

Lesson 44 - “Every Thing Shall Live Whither the River Cometh”

Ezekiel

Purpose: To encourage us to partake of the life-giving, healing powers that are available in the temple.

My lessons take a different path than the Gospel Doctrine lesson manual. The lesson outline looks closer at the doctrinal topics included in the lesson purpose and scripture block. The lessons are designed to challenge mature, active Latter-Day Saints who have a solid Gospel foundation and are looking for insights into the scriptures that will broaden their faith and understanding.

If you are interested in downloading the PowerPoint file, links to source material or reading posts about improving Gospel Doctrine class preparation, delivery and engagement, you can join my Facebook Group and have full access to the content posted there. The link is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/188904648521022/>

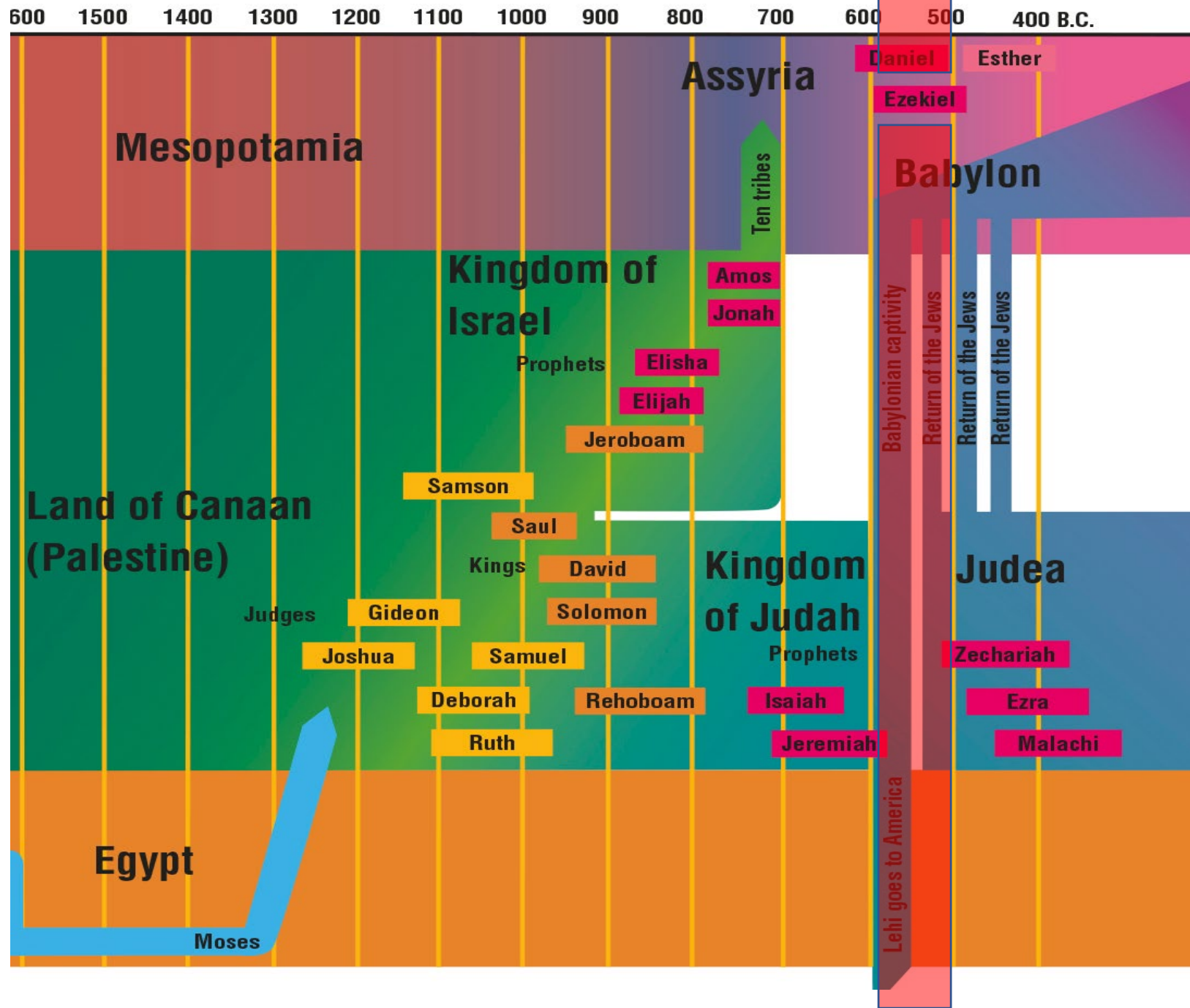
Last Week's Lesson Challenge

There are many in diverse circumstances who are in need of a shepherd in their lives. Sometimes all a shepherd needs to do is be a good, listener who is always there in times of need. Sometimes a shepherd needs to go the extra mile and give of themselves in large ways to feed the flock.

Last we were asked to pray for guidance regarding what is your role as the Lord's shepherd in Israel. Pray for the opportunity to be the Lord's hand in helping someone in need.

Would anyone wish to share their thoughts at this time?

Isaiah



Remember that Ezekiel was a prophet to the Judeans who had been taken from Jerusalem and relocated to Babylon. The Judeans were in Babylon for about 70 years until they were allowed to return to Jerusalem.

Soon after they were taken, the Babylonians destroyed what remained of Solomon's Temple. Ezekiel received the news of the destruction of Jerusalem from someone who had been there and had fled to Babylon to be with the exiled Jews.

“The news did not take Ezekiel by surprise. God had already given him back his speech, as promised [Ezekiel 24:27], by the time the messenger arrived. Some texts have ‘eleventh year’ for ‘twelfth’ in verse 21, in which case the news takes the more likely time of six months to reach them. Those left behind in Judah, far from repenting, were busy annexing other people’s property. And in Babylonia the exiles who seemed to lap up Ezekiel’s words came simply for entertainment. They neither believed them nor acted on them: a depressing state of affairs after all that had happened!”

It was unfortunate that the Jews in Babylonia did not appreciate at that time “that a prophet hath been among them” (Ezekiel 33:33).”

The Visions of Ezekiel

Ezekiel was given twelve visions that are recorded in the Book of Ezekiel. In today's lesson we will look at two of those visions that dwelt with the Latter-Days.

After the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel no longer spoke of God's judgments on his contemporaries but of Israel's redemption in the latter days. It was as though he had done all he could to stave off the destruction of his people, and when that was impossible and they were actually experiencing the suffering that captivity had imposed upon them, he turned their hearts to the future and the source of their ultimate hope in the Lord.

So Saints of the latter days should be most enthusiastic about Ezekiel's prophecies in chapters 25–48. Of Ezekiel's twelve, precisely recorded visions, seven were given after the fall of Jerusalem and dealt with such events of the last days as the building of the great Jewish kingdom under a shepherd named David, the gathering of scattered Israel, the unification of all the tribes of Israel, the joining of the Bible and the Book of Mormon, the battle of Armageddon, and the building of a modern temple in Jerusalem. Truly, Ezekiel was a prophet of the Restoration.

Ezekiel 43:1-6

1 Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east:

2 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.

3 And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face.

4 And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east.

5 So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house.

6 And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me.

The Vision of a Future Temple
In one of the most remarkable visions of the Old Testament, Ezekiel had the privilege of being carried away by the Spirit to the holy city of Jerusalem to behold on the temple mount the magnificent temple to be built there in the latter days.

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-kings-malachi/chapter-27?lang=eng>

In his book “The House of the Lord”, Elder James E. Talmage described the main features of the future temple that Ezekiel saw in a vision:

“In the twenty-fifth year of the Babylonian captivity, while the people of Israel were in exile in a strange land, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Ezekiel; the power of God rested upon him; and he saw in vision a glorious Temple, the plan of which he minutely described.

In most of its essential features Ezekiel’s ideal followed closely the plan of Solomon’s Temple; so close, indeed, is the resemblance, that many of the details specified by Ezekiel have been accepted as those of the splendid edifice destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. A predominant characteristic of the Temple described by Ezekiel was the spaciousness of its premises and the symmetry of both the Holy House and its associated buildings. The area was to be a square of five hundred cubits, walled about and provided with a gateway and arches on each of three sides; on the west side the wall was to be unbroken by arch or portal. At each of the gateways were little chambers regarded as lodges, and provided with porches. In the outer court were other chambers. The entire area was to be elevated, and a flight of steps led to each gateway. In the inner court was seen the great altar, standing before the House, and occupying the center of a square of one hundred cubits. Ample provision was made for every variety of sacrifice and offering, and for the accommodation of the priests, the singers, and all engaged in the holy ritual. The main structure comprised a Porch, a Holy Place, and an inner sanctuary or Most Holy Place, the last named elevated above the rest and reached by steps. The plan provided for even greater exclusiveness than had characterized the sacred area of the Temple of Solomon; the double courts contributed to this end. The service of the Temple was prescribed in detail; the ordinances of the altar, the duties of the priests, the ministry of the Levites, the regulations governing oblations and feasts were all set forth.

“The immediate purpose of this revelation through the vision of the prophet appears to have been that of awakening the people of Israel to a realization of their fallen state and a conception of their departed glory.” (The House of the Lord, pp. 37–38.)

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-kings-malachi/chapter-27?lang=eng>

Ezekiel 43:7-12

7 ¶ And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places.

8 In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, and the wall between me and them, they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger.

9 Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcasses of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever.

10 ¶ Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern.

11 And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them.

12 This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.

In hope for their repentance, Jehovah commands Ezekiel to describe in great detail, the future glorious temple that will be built on the Jerusalem temple mount in the Latter-Days.

As is always God's way, the wayward Jews who were captives in Babylon are given opportunity after opportunity to repent and return to living the commandments.

Ezekiel 47:1-5

1 Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

2 Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

3 And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles.

4 Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins.

5 Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.

Ezekiel sees a vision of waters flowing out from under the threshold of the Jerusalem Temple's east door which is the front door of the temple. What is the significance of the east door? Also, the waters are running on the right side. What is the significance of the right side?

Ezekiel follows a man who is walking eastward besides the flowing waters. He measures 1,000 cubits and takes a measurement where the waters were flowing the depth of Ezekiel's ankles. This continues three times and each time a 1,000 cubits is measured and the waters deepen to the point that they are no longer passable, someone would need to swim to cross.

What are the waters doing as the flow farther from the temple? They are getting deeper. The waters are multiplying as it flows away from the temple. What is the significance of the waters multiplying as the flow away from the temple? Normally, as waters flow away from their source they diminish as they seep into the earth.

Ezekiel 47:6-12

6 ¶ And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river.

7 Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.

9 And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh.

10 And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many.

11 But the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt.

12 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.

In Ezekiel 47:6-12, Ezekiel is told to go to the riverbank. He sees many trees along the riverbank. Why is this significant? The waters that run east from the temple are flowing through an arid desert that doesn't support the type of trees that grow along a riverbank. What are the waters flowing east from the temple doing to the desert? The waters are healing the desert. They are making it blossom and grow.

Further on the waters continue to flow to the sea, in this case the Dead Sea. Life doesn't survive in the Dead Sea, it's too salty. In verse 9, it says that the Dead Sea will be healed and there will be a great multitude of fish. There are no fish in the Dead Sea today. Fishers will come to the Dead Sea and they will freely catch fish of all kinds from the healed Dead Sea.

Some areas around the Dead Sea will not be healed. In Verse 11, these areas are described as miry places and the marshes. Not everyone will listen as the Gospel of Jesus Christ flows forth from the temple. Even places next to the healed Dead Sea will not choose to be healed.

In Verse 12, we read about how lush the banks of the Dead Sea will become. Leaves won't fade and new fruit will blossom. It further says that the fruit will be meat and the leaves medicine. What is the meaning of the meat and medicine that will come from the fruit and the leaves?

These scriptures in Ezekiel are like those we found in Isaiah and Jeremiah. Difficult for us to understand because of the imagery used that is foreign to us.

The important truths to understand from these verses are the following.

- The Gospel of Jesus Christ will flow like a river from the foundation of His temple. We too can't find great strength in temple work as the mysteries of the Gospel are revealed to us.
- Christ will return to the Earth from the east. We look to the morning sun rising in the east as a sign of His second coming. Most of the front doors of our temples today, face east.
- Just as the volume of water multiplied, so shall the impact of the Gospel of Jesus Christ multiply as it flows forward. We might consider the number of temples that are on the Earth today as an embodiment of the water multiplying in these verses.
- These waters will not only heal an arid desert, but they will also heal a dead sea. So too, the Gospel of Jesus Christ will heal anyone who accepts it and lives it commandments.
- It can not be understated how significant it is that the waters flowed from the Lord's Temple, his throne on Earth. We should see the temples that surround us today as having the same Gospel healing power as the imagery in Ezekiel 47:1-12.

This Week's Lesson Challenge

Do we see the Gospel of Jesus Christ as waters that flow freely and multiply as they proceed forth from the east door of the temple. Is that too metaphorical?

This week's challenge is to start to look at some of the difficult metaphors of the Old Testament prophets and see how better understanding them can enhance our belief in the vast ways that the Gospel of Jesus Christ can heal and uplift both ourselves and our loved ones.