

# CHAPTER 47

In this chapter we have,

- I. The vision of the holy waters, their rise, extent, depth, and healing virtue, the plenty of fish in them, and an account of the trees growing on the banks of them (v. 1-12).
- II. An appointment of the borders of the land of Canaan, which was to be divided by lot to the tribes of Israel and the strangers that sojourned among them (v. 13-23).

## ~~340~~ EZEKIEL 47:1-12

### THE VISION OF THE HOLY WATERS

This part of Ezekiel's vision must so necessarily have a mystical and spiritual meaning that thence we conclude the other parts of his vision have a mystical and spiritual meaning also; for it cannot be applied to the waters brought by pipes into the temple for the washing of the sacrifices, the keeping of the temple clean, and the carrying off of those waters, for that would be to turn this pleasant river into a sink or common sewer. That prophecy, ~~348~~ Zechariah 14:8, may explain it, of *living waters* that shall go out from Jerusalem, *half of them towards the former sea and half of them towards the hinder sea*. And there is plainly a reference to this in St. John's vision of a *pure river of water of life*, ~~621~~ Revelation 22:1. That seems to represent the glory and joy which are grace perfected. This seems to represent the grace and joy which are glory begun. Most interpreters agree that these waters signify the gospel of Christ, which went forth from Jerusalem, and spread itself into the countries about, and the gifts and powers of the Holy Ghost which accompanied it, and by virtue of which it spread far and produced strange and blessed effects. Ezekiel had walked round the house again and again, and yet did not till now take notice of those waters; for God makes known his mind and will to his people, not all at once, but by degrees. Now observe,

- I. The rise of these waters. He is not put to trace the streams to the fountain, but has the fountain-head first discovered to him (v. 1): *Waters*

issued out from the threshold of the house eastward, and from under the right side of the house, that is, the south side of the altar. And again (v. 2), *There ran out waters on the right side*, signifying that *from Zion should go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*, <sup><37B></sup>Isaiah 2:3. There it was that the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and endued them with the gift of tongues, that they might carry these waters to all nations. In the temple first they were to stand and *preach the words of this life*, <sup><45D></sup>Acts 5:20. They must preach the gospel to all nations, but must *begin at Jerusalem*, <sup><24E></sup>Luke 24:47. But that is not all: Christ is the temple; he is the door; from him those living waters flow, out of his pierced side. It is the water that he gives us that is *the well of water which springs up*, <sup><44A></sup>John 4:14. And it is by believing in him that we receive from him *rivers of living water*; and *this spoke he of the Spirit*, <sup><47B></sup>John 7:38, 39. The original of these waters was not above-ground, but they sprang up from under the threshold; for the fountain of a believer's life is a mystery; it is *hid with Christ in God*, <sup><37B></sup>Colossians 3:3. Some observe that they came forth *on the right side of the house* to intimate that gospel-blessings are right-hand blessings. It is also an encouragement to those who attend at Wisdom's gates, at the posts of her doors, who are willing to lie at the threshold of God's house, as David was, that they lie at the fountainhead of comfort and grace; the very entrance into God's word gives light and life, <sup><48B></sup>Psalms 119:130. David speaks it to the praise of Zion, *All my springs are in thee*, <sup><38E></sup>Psalms 87:7. They came *from the side of the altar*, for it is in and by Jesus Christ, the great altar (who *sanctifies our gifts* to God), that God has *blessed us with spiritual blessings in holy heavenly places*. From God as the fountain, in him as the channel, flows the river which *makes glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High*, <sup><46B></sup>Psalms 46:4. But observe how much the blessedness and joy of glorified saints in heaven exceed those of the best and happiest saints on earth; here the streams of our comfort arise *from under the threshold*; there they proceed *from the throne the throne of God and of the Lamb*, <sup><62I></sup>Revelation 22:1.

**II.** The progress and increase of these waters: They *went forth eastward* (v. 3), *towards the east country* (v. 8), for so they were directed. The prophet and his guide followed the stream as it ran down from the holy mountains, and when they had followed it about *a thousand cubits* they went over across it, to try the depth of it, and it was *to the ankles*, v. 3. Then they walked along on the bank of the river on the other side, a

thousand cubits more, and then, to try the depth of it, they waded through it the second time, and it was up to *their knees*, v. 4. They walked along by it a thousand cubits more, and then forded it the third time, and then it was up to their middle — *the waters were to the loins*. They then walked a thousand cubits further, and attempted to repass it the fourth time, but found it impracticable: *The waters had risen*, by the addition either of brooks that fell into it above ground or by springs under ground, so that they were *waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over*, v. 5. Note,

- 1.** The waters of the sanctuary are running waters, as those of a river, not standing waters, as those of a pond. The gospel, when it was first preached, was still spreading further. Grace in the soul is still pressing forward; it is an active principle, *plus ultra — onward still*, till it comes to perfection.
- 2.** They are increasing waters. This river, as it runs constantly, so the further it goes the fuller it grows. The gospel-church was very small in its beginnings, like a little purling brook; but by degrees it came to be *to the ankles, to the knees*: many were added to it daily, and the *grain of mustard seed* grew up to be a *great tree*. The gifts of the Spirit increase by being exercised, and grace, where it is true, is growing, like the light of the morning, which *shines more and more to the perfect day*.
- 3.** It is good for us to follow these waters, and go along with them. Observe the progress of the gospel in the world; observe the process of the work of grace in the heart; attend the motions of the blessed Spirit, and walk after them, under a divine guidance, as Ezekiel here did.
- 4.** It is good to be often searching into the things of God, and trying the depth of them, not only to look on the surface of those waters, but to go to the bottom of them as far as we can, to be often digging, often diving, into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as those who covet to be intimately acquainted with those things.
- 5.** If we search into the things of God, we shall find some things very plain and easy to be understood, as the waters that were but to the ankles, others more difficult, and which require a deeper search, as the water to the knees or the loins, and some quite beyond our reach, which we cannot penetrate into, or account for, but, despairing to find the bottom, must, as St. Paul, sit down at the brink, and adore the *depth*, <sup>ⓔⓅⓃ</sup>Romans 11:33. It has been

often said that in the scripture, like these waters of the sanctuary, there are some places so shallow that a lamb may wade through them, and others so deep that an elephant may swim in them. And it is our wisdom, as the prophet here, to begin with that which is most easy, and get our hearts washed with those things before we proceed to that which is *dark and hard to be understood*; it is good to take our work before us.

**III.** The extent of this river: *It issues towards the east country*, but thence it either divide itself into several streams or fetches a compass, so that it *goes down into the desert*, and so *goes into the sea*, either into the *dead sea*, which lay *south-east*, or the sea of Tiberias, which lay *north-east*, or the great sea, which lay *west*, v. 8. This was accomplished when the gospel was preached with success throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria (~~48E~~ Acts 8:1), and afterwards the nations about, nay, and those that lay most emote, even in the isles of the sea, were enlightened and leavened by it. The sound of it went forth *to the end of the world*; and the enemies of it could no more prevail to stop the progress of it than that of a mighty river.

**IV.** The healing virtue of this river. The waters of the sanctuary, wherever they come and have a free course, will be found a wonderful restorative. Being *brought forth into the sea*, the sulphureous lake of Sodom, that standing monument of divine vengeance, even those *waters shall be healed* (v. 8), shall become sweet, and pleasant, and healthful. This intimates the wonderful and blessed change that the gospel would make, wheresoever it came in its power, a a great change, in respect both of character and condition, as the turning of the dead sea into a fountain of gardens. When children of wrath became children of love, and those that were dead in trespasses and sins were made alive, then this was fulfilled. The gospel was as that salt which Elisha cast into the spring of the waters of Jericho, with which he *healed them*, ~~48M~~ 2 Kings 2:20, 21. Christ, coming into the world to be its physician, sent his gospel as the great medicine, the *panpharmacum*; there is in it a remedy for every malady. Nay, wherever these rivers come, they *make things to live* (v. 9), both plants and animals; they are the *water of life*, ~~62I~~ Revelation 22:1, 17. Christ came, *that we might have life* and for that end he sends his gospel. *Every thing shall live whither the river comes*. The grace of God makes dead sinners alive and living saints lively; everything is made fruitful and flourishing by it. But its effect is according as it is received, and as the

mind is prepared and disposed to receive it; for (v. 11) with respect to the marshes and *miry places thereof*, that are settled in the mire of their own sinfulness, and will not be healed, or settled in the moisture of their own righteousness, and think they need no healing, their doom is, *They shall not be healed*; the same gospel which to others is a savour of life unto life shall to them be a savour of death unto death; *they shall be given to salt*, to perpetual barrenness, <sup>(12)</sup>Deuteronomy 29:23. Those that will not be watered with the grace of God, and made fruitful, shall be abandoned to their own hearts' lusts, and left for ever unfruitful. *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Never fruit grow on thee more for ever*. They shall be given to *salt*, that is, to be monuments of divine justice, as Lot's wife that was turned into a *pillar of salt*, to season others.

**V.** The great plenty of fish that should be in this river. Everything living moving thing shall be found here, shall *live here* (v. 9), shall come on and prosper, shall be the best of the kind, and shall increase greatly; so that there shall be a *very great multitude of fish, according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceedingly many*. There shall be as great plenty of the river fish, and as vast shoals of them, as there is of salt-water fish, v. 10. There shall be no great numbers of Christians in the church, and those multiplying like fishes in the rising generations and *the dew of their youth*. In the creation the *waters brought forth the fish abundantly* (<sup>(1)</sup>Genesis 1:20, 21), and they still live in and by the waters that produced them; so believers are *begotten by the word of truth* (<sup>(18)</sup>James 1:18), and *born by it* (<sup>(12)</sup>1 Peter 1:23), that river of God; by it they live, from it they have their maintenance and subsistence; in the waters of the sanctuary they are as in their element, out of them they are as fish *upon dry ground*; so David was when he thirsted and panted for God, for the living God. Where the fish are known to be in abundance, thither will the fishers flock, and there they will *cast their nets*; and therefore, to intimate the replenishing of these waters and their being made every way useful, it is here foretold that the fishers shall stand upon the banks of this river, from *En-gedi*, which lies on the border of the dead sea, to *En-eglaim*, another city, which joins to that sea, and all along shall *spread their nets*. The dead sea, which before was shunned as noisome and noxious, shall be frequented. Gospel-grace makes those persons and places which were unprofitable and good for nothing to become serviceable to God and man.

**VI.** The trees that were on the banks of this river — *many trees on the one side and on the other* (v. 7), which made the prospect very pleasant and agreeable to the eye; the shelter of these trees also would be a convenience to the fishery. But that is not all (v. 12); they *are trees for meat*, and the *fruit of them shall not be consumed*, for it shall produce fresh fruit *every month*. The *leaf shall be for medicine*, and it *shall not fade*. This part of the vision is copied out into St. John's vision very exactly (<sup><621></sup>Revelation 22:2), where, on either side of the river, is said to grow the *tree of life*, which *yielded her fruit every month*, and *the leaves were for the healing of the nations*. Christians are supposed to be these trees, ministers especially, *trees of righteousness*, *the planting of the Lord* (<sup><213></sup>Isaiah 61:3), set by *the rivers of water*, the waters of the sanctuary (<sup><100></sup>Psalms 1:3), grafted into Christ the tree of life, and by virtue of their union with him made trees of life too, <sup><101></sup>rooted in him, <sup><102></sup>Colossians 2:7. There is a great variety of these trees, through the diversity of gifts with which they are endued by that *one Spirit who works all in all*. They grow *on the bank of the river*, or they keep close to holy ordinances, and through them derive from Christ sap and virtue. They are *fruit-trees*, designed, as the fig tree and the olive, with their fruits to *honour God and man*, <sup><103></sup>Judges 9:9. *The fruit thereof shall be for meat*, for the *lips of the righteous feed many*. The fruits of their righteousness are one way or other beneficial. The very leaves of these trees *are for medicine*, for *bruises* and sores, *margin*. Good Christians with their good discourses, which are as their leaves, as well as with their charitable actions, which are as their fruits, do good to those about them; they *strengthen the weak*, and bind up the broken-hearted. Their cheerfulness *does good like a medicine*, not only to themselves, but to others also. They shall be enabled by the grace of God to persevere in their goodness and usefulness; their *leaf shall not fade*, or lose its medicinal virtue, having not only life in their root, but sap in all their branches; their profession *shall not wither* (<sup><104></sup>Psalms 1:3), *neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed*; that is, they shall not lose the principle of their fruitfulness, but *shall still bring forth fruit in old age*, to *show that the Lord is upright* (<sup><105></sup>Psalms 92:14, 15), or the reward of their fruitfulness shall abide for ever; they bring forth fruit that shall abound to their account in the great day, *fruit to life eternal*; that is indeed *fruit which shall not be consumed*. They bring *new fruit according to their months*, some in one month and others in another: so that still there shall be one or other found to serve the glory of God for the purpose he designs. Or each one of them shall bring forth fruit monthly, which denotes an

abundant disposition to fruit-bearing (they shall never be weary of well-doing), and a very happy climate, such that there shall be a perpetual spring and summer. And the reason of this extraordinary fruitfulness is *because their waters issued out of the sanctuary*; it is not to be ascribed to any thing in themselves, but to the continual supplies of divine grace, with which they are *watered every moment* (<sup><207></sup>Isaiah 27:3); for, whoever planted them, it was that which *gave the increase*.

## <sup><373></sup>EZEKIEL 47:13-23

### THE BORDERS OF THE LAND APPOINTED

We are now to pass from the affairs of the sanctuary to those of the state, from the city to the country.

**1.** The Land of Canaan is here secured to them for an inheritance (v. 14): *I lifted up my hand to give it unto your fathers*, that is, promised it upon oath to them and their posterity. Though the possession had been a great while discontinued, yet God had not forgotten his oath which he swore to their fathers. Though God's providences may for a time seem to contradict his promises, yet the promise will certainly take place at last, for God will be *ever mindful of his covenant*. *I lifted up my hand to give it*, and therefore it shall without fail *fall to you for an inheritance*. Thus the heavenly Canaan is sure to all the seed, because it is what *God, who cannot lie, has promised*.

**2.** It is here circumscribed, and the bounds and limits of it are fixed, which they must not pass over to encroach upon their neighbours and which their neighbours shall not break through to encroach upon them. We had such a draught of the borders of Canaan when Joshua was to put the people in possession of it, <sup><081></sup>Numbers 34:1, etc. That begins with the salt sea in the south, goes round and ends there. This begins with Hamath about Damascus in the north, and so goes round and ends there, v. 20. Note, It is God that *appoints the bounds of our habitation*; and his Israel shall always have cause to say that *the lines have fallen to them in pleasant places*. The lake of Sodom is here called *the east sea*, for it, being healed by the waters of the sanctuary, it is no more to be called a *salt sea*, as it was in Numbers.

**3.** It is here ordered to be divided among the tribes of Israel, reckoning Joseph for two tribes, to make up the number of twelve, when Levi was taken out to attend the sanctuary, and had his lot adjoining to that (v. 13, 21): *You shall inherit it, one as well as another*, v. 14. The tribes shall have an equal share, one as much as another. As the tribes returned out of Babylon, this seems unequal, because some tribes were much more numerous than the other, and indeed the most were of Judah and Benjamin and very few of the other ten tribes; but as the twelve tribes stand, in type and vision, for the gospel-church, the Israel of God, it was very equal, because we find in another vision an equal number of each of the twelve tribes *sealed for the living God*, just 12,000 of each, <sup><617></sup>Revelation 7:5, etc. And to those sealed ones these allotments did belong. It intimates likewise that all the subjects of Christ's kingdom have *obtained like precious faith*. Male and female, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, are all alike welcome to Christ and made partakers of him.

**4.** The strangers who sojourn among them, *who shall beget children and be built up into families, and so help to people their country, shall have inheritance among the tribes*, as if they had been native Israelites (v. 22, 23), which was by no means allowed in Joshua's division of the land. This is an act for a general naturalization, which would teach the Jews who was their neighbour, not those only of their own nation and religion, but those, whoever they were, that they had an opportunity of showing kindness to, because from them they would be willing to receive kindness. It would likewise invite strangers to come and settle among them, and put themselves under the wings of the divine Majesty. But it certainly looks at gospel-times, when the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile was taken down, and both one in Christ, in whom *there is no difference*, <sup><612></sup>Romans 10:12. This land was a type of the heavenly Canaan, that *better country* (<sup><8116></sup>Hebrews 11:16), in which believing Gentiles shall have a blessed lot, as well as believing Jews, <sup><2303></sup>Isaiah 56:3.