he called the name of that place Bethel [house of God]; but the name of that city had been Luz [to depart or turn away] previously.

What an amazing change in Jacob when God stripped almost everything away from him. He went from having everything to nothing except the clothes on his back. After lying to his father Isaac and cheating Esau out of his birthright, Jacob lost his family and his comfortable lifestyle. Jacob was depressed and scared. He had depended on his own smarts but now had come to “rock” bottom, literally, with a stone for a pillow.

We all need to happen to us what happened to Jacob in at least a spiritual sense; *we need to wake up from our spiritual slumber and realise that God was there all along.* Up until this point, Jacob had been oblivious to God’s presence. He was satisfied with his human relationships—he was mummy’s boy. He was satisfied with his direction and provision in life—he received his father’s blessing through deceit. Nothing in Scripture gives any indication that Jacob had any kind of relationship with God up till this point, even though he grew up in a believing household (Isaac and Rebecca). However everything changed on that lonely night, in those depressing circumstances, when Jacob’s eyes were opened to the reality of God’s presence—**Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.**

Resting in the Lord—the fulfilment of the Sabbath: Contentment is another very simple test to diagnose the health of the believer’s relationship with God—those who are trusting, depending on, and resting in the Lord will discover and experience that their relationship with God is all they need.

Deuteronomy 31:6, 8 NKJV

Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. **He will not leave you nor forsake you.** ... ⁸ And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, **He will not leave you nor forsake you;** do not fear nor be dismayed.”

Joshua 1:5-6a NKJV

No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so **I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.** ⁶ Be strong and of good courage...

4. The River of Life (47:1-12)

Ezekiel 47:1-2 NKJV—The river flowing from under the entrance of the temple

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.

v 1 **There was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple:** This river is nothing short of a miracle. Firstly there is no physical source, its volume increases as it gets further away from the temple, and it has life giving or healing qualities.

There was never any river flowing from the previous temples. Also this Millennial river of life is different from the river of water of life in Revelation 22, which will proceed from the throne of God (there will be no temple then).

We could say that this Millennial river was predicted in the Old Testament:
There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God (Psalm 46:4)
A fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord (Joel 3:18)
And in that day it shall be—that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:8)

v 2 **Running out on the right side:** “The waters seem to have been at first *in small quantity*; for the words imply that they *oozed* or *dropped out*. They were at first so small that they came, *drop by drop*; but they increased.” (Clarke)

Ezekiel 47:3-6 NKJV—The river rapidly increases in depth and width

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. **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.

Here we have a description of the river’s increasing depth. As Ezekiel’s guide followed the river eastward as it flowed away from the temple, he stopped every 500m or half a kilometre (1,000 cubits). This is what Ezekiel saw and experienced:

500m from the temple—ankle deep
1000m from the temple—knee deep
1500m from the temple—waist deep
2000m from the temple—very deep, a river that could not be crossed.

v 3-4 **He brought me through the waters:** It’s interesting that Ezekiel was not walking next to the river, but in the river. As he continued walking through the river it got deeper and deeper.

“This rapid increase in depth—from small trickle of a stream to ankle depth, to knee depth, to waist depth, all in the course of about a mile (or 1.5 kilometers)—is *miraculous*. We read nothing of other streams leading into this; it is a miraculous and abundant provision.” (David Guzik)

“Why was it necessary to bring Ezekiel through the waters in vision? The purpose was to reveal to him both the size and depth of the river. The trickle (the literal of ‘ran out’ of v. 2 is ‘trickled forth’) had become a veritable river during the measuring activity of the man in the vision.” (Feinberg)

v 6 **He brought me and returned me to the bank of the river:** Eventually the river got too deep for Ezekiel and Ezekiel was led to the bank of the river.

v 6 **Have you seen this?:** This is an instruction to think about what he had just experienced. Indeed there is a lot to think about. We’ll come back to this soon.

Ezekiel 47:7-12 NKJV—The life giving and healing power of the river

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. ¹⁰ It shall be that fishermen will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be places for spreading their nets. Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceedingly many. ¹¹ But its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given over to salt. 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.”

v 7, 12 **Many trees on one side and the other ... 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:** Ezekiel gets out of the river and notices the many amazing trees that grew along both sides of the river.

There is an obvious parallel here to Psalm 1, where the person who turns from the things of the world and instead puts down their roots into God’s Word (and so finds contentment in their relationship with God) will be just like the trees planted by this river.

Psalm 1:1-3 NKJV

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

² But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. ³ He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

The river also is a picture of the living water (the Holy Spirit) that Jesus promised.

John 7:37-39 NKJV

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

v 8 **When it reaches the [Dead] sea, its waters are healed:** The Dead Sea where nothing lives will be healed and become fruitful, with a multitude of fish. This is a literal snapshot of the environmental restoration that will take place after Jesus comes back at His Second Coming (the end of the seven year Tribulation)—“So they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden’ (Ezekiel 36:35).

This is also a great picture of the power of the gospel to bring life to spiritually dead people—“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

v 11 **Its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given over to salt:** Interestingly, parts of the Dead Sea would remain dead. We are not told why. However, I can think of a possible reason and application. Water does not flow through swamps and marshes—they are places where the water is stagnant and it stinks and breeds mosquitoes. The application could be that those areas of our lives that we keep to ourselves, the areas of our lives that we refuse to submit to God’s authority, will remain dead, stagnant, and smelly—those parts of our lives will fail to bear fruit.

Application: The river as a picture of growing in relationship with God

“Fundamentally, this shows us the miraculous nature of a real river in a real Messianic kingdom to come. Yet by spiritual analogy there is a powerful picture of increasing progress and depth in our spiritual life. It illustrates progression from ankles, to knees, to waist, to depths where one can no longer touch the ground and must swim. God’s people read this and feel a call to *go deeper*. They shouldn’t stop until they are *swimming*, carried along by God’s currents and comfortable in that place.” (David Guzik)

“We need the ankle-depths of walking to be exchanged for the knee-depths of praying; and these for the loin-depths of perfect purity; and these for the length, depth, breadth, and height of the love of Christ.” (Meyer)

Jon Courson has a great application. ““Have you seen this?” The Lord asks us the same question because that’s the order of what happens in our walk. We’re walking with Jesus and we get our feet wet up to our ankles.

“This is great,” we say. “I’m on solid ground. I’m standing in the Lord. I’m born again. My sins are forgiven. I’m on my way to heaven!”

Then the Lord says, “Let’s go a little deeper.” So He takes us down river a thousand cubits and says, “Go in again.” This time, we go up to our knees.

“I want you to learn what it means to pray—not only to stand, but now to pray because you’re aware of the challenges and problems and struggles of life.”

Then the Lord says, “We’re going deeper still.” So we walk in up to our loins—the place of reproduction. As we grow in the knowledge of God, as we stay in His Word, as we learn how to pray, we’re going to reproduce spiritually. If a congregation is healthy, it will naturally grow because healthy sheep naturally reproduce. It’s inevitable.

Then the Lord says, “There’s one more stop. This time you’re going over your head in water so deep you can swim in it. You can be refreshed by it, but you can no longer control it. You’re over your head.” Praying in the Spirit, dying to self, worshiping with consistency, walking in power—have you seen this?

Where are you? Are you up to your ankles? Have you just begun your walk with Jesus? If you have, that’s great—but move on. Get on your knees. Learn how to intercede, to pray and to be faithful in your devotional life. Are you a prayer warrior? Great, then start reproducing. Start witnessing and sharing. But if you’re still desiring more, take the plunge today. Step in deeper still to the place where you want to be used by the Lord no matter the price.

Where are you now? Where do you desire to be? The Lord will take you as far down the river as you want to go.”