

God's Great River, Ezekiel 47:1-12, and Attitude Change

INTRODUCTION

What is your attitude toward the great river in Ezekiel 47:1-12?

- . . It will be a totally **real river**.
- . . Notice the name of real places in 47:8, 10.
- . . This river is not in heaven.
- . . And this is not about spiritual abundance in the church.
- . . It will be a **real future river**.
- . . It will be a great blessing during Christ's 1,000 year reign as King on earth.

. . People do not take this river seriously because of localized, self-centered attitudes.

- . . It will be in Israel rather than in the U.S., Canada, Brazil, Egypt, Japan, etc..
- . . It is not the Mississippi, the Saint Lawrence, the Amazon, the Nile, or any other local river of today.
- . . We are naturally more interested in local rivers, mountains, hills, streams, and even **mud puddles**.
- . . The flow of muddy water in my driveway may seem more important at the moment than the Amazon.
- . . **WHY?**

- . . It makes sense in a way, because a washed-out driveway can be expensive to repair.
- . . But, if we are honest we must admit that the Amazon is more important to the whole world.
- . . It's good to care for the driveway or rice field, but selfishly limiting your worldview is disastrous.

. . Also people do not take the river in Ezekiel seriously because it seems unscientific.

- . . They say, "Since water does not flow uphill, there should not be a spring on the top of the temple mount."
- . . This too is really just an attitude or worldview problem, however.
- . . It wrongly assumes that there is / will be nothing or nobody higher than the physical temple.
- . . The temple mount is not the highest mountain in Israel.
- . . And God will be in and above the temple. HE WHO IS WILL BE HIGHER.

. . WHAT WILL THE GREAT RIVER FROM UNDER THE TEMPLE BE LIKE?

- . . It will be somewhat like *the famous Kenrokuen Garden in Kanazawa City, Japan*.
- . . Kenrokuen is one of the three most famous gardens in Japan.
- . . It is located on a hill top. Yet, it has abundant overflowing water.
- . . This seems to be impossible, but...
- . . the water comes into the garden via a siphon from a distant river.
- . . The distant water source is higher than Kenrokuen garden.
- . . Likewise, the future temple's water source will be God who is, of course, the Most High.

This study is about attitude, not just about the future river itself.

- . . Through Ezekiel, God counseled the captive people in Babylon to change their negative attitude.
- . . We often need to change our negative, worldly attitudes as well.

What is your ATTITUDE . . . ?

1. TOWARD NATURE, GARDENS, and THE PRESENT

. . Some people don't like gardens -- because they are not natural enough.

but there are problems in nature.

. . Natural river banks are difficult walking. --- Poison snakes and other dangers are present.

. . This points back to the fall of man and the Garden of Eden

. . So people have been making artificial gardens from ancient times.

. . Do you like designing things?

. . People like to design and build because we are created in God's image.

. . Who made or will make this great river?

. . Many wrongly assume that it was Ezekiel as the author who "made" it,

. . because we have the Book --- but not the actual future river system.

. . This is based on viewing the present as all that is real, and this again is self-centered thinking.

. . We usually have a set of plans for a future building BEFORE building it.

. . Why are imperfect "swarming things" (47:9) and "swamps" (47:11) included?

. . The imperfections fits with Genesis, the fall, and the fact that the millennial kingdom is not heaven.

. . They also agrees with Zechariah -- Zec. 14:3-10.

. . This river will be from God Himself and is not just some dream of an ancient prophet.

2. TOWARD OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS and ISRAEL

. . We Christians like certain prophets.

. . Parts of Isaiah are popular, such as chapter 53 because it points to the cross.

. . Ezekiel is not as popular --- because he points to Israel's future.

. . This is self-centered thinking again --- because it is not about us (in the church).

. . We don't adequately appreciate the heart of God.

. . I have a friend whose first wife died, and he remarried.

. . The man loved both wives, but they were different. (tall - short, American - Canadian)

. . I wonder what the attitude of the second wife is toward the first?

. . Fortunately they (the two wives) knew each other very well.

. . So I don't think there is a problem when my friend talks about his first wife.

. . They will all be together in heaven.

. . We should be glad that God has not forgotten Israel.

. . We can't selfishly pretend that Israel does not exist.

. . We can't see God's heart through Israel -- through Israel's future.

. . As some wrongly despise the Law, so some wrongly despise prophecy.

. . We should compare Ezekiel 47 and Zechariah 14 --- like we often compare the Gospels.

. . Ezekiel is more peaceful than Zechariah --- no earthquake, and the fighting ended in chs. 38 and 39.

. . Ezekiel has only an eastern flowing river --- because healing the Dead Sea is his emphasis.

What is your ATTITUDE . . . ?

3. TOWARD GEOGRAPHY (maps, places, directions)

. . People are different regarding geography and maps.

- . . Some understand maps quickly. --- Others do not.
- . . Some are interested in far away places. Others are not.
- . . But we need to understand places and directions.
- . . This is especially true in Ezekiel.

. . thinking around the temple (47:1-2)

- . . Temple worship is the main thing in chapters 40-46. -- the river, trees (47:7, 12) and fish (47:9) come later.
- . . inside the temple (47:1) ---- the alter (47:1) -- Remember that Ezekiel was a priest.
- . . outside the temple (47:2) -- They could not use the East Gate,
 - . . because the East Gate is the Messiah's (Eze. 44:1-2, Zec. 14:4, Acts 1)
 - . . The East Gate faces the Mount of Olives --- where Jesus will return (Acts 1, Zec. 14:4).

. . What is your attitude toward this (47:1-2)?

- . . If you are bored, it again shows how [self-centered](#) you are.
- . . There is nothing boring about Ezekiel 47. If we think it is, the problem is with us.
- . . We don't consider Jerusalem to be our home, like Ezekiel did.

4. TOWARD THE RIVER and MEASURING IT (47:3-6)

. . Does measuring the river seem too physical - not spiritual enough?

- . . Christians associate "rivers of living water" with John 7:38 and the Holy Spirit (7:39).
- . . So some say Eze. 47:1-12 is just a prophecy of the Spirit's coming into the hearts of believers in the N.T.
 - . . But the Spirit will in the future come into the heart of Jewish believers (37:14).
 - . . There are similarities between the Spirit and this river, but this Ezekiel 47 river is a real river.

. . This river helps explain John 7:38-39.

- . . We should not imposing Jesus teaching on Ezekiel 47.
- . . Rather we should let Ezekiel 47:1-12 help explain what the abundant life is like.
 - . . The abundant life (in both the O.T. and the N.T.) is being connected to God.
 - . . In the N.T. (John 7:38-39), we become the temple.
 - . . In the kingdom, there will be a literal temple -- which also shows this connection.

. . The measuring shows two things.

- . . It shows that the river does not get deep quickly.
 - . . 1,000 cubits is about 450 meters. --- measured four times is about 1.8 km from front of temple.
 - . . So Jerusalem will be more flat. ---- It will not be a citadel for defense. --- Then there will be peace.
- . . It shows that the river is large and too deep for Ezekiel (47:5).
 - . . This speaks of God's greatness and human smallness.
 - . . The "son of man" expression (47:6) does as well. --- used 90 times in Ezekiel
 - . . What is your attitude toward being small? --- not liking this shows [self-centered thinking](#) again

	What is your ATTITUDE . . . ?
5.	TOWARD FOOD (fish, fruit, leaves)
	. . What will the fish be for?
	. . Obviously they were to be eaten. — So too was the fruit (47:12).
	. . This is not sports fishing. Nets will be used (47:10).
	. . Perhaps meat will be eaten less.
	. . But there will be offering of animals (46:24) -- And water will be needed for boiling.
	. . These are offerings of remembrance. --- Jewish version of the Lord's Supper.
	. . Why are the fish and fruit stressed?
	. . to stress God's goodness to his people
	. . to stress God meeting human needs
	. . They are sort of like "our daily bread" in the Lord's prayer.
	. . The fishermen (47:10) will still work -- but the catch will be of God.
	. . to stress God's faithfulness -- continually meeting the need (47:12)
	. . What about the leaves for healing (47:12)?
	. . They are needed because this will not be the perfect "new heaven and earth" (Rev. 21:1).
	. . They show our ongoing need for God in order to be healthy --- preventative.
	. . So it is with the leaves of the tree of life in Rev. 22:1-2 as well.
6.	TOWARD CHANGE and THE FUTURE
	. . Does the change seem too big?
	. . If we start with ourself it will seem too big. --- Again this is self-centered thinking .
	. . There have been big changes on the earth before.
	. . We must not forget the Genesis flood.
	. . There are many earthquakes, local floods, landslides, volcanoes, as well.
	. . The real problem is us -- our self-centered thinking -- making God small.
	. . Does the change seem too physical?
	. . If God is the Creator -- then He is the God of the physical too.
	. . If God is the God of the Bible --- then He cares about Israel and the land.
	. . Do we dislike future teaching (eschatology)?
	. . Some dislike teaching about the future -- because they are unable to fully understand.
	. . Some dislike teaching about the future -- because they dislike disagreement and want consensus.
	. . Many dislike teaching about the future -- because they are focused on the present and personal matters.
★	APPLICATION: CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE! REPENT!
	. . We must take this future river seriously — instead of just what we see in the present.
	. . If we are focused only on the present, we are worldly and not pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6).