

Introduction

This week is our annual sanctity of human life lesson titled “Values” featuring select passages from Ezekiel and Psalms. It will also wrap up our lesson series from Ezekiel, as next week we begin a new series from Daniel. Instead of an introduction to this week’s lesson, below are some thoughts from the last two chapters of Ezekiel.

The Healing River (Ezekiel 47:1-12)

*¹Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house (temple); and, behold, waters issued (flowed) out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood (faced) toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. ²Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. ³And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. ⁴Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. ⁵Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over (forded). ⁶And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. ⁷Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. ⁸Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. ⁹And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and everything shall live whither the river cometh. ¹⁰And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi even unto Eneglaim (places along the coast of the Dead Sea); they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. ¹¹But the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt. ¹²And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine. **Ezekiel 47:1-12***

These verses describe a great healing river flowing out from the temple and making its way to the Dead Sea (currently the saltiest body of water on earth, 9 times saltier than the ocean, it contains few plants and no fish), healing the waters so they teem with fish; a vivid illustration of the life-giving power of this heavenly flow. This prophecy is very similar to John’s vision of “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:” (Revelation 22:1-3). Other

scriptures such as Psalm 46:4, Isaiah 27:12-13, Joel 3:18, Zechariah 13:1, and Zechariah 14:8-9 also mention this great river of grace and forgiveness. The water and blood from Christ's side as He was pierced for our sins (John 19:34), make this healing stream possible. No matter how lifeless or hopeless our life may seem, Jesus, "*the fountain of living waters*" (Jeremiah 17:13), "*a well of water springing up into everlasting life*" (John 4:14) can make dead sinners alive and bring healing restoration, that we may "*be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season*" (Psalm 1:3).

The LORD is There (Ezekiel 48:35)

³⁵*It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there. Ezekiel 48:35*

Beyond man's sinful failures and God's righteous judgment, is His promise of restoration, the goal of redemptive history, to "*make all things new*" (Revelation 21:5). Fittingly the book of Ezekiel ends with the affirmation that when all is said and done, the Lord's Presence, personally and visibly, will be with His people forever, as John also proclaimed: "*And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*" (Revelation 21:3-4).

Shall We Gather At The River by Robert Lowry

Shall we gather at the river, Where bright angel feet have trod,
With it's crystal tide forever, Flowing by the throne of God?

On the margin of the river, Washing up it's silver spray,
We will walk and worship ever, All the happy golden day.

Ere we reach the shining river, Lay we every burden down;
Grace our spirits will deliver, And provide a robe and crown.

At the smiling of the river, Mirror of the Savior's face,
Saints, whom death will never sever, Lift their songs of saving grace.

Soon we'll reach the shining river, Soon our pilgrimage will cease;
Soon our happy hearts will quiver, With the melody of peace.

Refrain:

Yes, we'll gather at the river, The beautiful, the beautiful river;
Gather with the saints at the river, That flows by the throne of God...

Conclusion

Ezekiel reminds us that God is sovereign and in control of human history, moving it toward His final intended goal. Although evil may at times seem to flourish, God will ultimately triumph and establish His kingdom. Ezekiel ends with a glimpse into the glorious future that awaits all who accept Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord.

Please prayerfully consider meeting with us this week for 10:00 am Sunday School as we study God's word together from Ezekiel 16:20-21; 23:36-39; Psalm 139:13-16.

Last week's Sunday School attendance = 13

