

# Sunday October 3, 2021

## Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

### Welcome & Prayer (Ross L)

Good morning. Welcome to our service here at Charlestown Presbyterian Church. I'm Ross and we're glad that you're able to join us today. Well, how are you all travelling? The last few weeks have been difficult for many, during lockdown, with normal life put on hold. Essential shopping only, limited exercise, zoom the only way to see others face-to-face and ongoing bad hair days, there were times when it seemed that there was no end in sight. Finally, light at the end of the tunnel, October 11, December the 1<sup>st</sup>. I'm sure most of us are counting the days. We've finally got something to look forward to.

The book of Ezekiel began by describing God's holiness that Israel had despised and ignored. Ezekiel was called to preach to a people whom God labelled obstinate, stubborn and rebellious, and, subsequently, God's presence departed from the temple, the city and the people. The people were in a very dark place with little to hope for. Out of that dark place, that time of little hope, we come to the end of the book where Ezekiel presents a vision of God's final perfect kingdom. Hope to the people of Ezekiel's time and a future kingdom that we can anticipate and expect. We're here today to worship, to praise and to thank God for all that he provides for us. Please join me as I pray.

Amazing grace, Father, words that are so sweet to we who were lost from you, blinded by selfishness and yet, now able to see. You have given us an understanding of that precious grace; you have opened our hearts and our eyes to a restored relationship with you. Thank you. Even as we have walked through dark places, you have provided hope, strength and the courage that we need. Thank you. Today we want to remember your faithfulness, that you keep your promises, that you walk with us every day. Thank you that your goodness never fails us. We want to worship you, adore you and praise you. We want to come to you with open hearts. Helps us to be willing to learn & to change. As we worship today, take away our burdens, our distractions, those things that way heavy upon us and help us to see the vision of glory, your amazing vision for life that we read about in Ezekiel. The vision that you want us to see & to look forward to. Amen

### Song – Come people of the risen king

[Before the Throne of God Above \(feat. Kristyn Getty\) - Official Lyric Video - YouTube](#)

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1. Before the throne of God above<br/>I have a strong and perfect plea<br/>A great High Priest, whose name is Love<br/>Who ever lives and pleads for me<br/>My name is graven on His hands<br/>My name is written on His heart<br/>I know that while in heaven He stands<br/>No tongue can bid me thence depart<br/>No tongue can bid me thence depart</p> | <p>3. Behold Him there, the Risen Lamb<br/>My perfect, spotless righteousness<br/>The great unchangeable I am<br/>The King of glory and of grace!<br/>One with Himself I cannot die<br/>My soul is purchased by His blood<br/>My life is hid with Christ on high<br/>With Christ, my Savior and my God<br/>With Christ, my Savior and my God</p> |
| <p>1. When Satan tempts me to despair<br/>And tells me of the guilt within<br/>Upward I look, and see Him there<br/>who made an end to all my sin<br/>Because the sinless Saviour died<br/>My sinful soul is counted free<br/>For God the just is satisfied<br/>To look on Him and pardon me (repeat)</p>                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## Bible Reading – Ezekiel 40:1-9 & 43:1-12 (NIV)

*40 In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city—on that very day the hand of the LORD was on me and he took me there. <sup>2</sup> In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel & set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city. <sup>3</sup> He took me there, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand. <sup>4</sup> The man said to me, “Son of man, look carefully and listen closely and pay attention to everything I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here. Tell the people of Israel everything you see.”*

*43 Then the man brought me to the gate facing east, <sup>2</sup> and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory. <sup>3</sup> The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when he came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown. <sup>4</sup> The glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east. <sup>5</sup> Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. <sup>6</sup> While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me from inside the temple. <sup>7</sup> He said: “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. The people of Israel will never again defile my holy name—neither they nor their kings—by their prostitution and the funeral offerings for their kings at their death. <sup>8</sup> When they placed their threshold next to my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them, they defiled my holy name by their detestable practices. So I destroyed them in my anger. <sup>9</sup> Now let them put away from me their prostitution and the funeral offerings for their kings, and I will live among them forever. <sup>10</sup> “Son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins. Let them consider its perfection, <sup>11</sup> and if they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them the design of the temple—its arrangement, its exits and entrances—its whole design and all its regulations and laws. Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations. <sup>12</sup> “This is the law of the temple: All the surrounding area on top of the mountain will be most holy. Such is the law of the temple.*

## Announcements for 26<sup>th</sup> September

**NSW School Holidays.** It is important that Churches have been busy times and quieter times. During school holidays we try and stop most of our regular activities to give our dedicated leaders a good break. So this week there will be no SPARKLERS, IMPACT or Home Groups. They will start back again in early October when NSW schools return for term 4.

**Focus for the month – Family Prayer.** How have you gone with family prayer this month? Have you been able to prioritise it more? Have you tried anything that worked? Please let Stephen know as that might help others into the future. But if things are not working why not talk to Jon or Suzie or Stephen to find out some other ideas.

**COVID Regulations.** We are all looking forward to getting out of lockdown soon but it doesn't seem like we will be able to meet for physical church until the middle of October. We will let you know when and how when the NSW government makes a more definitive announcement. But please do all you can to come back when we are able. We will make things as safe as possible from a health point of view but it will be up to all of us play our part as we encourage one another in the faith. So please make it a priority to worship God with his people whenever you can for the rest of the year.

**Keeping in Touch.** In the meantime it is important for us all to make sure that others are doing OK in this lockdown. So why not give someone a call today, I am sure they will appreciate it.

**Christmas Boxes for Operation Christmas Child** It looks like our two options have become one option because of the extended lockdown in the Hunter! So if you would like to be involved this year through the Church then the only way is to pay money to OCC for the box and its contents. If you would like to do this

then please transfer \$20 per box to church account. (\$10 for postage and \$10 to have box filled) BSB 062 829, Number 1019 4850 Reference: OCC and you name (name is optional). Leila Fells from OCC will fill boxes on your behalf. There may be other ways to collect and fill a box but if you want to go down that path then you will need to do this independently.

**Facebook/Video Services.** If you have enjoyed a sermon or service why not post a response? Or tell us what you liked about it. The more we interact in this way, the more we encourage those who are working hard for each other and the way the Facebook algorithm works, the wider the video is distributed to others.

#### **Church Finances.**

Budget offerings for August	\$30,008
Actual Offerings for August	\$24,226
Deficit for August	\$ 5,782
Deficit for Jan-Aug 2021	\$15,226

This year has been a difficult one financially for our Church. Our regular bills still all need to be paid but with people not coming each week to Church, the needs of the church are not front and centre in most our minds. Please keep supporting us as best you can during these difficult times.

## **Song – O the deep, deep love of Jesus.**

[Oh The Deep, Deep Love - Sovereign Grace - YouTube](#)

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1. Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus<br/>Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free<br/>Rolling as a mighty ocean<br/>In its fullness over me<br/>Underneath me, all around me<br/>Is the current of Your love<br/>Leading onward, leading homeward<br/>To Your glorious rest above</p> | <p>3. Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus<br/>Far surpassing all the rest<br/>It's an ocean full of blessing<br/>In the midst of every test<br/>Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus<br/>Mighty Savior, precious Friend<br/>You will bring us home to glory<br/>Where Your love will never end</p> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Chorus

*Oh the deep, deep love  
All I need and trust  
Is the deep, deep love of Jesus*

- 2.** Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus  
Spread His praise from shore to shore  
How He came to pay our ransom  
Through the saving cross He bore  
How He watches o'er His loved ones  
Those He died to make His own  
How for them He's interceding  
Pleading now before the throne

## **Family Matters (God's Generosity).**

We asked a number of people about God's generosity to them.

#### **How has God been generous to you?**

God has been very generous to me through providing me with a loving family who all have a heart to serve and who love God. He has also blessed me with a beautiful school to go to & wonderful friends. (Yvette C)  
*I sense God's generosity in the phenomenon of life. He didn't have to generate it. Out of his abundant love, we have relationships, experiences, meaning, joy, family, purpose (Mark A)*

I think God has been generous to me in so many ways. He has given me with a really supportive Christian family. He has provided me with opportunities to explore new places and meet new people. And he has always given proved me with strong Christian care, no matter what situation I have been. (Phoebe B)

*God has been very generous to me by providing me with a wonderful family, a house, a job, a resident of Australia one of the best places int eh world to live and that's just the superficial stuff, looking back in my life I can see many things where God has watched over me, looked after me, dragged me back to him, kept with me the whole time. (Chris W)*

### **How has God been generous to you through this Church?**

I've grown up in this church and over the many years, God has been generous through the beautiful people within this church. I have loved forming relationships with both younger and older people. He has provided me with wonderful mentors who have helped to guide me in my growth with Christ. (Yvette C)

*In terms of the Church, I'll be specific. I recall Aaron Chesterfield's generosity and patience. He welcomed my volunteering to help with sound, but I had never used a digital desk. I took a while to pick it up and I appreciated his generosity with his time and his gracious manner with me. (Mark A)*

I think the most important way that God has been generous to me through this Church is this through this Church that I actually became a Christian. He has also been generous by making sure the people of this Church have been supportive and really care about each other so I am really glad that I am a part of this Church. (Phoebe B)

*We had Felicity in 2019 and the Church banded together, they got us meals, they gave us a lot of support. Ever since we have come to the church there they have been a really supportive family and that means so much to us and it has been a very generous things to do for us. (Chris W)*

## **Pastoral Prayer (Jen Mulready)**

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the Appleby's continuing work in Cambodia. Thankyou that though things are different due to the lockdowns there that they are still able to be creative in reaching out to people. We thank you and pray for the 2 workers who are in Vietnam in a hard lockdown. We thank you for the comparatively low rates of COVID death and illness in comparison to the rest of the Asian region. We thank you for the efficient rollout of vaccines but continue to pray for the government and its political manoeuvring and vendettas that have arisen in this environment. We thank you for Gilbert and his work with the translation project. We pray that he will continue to rely on your wisdom as he continues in this important work. We pray that your gospel will continue to be heard in Cambodia and that people will know Jesus as Lord of all.

Father we bring before you in prayer our world that is highly affected from the sustained physical, social and political effects of a pandemic- where people feel confronted, frightened and frustrated. We grieve with those who have lost loved ones, who suffer from long term illness as the result of infection with COVID 19. We pray for provision for those who have lost housing and employment. We pray for safety for those where the tensions of living with each other has become physically dangerous. We pray for people as they grieve separation from one another – for families who have not seen each other for long periods of time, for grandparents who haven't met new members of the family, to not being able to spend time with our friends who bring us much joy. We pray for comfort for those battling with poor mental health, loneliness, and fearfulness, that they will know your rest and peace.

Please give us wisdom to negotiate the ethical and moral decisions of living in this environment. We pray for those amongst us struggling with conscience, for those amongst us that fear or are suspicious that maybe some in positions of authority are being unscrupulous and taking advantage of a terrible situation. We continue to pray for our government that they will have integrity and make wise decisions for our country. Please help us to be critical thinkers, speaking up where it is appropriate but with reasoned debate that seeks to honour your name. We pray that Christians will

standout from the multitudes, not being characterised by fear but characterised by a firm hold and faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Please remind us, Father, that you are Lord of all -help us to trust in your promises, to remember that you are good.

We pray that outsiders will not see the wider church as being divisive and antagonistic and therefore as hypocritical but help outsiders to see that churches are made up of many people with lots of different opinions who are also struggling to make sense of this situation also. We pray for wisdom and patience within the many churches around Australia as decisions and logistics of how to meet together are worked out. We pray that as members of Charlestown Presbyterian we would be loving towards each other, patient and considerate of others views but ultimately be motivated to meet together in a safe environment. Help us to look forward to meeting together face to face, to read your word, to hear your gospel preached, to pray as your people in a group and to hear their voices in the room, to sing, to worship, to share our failings and our successes, to share meals together and have a laugh over a cuppa. We pray these things in your precious son Jesus' name Amen

## Bible Reading – Ezekiel 47:1-12 & 48:30-35 (NIV)

*47 The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. <sup>2</sup> He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side. <sup>3</sup> As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. <sup>4</sup> He 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. <sup>5</sup> He 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. <sup>6</sup> He asked me, “Son of man, do you see this?” Then he led me back to the bank of the river. <sup>7</sup> When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. <sup>8</sup> He said to me, “This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. <sup>9</sup> Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. <sup>10</sup> Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea. <sup>11</sup> But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. <sup>12</sup> Fruit 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 sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.”*

*48:30 “These will be the exits of the city: Beginning on the north side, which is 4,500 cubits long, <sup>31</sup> the gates of the city will be named after the tribes of Israel. The three gates on the north side will be the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah and the gate of Levi. <sup>32</sup> “On the east side, which is 4,500 cubits long, will be three gates: the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin and the gate of Dan. <sup>33</sup> “On the south side, which measures 4,500 cubits, will be three gates: the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar and the gate of Zebulun. <sup>34</sup> “On the west side, which is 4,500 cubits long, will be three gates: the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher and the gate of Naphtali. <sup>35</sup> “The distance all around will be 18,000 cubits. “And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE.”*

## Sermon – God’s Vision for Life (Stephen T) [https://youtu.be/MRZNHgE\\_HBO](https://youtu.be/MRZNHgE_HBO)

What does the good life look like for you? When you dream of life being as good as it gets what are you dreaming about? Martin Luther King famously dreamed of a time where black children and white children

played together in harmony. Where the colour of a person's skin would make no difference to the life and health of a person. Bob Hawke looked forward to a day where there were no children living in poverty, which each family had access to the good things that Australia has to offer.

I have to admit my dreams are often more mundane & selfish. Just getting to the weekend for example. Having a holiday where I can go away & have a complete break from the pressures of work. Even retirement where I can choose what to do when I get up each day.

Slide 2

But as we come to the end of the book of Ezekiel, we come to a much bigger and better vision. God's vision for humanity. God's vision for the future. God's vision for life, life to the full. But even this vision isn't as good as it gets. Because in the gospels Jesus will expand this vision and add colour to it. And at the very end of the Bible in Revelation 21 & 22, steroids are added. All the hopes and dreams of the whole Bible come together in the most wonderful way. Giving us hope for the future. Showing us the light at the end of the tunnel.

So we come to the climax of the book of Ezekiel, chapters 40-48. A long and complicated section which we will not be able to explore every part. But hopefully we will get enough so that Ezekiel's vision, Jesus vision, John's vision in Revelation will fill our vision. Enabling us all to take our eyes off our small and somewhat pathetic dreams and see God's dream for life.

Slide 3

1. And it begins with a focus on **the Lord** (chapters 40-43)

**40** *"In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city—on that very day the hand of the Lord was on me & he took me there. <sup>2</sup> In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel & set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city."*

The Lord gives Ezekiel another vision, 25 years after the people of God have gone into exile, 14 years after the fall of Jerusalem. God's people are still in exile. The land is still in tatters. Life is still hard and that is after 39 chapters of Ezekiel prophesying! You see the wait is still on. For God to come through for them. To give life to these dead bones, to provide God's people with a good shepherd, a new heart and a new spirit. When suddenly there is lift off.

Slide 4

<sup>3</sup> *"He took me there & I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord & a measuring rod in his hand. <sup>4</sup> The man said to me, "Son of man, look carefully & listen closely and pay attention to everything I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here. Tell the people of Israel everything you see."*

And just as we all get excited about what the Lord's vision for life is going to look like, we get two detailed chapters on the dimensions of the Temple. What on earth is going on here? For we have a passage that really only would get an architect excited but for the rest of us it all seems quite tedious. A floor plan, going into great detail about doors and alcoves, lengths and breadths, gates and steps. How God's temple will be put together.

Slide 5

But it is not a heavenly model to be built, it is a spiritual reality to be experienced. Because Ezekiel is called to look with his eyes, listen with ears, pay attention to everything that he is shown and then report everything he sees to Israel. You see the vision shows Ezekiel something that **already exists** and not something he was called to build! He is after all a prophet not an architect. God is going to use him to move hearts not hands.

And without going into all the details this Temple is perfectly square about 50 metres long and 50 metres wide. There is meticulous care over the design of all the rooms and gates and furnishings. Because the temple is all about how the Lord wants to be worshipped. We don't decide how best to worship our God, he tells us how to worship him. So, it is a building of great beauty and style and it is a symbol of how God wants to dwell amongst his people. God is amongst us. God can be found. There is a way to live in God's presence.

Slide 6

And that is further emphasised when we get Ezekiel 43 where we see the return of God's glory to His temple. In chapter 1 we saw God's glory appear before Ezekiel. In chapter 10 God's glory left the temple. Now in God's vision for the good life, the best life, our future life we see that God is back. At the centre of everything. This vision of the temple shows us that if we want to life and life to the full God must fill the very centre, the very core of our being.

Now the interesting thing is that when Israel returns to the land some 45 years later, they do build a temple but not this temple. And the people of that time weep because it is far from perfect, it isn't particularly grand or awesome or beautiful. And God glory is never said to come back to it to live in it. And it too is destroyed & then later King Herod builds a third temple but he doesn't use these plans either. Nor does God's glory fill this space either.

Slide 7

But many centuries later, John's gospel tells us that the Lord himself tabernacled amongst us in the form of his one & only Son Jesus Christ. Jesus was a man filled with the glory of God. And one day when this Jesus was arguing with the Jews about the destruction of the Temple, he told them the temple he was talking about was himself, his body. It would be destroyed but three days later be risen to life. So, this vision of the temple, this picture of a brave new world that God is offering us is a picture where at the very centre is the actual presence of God with his people. And God achieves that when he sends us his son Jesus.

Slide 8

And that should give us hope. God doesn't want to move away from his people but move in with them. We can come to Jesus and he will take our burdens and he will take up residence within us & that should be the centre of all our hopes & dreams for both now & the future. But if God is going to live with us, something must change within us. For He is holy and we are sinners. So, the next part of the vision focuses not just on the Lord but how we are to

Slide 9

## **2. Laud Him (Chapters 43-46)**

How we are to worship Him. That's why the focus of these chapters switches from the buildings to its main feature, the altar. For throughout the ancient world altars existed without temples but no temples existed without an altar. And this temple is no different because here at the very centre of the temple complex is a massive altar where sinful mankind can seek to have their sins forgiven.

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You see if God is going to live amongst his people, then they need to offer him their burnt offerings so that blood is shed for their sins. And they need to also offer him their fellowship offerings so that they can enjoy a close relationship with their Sovereign Lord. Forgiveness and fellowship your see are then at the very centre of Ezekiel's vision for the good life. Which means they also should be at the very centre of our dreams for the good life as well.

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And they can be. Because once again these chapters point us straight to Jesus. The book of Hebrews tells us that we have a great high priest who has come to the heavenly temple and offered the perfect sacrifice for sins, himself. The perfect lamb of God without spot or blemish. That leads both to our forgiveness and our fellowship with God. So, our worship is not done based on our own thoughts. Our worship consists of drawing near to Jesus Christ.

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So as you and I live in a world where God the Father is denigrated, disregarded & ridiculed, where God the Son's name is mostly heard in vain, where God the Spirit is regularly grieved and blasphemed against, then we should have at the top of our lists of dreams for each day a desire to worship the Lord. To enter into his temple and worship the one who secured our forgiveness and fellowship with God. Spend time in his presence and enjoy his fellowship.

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As John Newton once wrote to a friend, *"What words can express the privilege and honour of believers, who, whenever they please, have an audience with the King of Kings, whose compassion, mercy, and power are, like his majesty, infinite. The world wonders at their indifference to the vain pursuits and amusements by which others are engrossed, that they are so patient in trouble...but the wonder would cease if what passes in secret were publicly known. They have obtained the pearl of great price, they have communion with God, they derive their wisdom, strength and comfort from on high and cast all their cares on him, who they know takes care of them."*

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### 3. Lord, Laud & Life

But what's this, there is a leak in Ezekiel's Temple? Now if there is water flowing from your house you know things are bad but here there is a trickle of water coming out of the Temple

**Ezekiel 47:1**, *"The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple & I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east. The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar..."*<sup>3</sup> *As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits & then led me through water that was ankle-deep.*

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*He measured off another thousand cubits & led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist.*<sup>5</sup> *He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross because the water had risen & was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross."*

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The source of the water is the temple, which means the source of the water is God Himself. Life comes not from a palace or a government building but from God Himself. God's power and presence is spilling out from the people of God in a wonderful, tangible way. It starts small but it gets bigger. It is like a mustard seed, but you really can't imagine how big the implications of the work of God are going to become. Just look at the effects of this water.

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For it sanctifies. *"Then he led me back to the bank of the river. When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh."* Where ever it goes, it brings life.

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And it sustains life.<sup>9</sup> *"Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea."* Life in all its diversity comes from this water of life.

Slide 19

And there is no stopping it.<sup>12</sup> *"Fruit 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 sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food & their leaves for healing."* The benefits of God's presence are not just for the people of Jerusalem but for all the people of the land. It brings in a new Garden of Eden. With trees of fruit, abundant life, a new creation. All because of the Sovereign Lord. And yet Jesus again fulfills this prophecy.



Remember what he said to the Samaritan woman in John 4? *"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."* When we come to Jesus this water of life, this very presence of God in all his fullness wells up in us. It grows bigger and bigger. Transforming us. Changing us. Sanctifying us. Sustaining us.

And Jesus talks a little later in John 7 again about this water of life. Verse 37, *"If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. But this he meant the Spirit."* Do you get it? Jesus will send the Spirit into our lives and it will flow through us to others. To our church. To our world. To our family and friends.

This is not just something we can look forward to in the life to come, it is happening to you and I right now. Even now the river of life grows in us and through us and others can experience its life-giving effects as we share the gospel of Jesus with them and they repent of their sins and make them their sovereign Lord.

Friends are you beginning to widen your vision of what the good life actually looks like? We are in the presence of the Lord, we laud and worship Him as our King and God. We receive life from him and that life flows through us to those who are all around us. And then lastly that affects the whole

#### **4. Land (chapters 47-48)**

For this passage now moves to what the promised land will look like. And right at the centre of the land is the temple and the city of God and next to this is a place for God's servants the Levites and priests and also for God's Prince, the one whose task is to provide all the resources needed for worship. In the past the Kings of Israel were on the take, getting what they could out of the people. In this vision they are the ones who give, give out of all the things that God has given to them, they share with the people they are there to serve.

And that is another theme coming out of these chapters. This land, they don't have to fight for it, like they did in the beginning. It is given to them. And it is divided up fair and square. Everyone gets the same eastward to westward chunk. And the old divisions of the north and south are gone. For 5 of the tribes are south of the city and 7 are north of the city. And all of them have access to the city of God. All have a right to live in the presence of the Lord.

They all have a home. A place where God blesses them, feeds them and gives them life. A country where there is equality, security, sanctity and inclusivity. Why even the aliens have a place. Those who are not traditionally a part of the people of God get to live as part of the people of God. And right at the very end we get this picture of a city, a city where God lives. The city of rebellion and bloodshed has become the city of God's presence.

A city perfectly square, 2 & a bit kms wide and 2 & a bit kms long. With three gates on each side each named after one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Now normally there are just 1 or 2 gates because they are weak links in the defense of the city. But God is their defense, so there is no trouble in having 3 gates on every side & 12 in total. Which is why the book of Ezekiel ends with these words, *"& the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE."*

The vision is so real you can almost touch it. It is not just whetting Ezekiel's appetite; he is literally salivating. At the thought of being a part of the city. Like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Ezekiel is looking forward to the city with foundations whose architect and builder is God. Like all those who are written

about in Hebrews 11, the great chapter of faith, they are longing for a better country, a heavenly, a city that God is preparing for them.

Now that city didn't happen when the people came back from Babylon. That city didn't even happen when Jesus came to earth for that city will come at the end of the age. And that city will not be built by us before Jesus comes again. Because that city reappears coming down from heaven in the last book of the Bible, in the book of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22. So let's turn there and see how the vision of Ezekiel becomes even more fantastic. How heaven on earth is the ultimate fulfilment of Ezekiel's vision of what the good life really looks like.

Slide 24

**21** Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." God is now living with his people. God is providing for them. God is giving them life.

But it continues, <sup>10</sup> "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. <sup>11</sup> It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup> It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>13</sup> There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. <sup>14</sup> The wall of the city had twelve foundations & on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." God's glory is in this city. The gates of the city are still named for the tribes of Israel but the foundations are resting on the message of the apostles about their Saviour Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> "The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates & its walls. <sup>16</sup> The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long." Do you know the dimensions of the city in Ezekiel were about 10 times the size of Jerusalem prior to the exile, so there was going to be plenty of room for any Israelite that wanted to live with the Lord in their midst. But the heavenly city is a million times bigger than that. 2,200 kms wide, 2,200 kms long and get this 2,200 kms high! There is room for everyone.

But there is one massive difference between Ezekiel's city and the city in Revelation. The temple. <sup>22</sup> "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup> The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp." There is no need for a temple because the whole city is a temple & Jesus the one the Temple looked forward to is there in person.

Slide 25

And one more connection, Revelation 22, "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, **flowing from the throne of God & of the Lamb**<sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." This city is teeming with life. Enough life for the nations. For healing. For transformation for eternal life to all who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their Lord & Saviour.

Now that's a big dream, a massive vision. Better than a long weekend. Better than a lack of poverty, better than the equality of man, actually it probably still includes all of these things and more. It is a life lived in

the presence of God. A life of worship. A life of blessing. Where there is enough room for all people to call home. Now isn't that something to look forward to? Isn't that something to live for today? Isn't that a vision of life worth committing yourself to?

Slide 26

In the words of Tim Chester *"We need to talk about our hope and inheritance when we are together, reminding each other of what we have to look forward to when we are confronted by death, hardships, temptation or opposition. When we doubt or forget about our hope, we become focused on this world, distracted by stuff that seem important now and discouraged by the difficulties of the Christian life. We can end up as unprofitable servants, wasting our time on things that won't last, while gospel ministry is neglected."*

Slide 27

Let's not do that. Instead let us dream God's dreams. Let his vision of life become our vision for life. Let us again hear the wonderful offer of the Lord presented to his people at the end of the Bible. *"The Spirit and the bride says, Come. And let him who hears say Come. Whoever is thirsty, let him come and whoever wishes let him take the free gift of the water of life."*

## Song – See Him coming

[See Him Coming \(Acoustic Song Leading Video\) // Emu Music - YouTube](#)

- |                                            |                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Glory and power to the One Who loves us | 2. Glory and power to the One Who made us       |
| Honor and praise Him forever               | Kingdom of priests for God's service            |
| Come Lord Jesus, Come Lord Jesus           | Come Lord Jesus, Come Lord Jesus                |
| Glory and power to the One Who freed us    |                                                 |
| From all our sins by His blood             | Chorus                                          |
| Come Lord Jesus, Come Lord Jesus           |                                                 |
|                                            | Bridge                                          |
| Chorus                                     | Jesus is the Living One Who died and came alive |
| See Him coming on the clouds of heaven     | Jesus is the Mighty God Who was and is to come  |
| Every eye behold Him now                   | Jesus is the Living One Who died and came alive |
| He's the Living One, the First and Last    | Jesus is the Mighty God Who was and is to come  |
| Who once was dead but now He lives forever |                                                 |
| And ever                                   | Chorus                                          |

**Benediction** *"The Spirit and the bride says, Come. And let him who hears say Come. Whoever is thirsty, let him come and whoever wishes let him take the free gift of the water of life."*

**Morning Tea** There is no physical morning tea allowed at the moment but why not give someone a call instead? Who might your ring now? Maybe the person you are hoping to keep in touch with?