

Christ Church Clifton Sermon Notes & Questions



Series: Ezekiel Series Spring 2017

Passage: Ezekiel 47:1-12 & 48:30-35

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Sermon Notes: Ezekiel The Watchman

Context

- Ezekiel is prophesying to the people of God in exile
- Start of the book is a message of judgement and then we get to the vision in Ezekiel 8-11. This is a terrible vision of God's glory departing the temple, God himself leaving his people (Glory = God's manifest presence with his people in the Temple). So Ezekiel prophesied God's presence leaving his people
- Before this chapter begins Ezekiel has been prophesying the return of God's people into their land from Exile. But he also has prophesied the return of God's glory into the temple. God's presence was going to return to the temple

The Vision

Ezekiel 47:1-6

- God now tells Ezekiel what will happen when his glory returns to the Temple
- 'Son of man, do you see this' – he's in the middle of it, so of course he can see it! The question is more 'does he understand what he's seeing?' and 'does he understand how God is working?'
- God's presence in his temple isn't for God's benefit and it isn't to stay in the temple. **God's presence is always meant to break out**
- God's presence returns to the temple and Ezekiel 47 shows us God's presence flowing out from the temple

47:7-12

- Now see the impact of God's presence released into the land
- A wonderful picture expressing the blessing of God's presence poured out on the land
- We see that God's presence is to be the source of life, healing and fruitfulness

The four dimensions of OT Prophecy

- Past fulfilment – Original fulfilment for the people at the time
- Deeper fulfilment – fulfilment seen in Jesus
- Present fulfilment – what is God saying to us today through the Word
- Future fulfilment – fulfilment which is yet to come (eg Apocalyptic literature in Daniel)

Past fulfilment for Ezekiel 47

- Ezekiel's vision comes true with the return of the people from exile with Zerubbabel in 536 BC and the healing and blessing of the people in the land

Deeper fulfilment in Jesus

- There is a rich theology of God's presence throughout the Bible which we can study. Understand how God has chosen to dwell with his people through the different eras of salvation history

1. **In the garden of Eden** – God walking with Adam & Eve
 2. **Tent of meeting** – tabernacle – Moses would talk to God face to face
 3. **OT temple** – God's permanent dwelling place – his presence resting in the Holy of Holies
 4. **Jesus** – John 1:14 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us'
- In John 1:14 the word dwelling in the original greek is literally tabernacling – John is pointing to Jesus as the way that God is dwelling with his people, Jesus is the touching point where heaven meets earth

- So as Jesus walk on this earth, he did so as God amongst us, God dwelling with his people. And just as the river flowed from the Temple revealing that God's presence was the source of life, healing and fruitfulness, Jesus came and released the presence of God wherever he went transforming lives: bringing life, healing and fruitfulness wherever he went. In this way Jesus provides a deeper fulfilment to Ezekiel's river.

5. In the New Testament we see that each one of us are temples of the Holy Spirit

- 1 Cor 6:19 'Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit'
- Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each of our lives, God has made his dwelling with us
- Because God has made us his permanent dwelling place Ezekiel's river should find a present day fulfilment in us. That out of each one of us should flow a river of God's presence bringing life, healing and fruitfulness wherever we go

What does this mean for us:

1. We are called to overflow wherever God has placed us in the week

- As God's people, as Jesus' followers today, as temples of the Holy Spirit, a river of God's presence should flow from us bringing life, healing and fruitfulness wherever we go

2. We are called to overflow intentionally as a church

- The river of God bringing life, healing and fruitfulness is supposed to flow from the church because the Church is meant to be good news in our community

Wonderful paradox of the upside down kingdom

- The water gets deeper and wider the further it is from the temple. This doesn't make any sense because this isn't what happens naturally to rivers unless a river is joined by another source
- The point is this: The Spirit of God isn't given to us just in church, God's presence was always intended to break out of the church and bring blessing to those outside of church because God's heart is for those who don't yet know him. The more we step outside of the church, the more we see God at work (experience a deeper river)

American Vineyard Pastor Robby Dawkins puts it like this:

"If you only ever pray for Christians you'll get depressed – the power will ebb. You experience more when you pray for unbelievers because that's where Jesus did his ministry."

What's the result? Ezekiel 48:30-35

- Ezekiel's vision is of the river flowing from the temple into the land bringing life, healing and fruitfulness
- But the final vision in his book is a vision of a transformed city. It's a picture of perfection: with 12 gates representing the 12 tribes of Israel: everyone has a place in this city and it's architecture reveals that it's complete and whole
- The thing that distinguishes this city is its name. Jerusalem is renamed 'The Lord is there'. Why – because of his presence flowing from the temple into the city.
- This is a picture of wholeness and healing of the city. Restored and redeemed and called by a new name 'the Lord is there'
- Wonderful picture of what you and I are called to. We're not simply called to build a great church. We're called to build a great city by being people who carry God's presence. Filled with his Spirit so that we might overflow wherever we go that people may say that because of us 'The Lord is there' in Bristol

Questions

1. As this is the final sermon and notes on our series on Ezekiel. Can anyone summarise the book of Ezekiel and the last few weeks studies that we've done?
2. In the light of this summary, what do you think Ezekiel 47:1-6 is about?
3. How do v7-12 help us to see that God's presence is the source of life, healing and fruitfulness?
4. How does Jesus' life and ministry fulfil this prophecy
5. Look at 1 Cor 6:19. As temples of the Holy Spirit how are we called to fulfil this prophecy?
6. What would it mean for you to overflow with God's presence? What different ways might we overflow into the lives of other people this week?

7. How might we intentionally overflow as a church? How might we work together so that people might say 'The Lord is there' in Bristol