

Ezekiel 47

Tasks

1. Read the vision of Ezekiel (translation of the New International Version) together in the class.
2. Visualise the biblical text as a structural image by following the course of the water.

About the person of Ezekiel

The prophet Ezekiel (meaning of his name: "may God strengthen") was a priest who was deported to Babylon with the first exile in 597 and was active there from 593 to around 571. His preaching is very typical in terms of language and content and can be characterised as *theologia gloriae*: Ezekiel writes to proclaim the glory of God. Ezekiel is close to the priestly writing (P) of the Pentateuch (5 books of Moses), he himself probably appeared at services held by the exiles (1:3), so that he was possibly originally a cult prophet. Ezekiel understands the exile as a deserved punishment for Israel's apostasy to other gods.

Knowledge of God happens through historical events that YHWH will bring upon Israel and the nations. History, both negative and positive, is interpreted as having been brought about by God and God alone.

Chapters 40-48 represent the climax and conclusion of the book. Ezekiel has a vision of the new temple in Jerusalem and the re-entry of the glory of YHWH into this new sanctuary (ch. 43). The cult will be reorganised (44-46) and the land will be redistributed (47-48).

The river from the temple¹

¹The man² brought me back to the entrance to the temple³, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple towards the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar⁴. ²He then brought me out through the north gate⁵ and led me round the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side.

³As the man went eastward with a measuring line⁶ in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. ⁴He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. ⁵He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in – a river that no-one could cross. ⁶He asked me, 'Son of man, do you see this?'

Then he led me back to the bank of the river. ⁷When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. ⁸He said to me, 'This water flows towards the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea⁷. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. ⁹Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the

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² the man: A messenger sent by God who leads Ezekiel through the sanctuary in the vision.

³ temple: Here the actual temple building, which was divided into the vestibule, the main room and the Holy of Holies.

⁴ altar: Refers to the altar of burnt offering in front of the temple building.

⁵ north gate: The direct route through the east gate is blocked. As this gate remains closed after the entry of the glory of God into the temple; cf. Ezekiel 44:1-3.

⁶ measuring line: A cord used for building and measuring land

⁷ Dead Sea: Large lake into which the Jordan River flows, with an unusually high salt content.



river flows. There will be large numbers of fish⁸, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. ¹⁰Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim⁹ there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds – like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea. ¹¹But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt¹⁰. ¹²Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary¹¹ flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.’

⁸ numbers of fish: There are no fish in the Dead Sea due to the high salt content.

⁹ En-Gedi and En-Eglajim: Towns on the western shore of the Dead Sea.

¹⁰ salt: Was used to preserve food and was precious.

¹¹ from the sanctuary: The sanctuary symbolises the presence of God, from which the flow of life emanates.