

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

Commentary by Michael Sigler

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A Transforming Stream

Read Ezekiel 47:1, 3-12

Key verse: “Wherever the river flows, every living thing that moves will thrive. There will be great schools of fish, because when these waters enter the sea, it will be fresh. Wherever the river flows, everything will live” (Ezekiel 47:9).

In the prophet Ezekiel’s time, God judged the Hebrew people because of their sins of immorality, idolatry, and spiritual apostasy. This judgment included the exile of many of the Hebrew people to Babylon as well as the destruction of Jerusalem.

But in the later chapters of the book of Ezekiel, God gives the prophet a messages of hope that includes a vision of a rebuilt and restored temple in Jerusalem. This vision of a restored temple, recorded in Ezekiel 47:1, 3-12, is described and explained in the following commentary from *The Wesley Study Bible*:

47:1-7 – The tour [of the restored temple] now reaches its climax. Back at the entrance of the temple, Ezekiel sees water bubbling from beneath the temple threshold, flowing past the south side of the altar. Such a sight had never been seen on the temple mount. The tour moves back outside to the east gate, now shut since the entry of the divine glory (v. 2; 44:2), near where it had begun (40:5-6).

Water exits the east gate through which only the glory of God has passed. From here on walking east, attention is focused on the amazing growth of the stream and its astounding capacity to spawn life and fruitfulness (vv. 3-6). Within little more than a mile, the trickle from the temple has become a river Ezekiel cannot cross! As Ezekiel is led back along the bank, he sees many trees have sprung up along the stream (vv. 6b-7).

47:8-12 – There is more that Ezekiel cannot see. The guide tells him of re-creation wrought by the stream as it reaches the Jordan and flows down into the Arabah. The Dead Sea becomes a Sea of Life, best described in vocabulary straight from the creation account of Genesis 1 (vv. 8-10). And, by the river, the trees will be perennial sources of fruit, varied and fresh every month and never-ending sources of food and healing. The guide traces all of this life-giving bounty to the fact that the stream issues from the sanctuary of God. Clearly God is the source of life and healing.

Wherever God's presence may flow, life-giving, recreating power appears in utterly unpredictable ways.

Jesus tells us that, when He lives in us by the Holy Spirit, we can experience a similar infusion of saving, healing, life-giving power. Jesus said: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:37-38).

Jesus offers living water to all who will receive Him! It's what our world so badly needs.

The book *Sahara Unveiled* tells about two men whose truck broke down, leaving them stranded in the desert. As days passed, the two men became so thirsty and desperate for water that they drank the rusty anti-freeze from their truck's radiator. They were so desperately thirsty that they drank poison.

Spiritually, many people do something like that. They turn to poisonous substitutes like money, sex, drugs, and power to try to quench their spiritual thirst. But only Jesus can quench the deep spiritual thirst of the human heart. Let us come and drink! And having drunk our fill, let us offer "living water" to a world of people who are dying of thirst.

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