

The Source of Life-Giving Water

International Bible Lesson

Ezekiel 47:1-12

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“And 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 47:12—KJV).

“On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing” (Ezekiel 47:12—NRSV).

The visions of the River of Life that God gave the prophet Ezekiel and the Apostle John show that God wants to meet the needs of people in every nation (see also Revelation 22:1-2). Ezekiel's vision shows the River of God transforming nature by making stale water into fresh water and fit for fish and fruit trees for food. Both visions teach that the River of Life flows from the throne of God, which in Ezekiel's vision is in a new temple built according to God's plan and in John's vision is in the heavenly city of God and flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, where the Tree of Life provides food and healing for the nations. Those who returned from exile never built a temple according to God's plan. The heavenly city John saw has not yet been seen on earth. However, the Messiah has come into our world, and He gives living water to those who believe in Him. Jesus told the woman He met at the well, “Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” (John 4:14). When Jesus sits on the throne of our hearts, He gives living water that brings the blessings of God to us and others through us.

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Thinking Further

1. Do you know of any other interpretations of Ezekiel's temple and river than the ones discussed in this lesson?

2. How is Ezekiel 47:1 and Revelation 22:1 different?

3. How does the river in Ezekiel differ from natural rivers and streams?

4. What was the most important part of Ezekiel's vision to you?

5. In what way is Ezekiel 47:12 similar to Revelation 22:2?