

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



E Z E K I E L

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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The Mystery of Iniquity

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 29, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Ezekiel 28

*“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou
was created, till iniquity was found in thee.”*

EZEKIEL 28:15

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Introduction

Turn in your Bibles to Ezekiel chapter 28.

In a few hours, the world will be participating in something called Halloween that in many ways glorifies the devil. I can remember as a youngster participating in Halloween, putting on costumes, going out as a child—we would dress up as witches, ghosts, skeletons, hob-goblins. And I remember at churches I used to pastor, we would have Halloween parties. And I can remember walking into a church that I pastored in Florida and seeing a booth, and in that booth was a woman dressed in black with a pointed hat, and it said, “Get your fortune told here.” And I thought, how stupid could I be? How blasé—this many, many years ago—how blasé to the work of Satan that a witch, even a parody, even a joke, could be inside of a Christian church. How Satan had fooled us, and how we had become so blasé and so ignorant of his devices. Now, that was many, many years ago. I tell you, I think a whole lot more seriously about those things today than I did in those younger years.

And I want to tell you that we are at war—W-A-R. And the reason that we are not winning the war is so many times we do not recognize the enemy. Our enemy is not political. Our enemy is not philosophical. Our enemy is not cultural. The enemy is not pornography. The enemy is not liquor. The enemy is not drugs. The enemy is not violence. The enemy is not perversion. The enemy is not abortion. Nor is any human the enemy. The enemy is not your wife, not your mother-in-law, not your father, not your husband, not your parents, not your boss, not the principle, not the President, not the

Congress. There is a kingdom of evil. It is headed up by Satan. And he is the power behind all these other things that we think we're fighting.

Now, God's people need to be informed. And we need to understand that we are not citizens of this world. We're citizens of another world, and we are living in hostile territory. Now, we don't need to be ignorant. We must be informed. But there are many mysterious things about the nether world, the underworld, the world of darkness. So I want us to think tonight for some time in the Word of God about "The Mystery of Iniquity"—"The Mystery of Iniquity."

Now, when I say the mystery of iniquity, that does not mean something that is so mysterious that we can figure it out, as if we were Sherlock Holmes, or Agatha Christie, or Columbo. That's not the kind of a mystery I'm talking about. A mystery in the Bible is a sacred secret that you can only understand by divine revelation. The apostle Paul spoke in 2 Thessalonians the second chapter about the mystery of iniquity. But the mystery of iniquity is explained in many ways in Ezekiel chapter 28. Here in Ezekiel chapter 28, we find the story of Lucifer, Satan, the devil.

Look, if you will please, beginning in verse 11: *"Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise, they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, and by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more"* (Ezekiel 28:11–19).

Now, folks, I want to remind you again that there is a kingdom of evil, and it has a dark prince. Jesus, in John chapter 14, verse 30, calls Satan the prince of this world. Now, this passage of Scripture that I just read to you was addressed to an ancient king.

There is a kingdom just above Israel called Tyre and it's there on the coast of the Mediterranean. It's roughly what we would call Lebanon today. And the message is addressed to the king of Tyre. But, as you look at this message, you know that it goes beyond the king of Tyre to the power behind the throne, because while this was a wicked, ungodly, malevolent, egocentric king, things are said about him that could not be said about any earthly human being. And so, what God is doing is addressing the devil through this individual. Now, God has already done that. God addressed the devil, for example, through the serpent in the Garden of Eden. One time, the Lord Jesus addressed the devil through Simon Peter. He looked at Simon Peter and said, "*Get thee behind me, Satan*" (Matthew 16:23). Because the Lord Jesus saw the power that was working in Simon Peter was really the power of Satan. And again, the apostle Paul says, "*we wrestle not against flesh and blood*" (Ephesians 6:12). So many things that we see in flesh and blood are really the working, the power, of Satan. That's the way it was with the king of Tyre.

I. Why Did God Create the Devil?

And so, there are three questions I want to ask and answer about Satan tonight, the mystery of iniquity. Question number one: Why did God create the devil? Now, that's a big question. Why did God create the devil? That's the question. Here is the answer: He didn't. God did not create the devil. God created an angel, an anointing cherub who was absolutely, totally perfect. He was created in perfection.

Notice again verse 12: "*Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum*" (Ezekiel 28:12). Now, what does it mean, "he sealet up the sum"? We would say today he was a perfect ten, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. Now, again verse 15: "*Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou was created, till iniquity was found in thee*" (Ezekiel 28:15). God did not create sin. God did not create imperfection. God did not create a devil. God created a cherub who was noble and beautiful. This one was the top of the line. This one was the best of the best, the wisest of the wise, the most exquisite in beauty. He was surpassing in beauty, superlative in wisdom. In another passage, we learn that his name was Lucifer. And the word *Lucifer* literally means light-bearer. And it was not a bad name at the beginning; it was a beautiful name.

Now, he was perfect in beauty—verse 15. Verse 13 tells us that when he spoke his very voice was like music. Look in the last part of verse 13: "*the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee the day thou wast created*" (Ezekiel 28:13). To hear this one speak would be like hearing a great pipe organ play. He lived in a beautiful place, in a jeweled city. Look, if you will, in verse 13: "*Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering*" (Ezekiel 28:13), and

then he lists all of these precious stones. One of these days I hope to live in a city like that, and I will. I'm going to live in a city whose walls are jasper set with precious stones and streets of gold.

Look in verse 14—you know this could not be the king of Tyre, for it says, *“Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God”* (Ezekiel 28:14). Now, when the Bible uses the term a mountain of God, it's not speaking of a pile of dirt. But in the Bible, in Bible symbolism, an emblem, the mountain stands for the government of God. And what that means is that this: this angel, this cherub, this one that was so incredibly beautiful, this one who was surrounded by splendor, had to do with the government of God. He was a high official in heaven. Most likely, he was the prime minister of heaven. Verse 14 tells us that he was a cherub. The cherubim were the highest class of angels. And he was the one that covered. That is, he was the chief among them.

Look, if you will, in verse 18—it speaks of sanctuaries: *“Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries”* (Ezekiel 28:18). A sanctuary is a place of worship. This high official, this beautiful creature, was most likely the prime minister of heaven who received worship and passed it on to God Almighty. He was there coordinating the praise in heaven. He has the ability and the responsibility to offer worship and praise to the Almighty.

Now, remember that he was created. He was a created being. Look again in verse 15: *“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee”* (Ezekiel 28:15). Now, in spite of all of his superlative beauty, in spite of all of his seemingly limitless wisdom, he was created.

There are some people who believe in a dualism, that is, that there is sort of an eternal kingdom of evil and an eternal kingdom of God. Manichaeus was a philosopher who believed this dualism. But there's no dualism. Don't get the idea that we're in some sort of a battle today between God and Satan and we're waiting to see how it works out, that Satan is some sort of a being co-equal with God—only on the dark side. No, Satan is a created being. And when God created him, God created him in perfection.

So many times we have the idea that Satan is the opposite of God. You've played the game of antonyms. That's the opposite word. For example, the antonym for up would be what? Down. The antonym for good would be bad. For light would be dark. And if you ask somebody what's the antonym for God, they might say, Satan. But no, God has no opposite. For God to have an opposite, God would have to have an equal. There is no equal to God. Satan is a created being. There's not another like God. There's not another opposite from God. God has no opposite because God has no equal.

But God did not create a devil. Everything that God created was perfect. But God created a being, and because he was perfect, he had perfect freedom—he had perfect

freedom. And he chose in that perfect freedom to sin. Iniquity was found in him in verse 15, we're going to find out, and that sin was pride. That same pride had infected the king of Tyre.

Go back to chapter 28, verse 2: *"Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God..."* (Ezekiel 28:2). Who gave the king of Tyre that idea? The old devil, who said, "I will be like the Most High." You can read that in Isaiah chapter 14. Here was a man who was lifted up with pride. And, what caused this pride? Well, look in verse 16: *"By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence"* (Ezekiel 28:16). What is merchandise? Merchandise is that which has passed through your hands. A merchant buys goods, and he sells goods, and they come through his hands. Satan was handling holy things. He could take praise and offer praise. He could take wisdom and dispense wisdom. And it was passing through his hands.

You know, that's one of the reasons that the Bible says that you're not to put a young man in the ministry until he's had experience and he's been seasoned. The Bible says don't ordain a novice lest he be lifted up with pride and fall into the condemnation of the devil (1 Timothy 3:6), because a minister sometimes, if he's not careful, can handle holy things. He can take the Word of God and be dispensing the Word of God, he can be orchestrating praise, and after a while, he forgets who's who or what's what. And he begins to lay profane hands on holy things and make merchandise of the ministry. We've seen that happen sometimes where people fall under the condemnation of the devil by merchandising holy things of God.

And so, here's what happened to Satan. Satan became filled with pride. He came to the place where he said, "I am too wise, I am too beautiful, I am too powerful to be anything less than God. I will be like the Most High." Created in perfection, but corrupted by pride. God did not create a devil. God created an angel in absolute perfection, but He gave to that angel choice. And Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night. And his wisdom and his beauty were corrupted, but they still remained.

Now, here's something you need to learn about the dark prince. He still has traces of that original beauty and he has that residual wisdom. So, therefore, he has transformed himself as an angel of light.

Put in your margin 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 14 and 15. Paul is talking about false apostles who sometimes occupy the pulpit. And then he says, *"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed as an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness"* (2 Corinthians 11:14–15). Not everybody who stands behind the pulpit is a man of God. Some are men of

Satan. Satan has his ministers—the Reverend Dr. D. D. So-and-So. They are ministers of Satan transformed. Satan uses this camouflage. He is a master of music. He is a lover of light. He is a worker of literature. He is brilliant, but he is brilliantly stupid. He is beautiful, but he is hideously beautiful. He has a blemished beauty. He has a warped wisdom. And this makes him very dangerous.

I want to give you some phrases that speak of his activity in the Bible. He is called, for example, in the book of Genesis, “*more subtil*” (Genesis 3:1). He is called in the letter to the Corinthians, “*angel of light*” (2 Corinthians 11:14). He is called in the letter to the Ephesians, one who has wiles (Ephesians 6:11). In another place, snares (1 Timothy 3:7; 2 Timothy 2:26). In another place, devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). Now, think of those words—angel of light, snares, devices, subtle. Do you know what Jesus said of him? If it were possible, he would deceive the very elect. Now, that means the only reason that he has not deceived you is God has not allowed him to do so. Incredibly wise, incredibly shrewd, incredibly powerful. He’s not opposed to religion. It was religion that had motivated him to begin with. And his desire is in the realm of religion—to be like God. He has always wanted to be worshiped.

He tempted Eve. And how did he tempt Eve? To be like God. He said, Take of this fruit, and you will be as God, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5). It was the same temptation that Satan himself had had. And he was offering to Eve what she already had, because Eve was made in the likeness of God. But he wanted to pervert that, and twist that, and not make her like God, but as God. That is to say, “Move over, God. I’m going to take your place. I’m going to be my own God.” That same temptation is today. That’s all New Age religion is based on: the same temptation that Eve received in the Garden of Eden.

Satan even had the audacity to come to the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and ask Jesus to worship him. And he occupies pulpits and schools of theology today. Don’t think that means the Bible is not the Word of God, for the Word of God says in 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 1, “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils*” (1 Timothy 4:1). In the last days, God said, that’s what’s going to happen. If we did not have the apostate religions today, it would prove the Bible false. The apostate religions ratify, underscore, the truth of God’s Word. It is exactly, precisely as the apostle Paul predicted it would be. First Timothy 4:1: “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.*”

Question: Why did God create the devil? Answer: He did not create the devil. God created a beautiful angel in absolute perfection, who, by his own choice, became a devil.

II. Why Doesn't God Destroy the Devil?

Question number two: Why doesn't God destroy the devil?—Why doesn't God destroy the devil? Answer: He has. Not will—He has. You say, now, wait a minute. Who's doing all this stuff then? Well, hear me out. Back in the Garden of Eden, Satan was a flimflam artist who negotiated with Adam for Adam's birthright and Eve's birthright. They were made to be king and queen of the earth. But as you read the entire story, you find that Adam sold the farm to save him. Satan tricked him and gained the dominion, and Adam yielded willingly over to Satan and became a slave of Satan. Now, when a man owns a slave, he owns everything the slave owns. And now that dominion has become Satan's. Satan now has power and authority over those who are not saved and those who are not redeemed.

Let me tell you kind of power and authority Satan has. For example, none less than the Lord Jesus, in John chapter 14, verse 30, called him *"the prince of this world"* (John 14:30). That's not what he called himself; that's what Jesus called him: *"the prince of this world."* The apostle Paul called him, in 2 Corinthians 4:4, *"the god of this world"*—god, with a little g. There's only one true God, but he is the god of this world. The apostle Paul called him, in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12, the ruler of darkness (Ephesians 6:12). Satan, the prince of this world, the dark prince, has a legion of angels, fallen creatures, who rebel with him, who are in full sympathy with him, who do his bidding on this earth.

When Satan tempted Jesus, Satan said to Jesus, in Luke chapter 4, verses 5 and 7, after he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, he said, "All of this I will give you if you will bow down and worship me" (Luke 4:5–7). Jesus never said to him, "It's not yours to give." Jesus never did deny that it had been turned over to him. Jesus had another plan: not to take the kingdoms from Satan by worshiping Satan, but to absolutely, totally destroy Satan. But how is he going to do it? We'll get to that in just a moment. But, as the king of this world, as the prince, as the God of this age, he has incredible power.

One of my favorite songs, I think one of the greatest hymns ever written, is A Mighty Fortress is Our God, written by Martin Luther—written in German, translated into English. And the English translation is incredible. But one line there speaks of Satan. And it says,

*His craft and pow'r are great, and
armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.*

—MARTIN LUTHER

We need to understand that. He is known for a multitude of iniquities.

Look in verse 18: *"Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine*

iniquities, and by the iniquity of thy traffick” (Ezekiel 28:18). What does Satan do in the world today? Acts 10, verse 38, speaks of those oppressed by the devil (Acts 10:38). I’ve just been to India—come back. I’ve seen a nation given over to idolatry, and seen multiplied thousands, though I didn’t see millions with my own eyes, in a nation filled with people who are oppressed by the devil.

In Luke chapter 13, verse 16, the Bible speaks of those whom Satan has bound (Luke 13:16). It’s a pitiful thing—bound by Satan. In 2 Corinthians 12, verse 7, the apostle Paul said, there was a *“messenger of Satan to buffet me”* (2 Corinthians 12:7). Have you ever been buffeted by Satan? Satan has a reign of terror, subversion, perversion, diversion. Satan wants to come to divide, to depress, to destroy. Some people are under depression, some are under oppression, some obsession, some possession—all of these are the malignant work of Satan.

Has it ever dawned on you how much Satan hates little babies? You study the Bible, you find out that the pagan God Molech, he was a big bronze god with an open belly and a fire in his belly like a furnace. And the people would take their little babies and feed their babies into the molten belly of Molech in order to worship their God who was Satan. How did they worship Baal, whose name is spelled B-a-a-l. Baal—how did they worship him? By the murder of little babies. What motivated Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to kill all the little babies? What motivated Herod, that wicked king of Judea, to murder all the little babies? What motivates America to kill all the little babies? It is the bloodlust of Satan.

No wonder the Bible says the whole world lieth in the wicked one (1 John 5:19). All the suffering, all the heartache, all the tears, all the fears, all the faults, all the failures can go back to sin. And sin is rooted in Satan. *There is a trinity of evil—sin, suffering and Satan—and they’re all inextricably woven together.*

“But, Pastor Rogers, you said that God has destroyed the devil.” Yes, He has. I want you to get a verse—Hebrews 2, verse 14: *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood...”*—he’s talking about the children of men, talking about us, human beings, so—*“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself”*—“he also himself” now, is referring to Jesus—*“likewise took part of the same...”*—that is, Jesus took upon Him flesh and blood. Why did He take upon him flesh and blood? Because, as a spirit, He could not die. And the wages of sin is death, and He was going to pay the wages of sin for us, and pay our sin debt for us, and so He had to take flesh and blood that He might die. And so the Bible says—*“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”* (Hebrews 2:14).

Jesus died to destroy Satan. Jesus has died, and Satan is destroyed. You say, if

Satan is destroyed, who's doing all this dirty work? Well, the word *destroy* here does not mean to obliterate. It's the word *katargeo*, spelled k-a-t-a-r-g-e-o. And it literally means "to make of none effect." He has destroyed the devil that He might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil.

Now, why did God do it this way? Why didn't God just blow His breath on him, cremate him, obliterate him? He spoke him into existence; why didn't He speak him out of existence? Well, He could have done that—but not to be true to His own sense of justice. You see, heaven is run according to laws. God is absolutely, totally just. That's the reason that none of us can ever go to heaven except we be justified in the sight of a righteous and a holy God.

God gave to Adam dominion. Adam legally lost it. It must be rightfully regained. And it was lost by a man. It had to be regained by a man. But it had to be regained by a perfect man. A sinner could die for nobody else's sin but his own. A slave could not redeem slaves. He himself, being a slave, had nothing to redeem slaves with. That's the reason Jesus was born of a virgin. Though He was perfect man, He was also Almighty God. And, being born of a virgin, He had none of Adam's sin in Him. He was the Son of God. And yet, He was made flesh and blood that He might die the perfect righteous sacrifice, and legally buy back for Adam his lost estate. When Jesus was on the cross, hell had a holiday. As He was dying and expiring, they said, "He is finished." But Jesus said, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). The plan of salvation was finished. They put Jesus in a tomb. He stayed there three days. On the third day, He walked out of that tomb, and He said, "I have the keys of death and of hell" (Revelation 1:18).

Now, here's a scripture I want to give you—Colossians 2, verse 15. The Bible speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His victory, and Calvary, and His ascension, as He has ascended the high hills of glory. And it says this of the Lord Jesus: "*And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them*"—principalities and powers—"in it" (Colossians 2:15).

Now, the triumph was when a Roman general would come back from a victory. He would bring his captives chained to his chariot wheels. He would take the chief leader, and he would strip that leader, that king, that general, that potentate, that pompous whoever; he would take from this one his medals, his armor, his royal regalia, and strip him stark naked, all of the accoutrements of his office gone; all of the embellishments, all of the adornments, all of the points of bragging were gone. There he is, absolutely humiliated, chained to the chariot wheels of the conquering Roman general, and they call that the triumph. After the battle, there was a triumph. This kingdom that has been overcome in battle is spoiled.

Now, notice again what it says about the Lord Jesus, keeping that in mind: "*And having spoiled principalities and powers...*"—now, you remember who it says that we

wrestle against? We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12). It's talking about the dark kingdom—*“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”* Three words: stripped, shamed, subdued. That's Satan: stripped—stripped. The word spoiled is the word *ekduo*. It means to strip; it means to be unclothed. He has been unclothed. The king has no clothes, folks—the king has no clothes. He has been stripped at Calvary. Not only has he been stripped; he's been shamed. If you could only see what Jesus did to him when through death He destroyed him that had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14). And he has been subdued. He is chained to the chariot wheels of Prince Emmanuel. Jesus said at the cross, “Now is the prince of this world cast out” (John 12:31). You say, “Why doesn't God destroy the devil?” He has destroyed the devil. Through death, He has destroyed him that has the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14).

Now, for the Christian, Satan has been defeated. He is vanquished, not vanished. He may be present, but he is powerless over the child of God. First John chapter 4, verse 4: *“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them:”—*what? the powers of darkness; a little child overcoming the powers of darkness—*“because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4).

III. When Will the Devil Rule in Hell?

Well, one last question. First question: Why did God create the devil? He didn't. Second question: Why doesn't God destroy the devil? He has. Third question: When will the devil rule in hell? Answer: never—never. Don't get the idea that Satan rules in hell. Milton, I believe, said that Satan said, “I had rather rule in hell than serve in heaven.” Well, he'll do neither. Don't get the idea that somehow, as the caricaturist and the cartoonist think of things, that Satan is there somehow making people shovel coal in hell, and he's there with a pitchfork trying to catch somebody bending over, or something like that—such ridiculous ideas! Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. Jesus told us that (Matthew 25:41). And Satan is not in hell yet, but he will be in hell.

You're back here in Ezekiel chapter 28. Look, if you will, in verses 18 and 19: *“Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee...and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more”* (Ezekiel 28:18–19). That is, never anymore a terror. You are going to come to a place of a lake of fire. Remember he walked up and down the midst of the stones of fire? How the mighty have fallen! He will go from the stones of fire to the lake

of fire.

See, Satan said, “I will ascend.” But God says, “You’re going down.” Jesus said, “I will descend.” And God the Father says, “And I’ll give You a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9–11). He’s Lord in heaven; He’s Lord on earth. Jesus is Lord in hell. Every knee shall bow—things in earth, and things in heaven, and things under the earth—and every tongue, even in hell, shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The utter folly of following Satan—friend, did you know that in the world to come those who are redeemed will be given a place—listen—a place—are you listening?—higher than Satan had before he fell? You will be given a place higher than Satan had before he fell. Did you know the Bible teaches that the saints are going to judge the angels? First Corinthians chapter 6, verses 2 and 3: *“Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?”* (1 Corinthians 6:2–3). Well, the judge is greater than the one he judges. I’d rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel.

Oh, what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ! How foolish people are to listen to the lies of Satan! And if you’re a child of God, how foolish you are to take that stuff from him, because you don’t have to take it. You don’t have to take it. You draw nigh to God, God will draw nigh to you. You resist the devil, and the devil will flee from you (James 4:7–8).

You say, “Well, Pastor, I’m not afraid of the devil.” That’s not enough. He ought to be afraid of you. Resist the devil; he will flee from you. He has been stripped, shamed, and subdued. He was wiped out at Calvary. And we need to learn the power of the blood of Jesus. *“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death”* (Revelation 12:11). Why? Because the one who has the power of death has already been destroyed. And now death to us is a welcome friend. All death does is bring us to Jesus. That’s all it does.

Conclusion

I met a girl on the street—two girls, teenagers. I stopped them, got them in a conversation, witnessed to them. One girl, as I remember, prayed and asked Christ into her heart. I asked the other girl if she would pray and ask Christ into her heart. She said no. She said, “I don’t want to do it right now.” And I spoke with her again. I said, *“Now is the accepted time”* (2 Corinthians 6:2). Would you give your heart to Jesus? She said, “No, not now; I can’t do it now.” I persuaded and pushed about as far as I felt I ought to push, and I said, “Well, I don’t want to offend you. You’ve been very nice to listen to me.

Before I go, would you shake hands with me?" "Well," she said, "yes." I said, "Fine, I've got two hands." I said, "If you'll take Christ and heaven and salvation, would you shake my right hand?" I said, "If you'll take Satan and hell and damnation, will you shake my left hand?" She put her hands behind her and backed up like that. I said, "You said you'd shake my hand." I said, "If you'll take Christ and salvation and heaven, will you shake my right hand? If you'll take the devil, hell, and damnation, take my left hand." She said, "I don't want to take either one." And I said, "You already have, whether you've done it physically or not, because if you're not for Christ, you're for Satan. Jesus said, *'He that is not with me is against me and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad'*" (Matthew 12:30).

And I want to say to every mother's child tonight, you're on one side or the other. And tonight, you have Christ or Satan by the hand.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father God, I pray tonight that you would help us to understand the authority that we have in the Lord Jesus, the victory that we have in the Lord Jesus, incredible blessings that we have in the Lord Jesus. Lord, help us to understand the dark, malevolent power of Satan that only exists today because of his trickery, because he has no real power. That power has been broken. His authority is gone. And Father, I pray that in this building tonight, if there's anybody here—surely there must be in a crowd like this—who's not truly saved, that tonight they might come to Jesus.

From the Palace to the Pit

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 11, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Ezekiel 28:8

“They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas.”

EZEKIEL 28:8

Outline

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Introduction

Take God’s Word and find in the Old Testament the prophet Ezekiel. And, when you’ve found that Old Testament passage, turn to chapter 28. And, when you’ve found that, look up here. And, I want to talk to you on this subject: “From the Palace to the Pit.”

I, like you, enjoy headlines sometimes. I especially enjoyed this one. Now, you might not be able to see it out there, but that’s a picture of Saddam Hussein, and in big red captions it says, “Captured!” Down underneath that it says, “Iraqi ex-dictator found hiding in a hole.” Now, when I read that, my mind immediately went to this passage of Scripture over here in Ezekiel chapter 28 and verse 8: *“They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas.”*

Now, this Scripture that I just read to you was talking about the king of Tyre, who lived high, wide, and handsome; who had a lavish, marble, cedar palace. And yet, he went from the palace to the pit. And, God takes the king of Tyre, and uses him as an illustration of Satan himself.

Now, Saddam Hussein may have been a terrorist, but he’s only a picture of the greater terrorist, who is Satan himself. And, all the terrorists of this world, including the king of ancient Tyre, and Hitler, and all of these today, are but tools of Satan, who is the power behind the throne. And, Satan himself has gone from the palace and is headed toward the pit.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, we are at war, and it is a bigger war than we realize. Our war is not primarily or only against terrorism. Our war is not a political war. Our war is not a philosophical war. Our war is not a cultural war, as such. Therefore, our great enemy is not terrorism. It is not pornography. It is not liquor. It is not drugs, not violence, not sexual perversion, not abortion. Now, all of these things are terrible, but unless you see the power behind them all, behind all modern-day terrorism, behind all of these cultural and philosophical problems, you're not going to win the war. Your enemy, lady, is not your husband. Sir, your enemy is not your boss, or your in-laws; not the IRS. There is a kingdom—listen carefully—there is a kingdom of evil. It is headed up by Satan, and he is the power behind the throne.

Now, Satan is not some medieval superstition. You cannot, as a child of God, afford ignorance. You need to be informed. There is a kingdom of evil. And, we need to understand that we are citizens of another kingdom, and that we have victory day by day, if we will appropriate it. But, we are living in this day and age in what the Bible calls hell's headquarters.

Listen to Revelation chapter 2, verse 13. God said to the church at Pergamos, "*I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat*"—literally, where Satan's throne—"*is*" (Revelation 2:13). Now, we live in a world that is dominated by a kingdom of evil that has a king. Jesus called him in the Bible, in John 14, verse 30, "*the prince of this world*" (John 14:30). That's what Jesus called Satan: "*the prince of this world.*" There is a kingdom of evil.

Now the king of ancient Tyre that we see described here in Ezekiel 28 is used in the Bible as an illustration of Satan himself. And, as you read Ezekiel 28, you find God speaking to the king of ancient Tyre, a wicked, malevolent, terrorist king, but God goes right on through the king of Tyre, and God addresses Satan himself, who is the power behind the throne. Now, in the Bible, you'll often find God speaking through something or someone to the devil. For example, in the Garden of Eden, God spoke to the serpent, but He was really speaking to Satan. When Simon Peter said to Jesus, "You're not going to the cross," Jesus was speaking to Simon, but really to Satan, when He said, "*Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God*" (Mark 8:33). Sometimes God takes an individual or a thing, and sees the power behind that thing, and speaks to Satan himself. Now, that's what God has done here in this twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel. So, what we're going to do is we're going to look at Satan himself, the power behind Saddam Hussein, the power behind terrorism, and we're going to see what we are really up against, because we'll never win the war until we see where the true enemy is.

Now, there is a system of iniquity. The Bible calls it "*the mystery of iniquity*" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). There are four things out of this passage here in Ezekiel chapter 28

that I want to lay upon your heart—many more things, but four things I want you to see about the devil himself. Now, remember, this involves you. You may think that it doesn't involve you, but you are a target of a sinister enemy. He is your personal enemy. And don't think that you can afford neutrality, and ignorance is dangerous. Four things I lay on your heart.

I. Satan Was Created in Perfection

First of all, Satan was created in perfection—Satan was created in perfection. People ask this question: “Why did God ever make the devil, to begin with?” Friend, God did not create a devil. Satan, who became the devil, was created in perfection. Look, if you will now, beginning in verse 11: *“Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.”* Today we would say he was a perfect 10. He seals up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. *“Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God;”*—now, right away we know he was not talking about the literal king of Tyre, because the king of Tyre was not full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. The king of Tyre had never been in Eden, the garden of God—*“every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.”* Now, this tells us that Satan was a created being. *“Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire”* (Ezekiel 28:11–14). Now, the king of Tyre never did all of that himself, so God is speaking through the king of Tyre to someone else.

But now notice verse 15: *“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee”* (Ezekiel 28:15). Now, verse 15 tells us that Satan was the noblest, the most beautiful, of angelic creation. Satan was surpassing in beauty. He was superlative in wisdom. Originally his name was Lucifer, which means, “light-bearer.”

Look at verse 13. Brother Whitmire, verse 13 teaches that when Satan spoke, it was like music. His voice was like a great pipe organ. Look in the last part of that verse: *“And...thy pipes [were] prepared in thee [from] the day...thou wast created.”* When he would speak, he would fill the universe with music.

Look, if you will again, in verse 13. He lived in a jeweled city. Now, one day I'm going to live in a jeweled city, and so are you. We're going to live in a city whose streets are gold, whose walls are jasper, a city that is adorned with precious gems. What he's talking about here is Heaven. There was a time when this created being dwelt in a place

called Heaven.

Verse 14—verse 14 tells us he was on *“the holy mountain.”* A mountain, in the Bible, speaks of God’s government. The mountain of God speaks of the administrative authority that this one had. He was the chief of the chief. He was the prime minister of Heaven. Verse 14 tells us that he was a cherub. The cherubim were the highest of the created angels. He was the highest class of angels. And verse 14 tells us that he was the chief among them. He was the anointed cherub that covers. He was the one who was the leader of the leaders. He was the highest of the high.

Verse 18—look in verse 18. It speaks of his sanctuaries. *“Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities”* (Ezekiel 28:18). A sanctuary is a place of praise. This anointed cherub, this one, the highest of the high; this one, full of wisdom and beauty, was a person who would receive and offer praise to the Almighty. He was like the high priest of Heaven. And, it was his responsibility to orchestrate the worship and the praise to God the Father.

But remember that he was a created being. Never get the idea that Satan somehow was co-equal and co-eternal with God. Satan had a beginning. He was created with God, created by Almighty God. God did not create a devil. God created a perfect being, absolutely, totally perfect. So, the first thing I want you to learn about this sinister minister of evil is that he was created in perfection. Got it?

II. Satan Was Corrupted Through Pride

Now, here’s the second thing. Not only was he created in perfection, but, number two, he was corrupted through pride—he was corrupted through pride. Now, look again in verse 15: *“Thou wast perfect in thy ways...”*—see, God did not create imperfection—*“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till...”*—underscore the word *till*—*“till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom because of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee”* (Ezekiel 28:15–17).

Now, here was this Lucifer, this son of the morning, who is absolutely beautiful, wise, having all of the attributes and accoutrements that God could give to him, but then he was infected with pride. He came to believe, “I’m too good. I’m too wise. I’m too holy. I’m too great to be anything less than God.” The counterpart of this passage is found in Isaiah chapter 14, where the Bible says that he was lifted up with pride and said, *“I will be like the most High”* (Isaiah 14:14).

Now, look at the word *merchandise* in verse 16: *“By the multitude of thy*

merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence.” What is merchandise? Merchandise is that which passes through our hands. A merchant is something that takes something from somebody and sells it to somebody else. This merchandise comes through his hands. Now, Satan made merchandise of his office. All of this praise that was coming, it was coming only to him that it might go through him and up to God Himself. But, what he began to do was to put his hands on that merchandise and to try to let that merchandise stick to his own fingers, and he made merchandise of his office. And, because of that, he fell from his exalted position.

Look, if you will, in verse 17: *“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.”* Now, he fell because of his exalted position. Now, get it down plain, because some people stumble over this fact: God did not create a devil. He created a holy angel. And, He gave that angel the power of choice between good and evil, and this angel chose to do evil. Now, had he not had the ability to choose to do evil, he could not have chose to do good. God gives everybody a power of choice. If we had no choice, we could neither be praised for doing good or blamed for doing evil. This angel had a choice. And, because of pride, he chose wrong. And, Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night. And, verse 17 tells us that his wisdom and his beauty are corrupted. But now, listen carefully. Corrupted or not, traces of them still remain.

So, when you think of the devil, don’t think of some repulsive monster, some scaly beast. The Bible tells us that he is a master of camouflage, and he has been transformed as an angel of light. Put this verse in your margin—2 Corinthians 11, verses 14 and 15. Here’s what the apostle said. He’s warning them about false prophets, and here’s what he said: *“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works”* (2 Corinthians 11:14–15).

Now, Satan is like an angel—an angel of light. If Satan were to appear in this building as an angel of light, you would be tempted to fall down and worship him. And, Satan has his emissaries, his ministers. Now, I want to say to all of those of you who are listening on television and those in this worship center, when you look for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpit—never fail to look in the pulpit. Paul says—he’s talking about false prophets—and he says, “He has transformed himself as an angel of light.” And so, it’s no strange thing if his ministers also be that way, be transformed as the ministers of righteousness. You see, the devil’s not against religion. The devil is up to his ears in religion. He is the master of camouflage. And, Satan works through music. Satan works through art, through literature. He is brilliant, but he’s brilliantly stupid. He is beautiful, but he is hideously beautiful. And, he has blemished beauty. He has warped

wisdom.

Let me tell you some of the attributes of the devil with this blemished beauty and this warped wisdom. The Bible describes him in Genesis as *“more subtil than any beast of the field”* (Genesis 3:1). The Apostle Paul called him, *“an angel of light”* (2 Corinthians 11:14). The Apostle Paul spoke of his wiles and his snares and his devices. Friend, sometimes a person may be very religious and very iniquitous at the same time.

Do you know what the first temptation was in the Garden of Eden? The devil, in the form of a serpent, tempted Eve to sin, but what was the crux of the temptation? What was underneath the temptation? “Eve, do this, and you’ll be like God.” He didn’t say, “You’ll be like the devil.” “You’ll be like God.” Now, that sounds pretty good, doesn’t it? It wasn’t a temptation to fall down; it was a temptation to rise up. “To be like God, just do it my way. Forsake what God the Father has said, and listen to me. You have your own homemade religion.”

See, the devil is into this thing of worship. The devil even wanted the Lord Jesus to worship him. That’s the unmitigated gall and audacity that the devil has. He said to Jesus, when he showed Him the kingdoms of this world, he said, “All of this I’ll give you if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus knew the Scripture. Jesus said, “Of course not! The Scripture says, ‘Thou shalt worship the Lord God, and Him only.’”

This world is full of religious deception. You say, “Pastor, then that proves the Bible not to be true.” No, it proves the Bible to be true. First Timothy chapter 4, verse 1: *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to”—what?—“seducing spirits and doctrines of devils”* (1 Timothy 4:1)—doctrines of demons. The devil transforms himself as an angel of light.

Satan was created in perfection. Satan was corrupted through pride. And, by the way, nothing will put you further out of the devil’s reach than genuine humility. And, the Bible tells us when we ordain a new minister, be careful that he’s “not a novice, lest he be lifted up with pride and fall into the condemnation of the devil.” *Nothing will put a preacher more out of the reach of Satan than genuine humility.* Sometimes we pray, “Lord, make me humble.” Well, friend, if you’re wise, you’ll humble yourself before Almighty God. God has ways of making you humble, and you probably will not like it.

III. Satan Continues with Power

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to notice. Satan’s created in perfection. God did not create a devil. Satan was corrupted with pride. Now, here’s the third thing I want to lay upon your heart. Satan continues with power. Now, God says that, “I am going to cast you out of this holy place.” Look, if you will, in verse 17: *“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom because of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground.”* Satan is cast out of Heaven. No sooner had he unsheathed his

sword of rebellion than the power of Almighty God cast him from His holy place, from the holy mountain. Jesus said, *“I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven”* (Luke 10:18). Jesus was there when it happened. This was eons before Bethlehem when Satan fell. But even though he’s been cast out of Heaven by the express permission of God, Satan continues with power.

Look, if you will, in verses 16 through 18: *“By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned; therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.”* That is, “You’re no longer going to walk up and down here in this holy place.” *“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee”* (Ezekiel 28:16–18). Now, here God is speaking of a process that begins with Satan’s being cast out of Heaven and finally brought down to Hell. But, in the meanwhile, Satan still has power.

You see, God gave to Adam and Eve dominion of the Earth. Satan, having been cast out of Heaven, came as a con artist and conned Adam and Eve out of that dominion. They turned it over to him. They became slaves of Satan. And, all the progeny of Adam and Eve have become slaves to Satan. The Bible says, “The whole world lieth in the lap, the bosom, of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19). We are by nature now the children of wrath. And Adam and Eve turned over the power and the authority on Earth to this one called Satan. You say, “Well, I didn’t know that Satan had power and authority on Earth.” Yes, he does.

Put these scriptures down now. John 14, verse 30—Jesus said, *“Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh...”*—“the prince of this world”: Jesus called him that—*“the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me”* (John 14:30). What does that mean? I don’t have any itch the devil can scratch. That’s what that means. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, the Apostle Paul called him *“the god of this world.”* The word *god* with a little *g*. He is *“the god of this world.”* Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12, speaks of the “rulers of darkness” (Ephesians 6:12). That means that Satan is the commander-in-chief of a vast number of spirit beings, angels who rebelled with him and are in full sympathy with him and do his bidding. And now, Satan has this reign of terror over the Earth. You want to know what’s wrong with the world today? There is a reign of terror, and Satan is the master and chief. He has principalities and powers.

When Satan said to Jesus, “Fall down and worship me, because all these kingdoms have been given to me,” Jesus did not argue with him. Jesus did not say, “It’s not yours

to give” (Matthew 4:8–10; Luke 4:5–8). Jesus knew that Adam had delivered it over to Satan. Satan had usurped it as a con artist, but, nonetheless, Satan had it. But Jesus refused to worship him, but He did not deny the power that Satan had.

Martin Luther, with that great hymn, which is one of my favorite hymns, “A Mighty Fortress is our God,” said of Satan,

*His craft and pow’r are great, and
armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.*

—MARTIN LUTHER

And he is known now for a multitude of iniquities. Notice in verse 18: “the multitude of iniquities.”

What’s wrong with the world today? Jot these scriptures down. Acts chapter 10, verse 38, speaks of those “*oppressed of the devil*” (Acts 10:38). Luke 13:16 spoke of one whom Satan has bound; 2 Corinthians 12:7, “*the messenger of Satan.*” Satan has today a reign of terror. He’s the chief terrorist: subversion, perversion, diversion. He wants to divide. He wants to depress. He wants to destroy. Depression, oppression: these things come from the devil.

Have you ever wondered why there’s such a war on little babies? Friend, just open the Bible. Read about the ancient god Molech—Molech, who had a fire in his belly with open arms. And, in order to please this pagan deity, mothers would take their new, little newborn babes and roll them screaming into the fire to please Molech. Then, they had the worship of Baal, the fertility god, the god of sex. How did they worship the god of sex, Baal? By the sacrifice of their little babies. Satan has always hated children. Think of Pharaoh. What did Pharaoh do? He killed the babies. What did Herod do? He killed the babies. What does Planned Parenthood do? It kills the babies. Who is behind that? Abortion is a blood sacrifice to Satan. Satan has a war against the unborn, against the innocent. You see, they’re just old gods with new names.

Well, you say, “Pastor, is it hopeless and helpless?” Of course not! That’s why Jesus came. Put Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14 down: “*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood...*”—“*as the children,*” talking about us, the children of God—“*are partakers of flesh and blood, he*”—Jesus—“*also himself...took part of the same;*”—Jesus became flesh and blood. Why?—“*that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death...the devil*” (Hebrews 2:14). Jesus came to this earth to die in my place, in your place, and through His death destroy him who had the power of death, the devil. Now, the word destroy, *katargeo*, does not mean, “to obliterate.” It means, “to make of no effect.” Jesus does not obliterate the devil, but Jesus has taken away the authority of the devil. What Adam gave to Satan legally, what was legally lost, Jesus has legally taken back by His death, burial, and resurrection. When Jesus Christ

was on the cross, Hell had a holiday. They said, “He is finished!” But He wasn’t finished. Satan was finished. The power of Satan was finished.

Now, notice. Put down Colossians chapter 2 and verse 15. It speaks of Jesus and His death, and it says, *“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it”* (Colossians 2:15). In what? In His death. Jesus spoiled principalities and powers. Now, the Bible says we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12). But, those principalities and powers, headed up by the devil, have been decimated by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has been stripped. That is, all of his accoutrements are taken from him.

Think of Saddam Hussein in that rat hole. Think of that man who had walked around in his military regalia, and that man who swaggered, and he’s stripped. Not only was he stripped, but the Bible teaches that he is shamed, that he has spoiled principalities and powers. His authority has been taken from him. He is subdued like a whipped puppy, saying, “I want to negotiate.” That is the way Satan is to you, child of God, if you’ll understand it. He, Jesus, has spoiled principalities and powers. For the Christian, therefore, in your life and in my life, Satan has been defeated. He has been vanquished even if he has not vanished. He is present, but he is powerless. If I could only get you to understand this. Listen to me. Come up close. Satan has no power over you—none! none! none! He doesn’t want you to understand that. You’re not a victim. His back was broken at Calvary. He sails a sinking ship. He rules a doomed domain. And, Jesus said, “I give you authority over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19). Amen? You need to understand that. Our Lord said, *“In nothing [be] terrified by your adversaries”* (Philippians 1:28).

You say, “Does that mean I can’t be put to death for Christ?” If you do, if you get put to death, it will be Satan’s biggest mistake. *“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto...death”* (Revelation 12:11). Friend, in Jesus we have conquered. “Thanks be unto God who causes us always to triumph in Christ Jesus” (2 Corinthians 2:14). You’re not a helpless victim, and quit saying, “The devil made me do it.” He hasn’t. He can’t. Now, you can fail to use the authority that God has given you, and if you do, then you’ve got a big problem. But, friend, our Lord says, “Behold, I give you authority over all the power of the enemy.” You’re not bigger, stronger, wiser, greater than Satan, but Jesus is, and the Bible says, *“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4).

IV. Satan Is Consigned to the Pit

Fourth and final thing I want to lay on your heart today: Satan is consigned to the pit—Satan is consigned to the pit. Look in verse 8: *“They shall bring thee down to the pit.”*

Look in verses 18 and 19: *“Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. And all they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror,”*—that is, you’re just awful to look at— *“and never shalt thou be any more”* (Ezekiel 28:18–19). That doesn’t mean that he won’t exist anymore; it means never will you terrorize people anymore. It’s over for you, Satan. Just as this man here who lived so high, wide, and handsome, put to death so many people, where did they find him? In a hole, cowering in the dirt, and people said, “You mean that’s the one we’ve been after?” Friend, there’s coming a time—there’s coming a time—when we see Satan, and we’ll say, “That worm? That’s the one that made the nations to tremble?”

Conclusion

What’s it all about? You choose sides carefully, because if you follow Satan, you’re going to end up with him. The Bible says that Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. It wasn’t prepared for you. If you go to Hell, you’ll be an intruder. But all who follow Satan will end up with him.

Number two: Don’t you be terrified by Satan. I don’t mean to swagger; I don’t mean to be careless. The Bible says, “Be sober, be vigilant; your adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). But remember that in Jesus you have authority, if you will use it.

Number three: Understand where the real war is. Our battle is not with flesh and blood. Our battle is with principalities and powers. And many times we lose the war because we don’t show up for the battle.

Are you saved? Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? If not—if not—Satan has you like a plaything, like a puppet on a string now, and one of these days you’ll join him in Hell. “Pastor, when is the devil going to rule in Hell?” Never. The devil doesn’t rule in Hell. The devil is going to Hell to suffer. Don’t get the idea that somehow Satan rules Hell. He doesn’t rule Hell. For a while, he’s a usurper here on Earth, but his back has been broken, and he has no power over you, if you’ll trust Jesus.

From the Palace to the Pit

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 11, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Ezekiel 28:8

“They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas.”

EZEKIEL 28:8

Outline

Introduction

Introduction

- I. Satan Was Created in Perfection
- II. Satan Was Corrupted Through Pride
- III. Satan Continues with Power
- IV. Satan Is Consigned to the Pit

Conclusion

Introduction

Find Ezekiel chapter 28 in the Old Testament, one of the major prophets of the Old Testament. And, when you've found that, look up here. I want to talk to you on this subject: "From the Palace to the Pit."

I enjoy news headlines sometimes; I especially enjoyed this one. Get up close, camera, if you can. There's a picture of Saddam Hussein in red headlines: "Captured!" George Bush says, "Saddam will face the justice he denied to millions." The sub-headline: "Iraqi ex-dictator found hiding in a hole."

Now, keep that in mind, and I want you to look, if you will, in Ezekiel chapter 28 and verse 8: *"They shall bring thee down to the pit"* (Ezekiel 28:8). Now, who is this talking about? Well, it's talking about an ancient ruler, not Saddam Hussein, but he was talking about the king of Tyre—the king of Tyre—who lived in a lavish palace. He was a terrorist. He was a murderer. He was bloodthirsty. He was filled with pomposity and pride, and lived a life of luxury. And yet, the prophet Ezekiel said, "You're going down into a hole. They're going to bring you down to the pit." I thought of this verse when I read this headline, and I want to talk to you on this subject: "From the Palace to the Pit."

Now, what God does here in Ezekiel chapter 28, He looks through the king of Tyre, who's going to do down into the pit, and He addresses Satan, who is the power behind the king of Tyre. Saddam Hussein had a power behind him. Other despots, other

terrorists, other wicked people all through history have been but pawns and puppets in the hand of the master terrorist, who is Satan himself.

Now, we are at war. No child of God is immune, and none can afford to be ignorant. And, our war is not primarily against flesh and blood. Now, listen carefully to your pastor. Our war is not primarily a political war. It is not a philosophical war. It is not a cultural war. Our war is not primarily with pornography, not with liquor, not with drugs, not with violence, not perversion, and not with abortion. All of these are evils, but there is a power behind the throne. There is a kingdom of evil.

The Apostle John spoke to the church at Pergamos, and said, “You dwell where Satan’s throne is.” (Revelation 2:13). But, not only did they dwell there; we dwell there. There is a kingdom of evil. Jesus called the devil “*the prince of this world*” (John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11). He is the dark prince. Now, you say, “Well, Pastor, I want to get some intellectual information.” You need more than intellectual information; you need intelligence from Heaven, because you are a pawn in this battle.

Now, the ancient king of Tyre was a wicked man, and this chapter starts out addressing him and telling him he’s going to be brought down to the pit. But now, listen. It goes beyond him. And, God in this chapter morphs from speaking to the king of Tyre to speaking to the power behind the throne, the devil himself, and reminds us of what the Apostle Paul said when he said, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood,”—that is, the king of Tyre—“but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12). Now, if we don’t understand where the real battle is, we’re going to lose, because we’ll never really even show up for the war. Our battle is not with our wives, our husbands. Our battle is not with our mother-in-law. Our battle is not with the IRS. Our battle is not with wicked terrorists all over the world. Yes, there are things that must be opposed, and I’m not saying that we should roll over and play dead, but I’m saying that unless we look beyond these and through these, beyond the king of Tyre to the power behind the throne, we’re not going to win the battle.

Now, God has often addressed the devil through individuals or things. For example, God addressed Satan through the serpent in the Garden of Eden. When Simon Peter tried to keep Jesus Christ from the cross, Jesus looked at Simon Peter and said, “*Get thee behind me, Satan: [for] thou art an offence unto me*” (Matthew 16:23). Well, He was talking to Peter, but He knew that His real battle was not with Peter, but with the devil behind Peter that encouraged Peter to say to Jesus, “Don’t go to the cross.”

And so, with that in mind, I want us to learn four things about your enemy, the devil. And, the title again of the message, “From the Palace to the Pit,” because that is exactly the history of the devil himself. Satan began in the palace. He will end in the pit. And, I want to show you that from the Word of God. Four things I want to get in your heart and in your mind today.

I. Satan Was Created in Perfection

Number one: Satan was created in perfection. There are some people who say, “Why did God ever create a devil to begin with?” God did not create a devil. He created a perfect being. Let’s look in verse 11: *“Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying...”*—now, when he says, *“moreover,”* he’s kicking it up a notch and getting into a different subject—*“Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty”* (Ezekiel 28:11–12). Now, that certainly couldn’t be the literal king of Tyre, because he was not perfect in beauty. He was not full of wisdom. He did not seal up the sum. What does that mean: *“Thou sealest up the sum”*? That means he’s a *perfect 10*, perfect in beauty.

Notice in verse 13: *“Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God;”—*the king of Tyre was never in Eden, the garden of God—*“every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee the day that thou wast created.”* Underscore the phrase *“thou wast created.”* *“Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth;”—*well, certainly the king of Tyre, the literal king of Tyre, was no anointed cherub that covers—*“and I have set thee so; thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created,”—*now, underscore this—*“till iniquity was found in thee”* (Ezekiel 28:13–15).

God did not create a wicked devil. Some people say, “Well, where is there a devil? Did he always exist?” No, he didn’t always exist. Did God create a wicked devil? No, God did not create a wicked devil. God created an indescribably beautiful angelic creature whose name was Lucifer, which means, “son of the morning.”

Look, if you will, in verse 15. Look how great he was. The Bible says here in verse 15: *“Thou wast perfect in thy ways.”* Now, he was the noblest and the most beautiful of all of the angels that God created. He was surpassing in beauty. He was superlative in wisdom, the Bible teaches.

Look in verse 13, the last part of verse 13 here. When he spoke, it was like music. It says here, *“The workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee [from] the day thou wast created.”* Now, when he talks of tabrets and pipes, he’s saying that when Lucifer spoke, it was like a grand pipe organ. He would fill the universe with music by his very voice. He was one who worshiped God.

Look in verse 13. He lived in a jeweled city. Do you see that? *“Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering.”* And, he mentions all of these jewels. One of these days I’m going to live in that jeweled city. That’s Heaven with gates of gold, gates of pearl, walls of jasper, streets of gold. This is a picture of

Heaven. This is where this creature was, this beautiful creature. He lived in a jeweled city.

Look in verse 14. He was on the holy mount. Do you see that in verse 14? *“Thou wast upon the holy mountain of God.”* A mountain, in the Bible, speaks of government. Here was a creature who was in the governmental affairs of God. It seems as though he were the prime minister of Heaven. He is there upon the holy mountain in God’s government. In verse 14, he is called a cherub. The cherubim were the highest class of angels, and he was the anointed cherub. He was the one set aside, a leader of leaders.

Look, if you will, in verse 18. There in verse 18 sanctuaries are mentioned. What is a sanctuary? It’s a holy place, a place of worship. This beautiful, wise, authoritative figure was there in the midst of the worship of Almighty God. He was almost like a priest receiving worship and passing that worship on to the throne of God. He was orchestrating Heaven’s worship.

Now, I don’t have words enough to explain how glorious this one was. As a matter of fact, again, the Bible says he was perfect, full of wisdom, exquisite in beauty, and yet, he was created. Now, this is going to answer the question, why did God create the devil? God did not create a devil. God created an absolutely perfect being.

II. Satan Was Corrupted Through Pride

Here’s the second thing I want you to see. This one who was created in perfection was corrupted through pride. Look at the pride that happened to him in verse 16: *“By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee”* (Ezekiel 28:16–17).

Now, here is Satan as he begins his way down. Satan has a heart now that is filled with pride. He begins to think, “I’m too wise, I’m too beautiful, I’m too strong, I’m too powerful, I’m too glorious to be less than God Himself.” You read the counterpart over there in Isaiah chapter 14, where Satan says, *“I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the most High”* (Isaiah 14:13–14). And, how did he do it? The Bible says through his merchandise; he was corrupted by his merchandise. What is merchandise? Merchandise is that which passes through our hands. What does a merchant do? A merchant takes goods from this person and he passes them on to this person, and it passes through his hands. Now, what Satan began to do was to make merchandise of his office. He began to abrogate this praise to himself. He began to let what passed through his hands stick to his fingers, and because of his exalted position

he fell. He was cast out of the holy mountain. Jesus said, *“I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven”* (Luke 10:18). Satan was banished from Heaven, but now he has come down to the earth, and now he is a devil. No longer there as the prime minister of Heaven, no longer orchestrating the praise in Heaven, he has come down to the earth. And, Lucifer, the son of the morning, has become Satan, the father of the night. He has wisdom, but it is corrupted and warped wisdom. He has beauty, but it is blemished beauty.

Now, when you look for the devil, therefore, don't look for some repulsive monster, some hideous, scaly monster. The devil is a master of camouflage. If the devil were to come in here with his blemished beauty and his warped wisdom, he has enough power to deceive the very elect, if it were possible (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22). If he were to come in here, he would be so dazzling, if he were to appear to us, that you would want to fall down and worship him. In 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 14 and 15, Paul is warning about false teachers and how they deceive. And then he says this, and listen to it carefully. This is 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 14 and 15. Paul, concerning the power of these false teachers, says, *“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”* Now, when you think of the devil, what do you think of? A dragon? A beast? Well, Paul said he's transformed into an angel of light, and, *“Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness”* (2 Corinthians 11:14–15).

Now, think of this: Satan masquerading as an angel of light, and ministers, pastors, teachers, preachers masquerading as ministers of righteousness. When you look for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpit. Across America there are ministers who are teaching false doctrine, and they have transformed themselves into ministers of righteousness. You see, Satan is a master of camouflage. Satan can work through art. He can work through music. He can work through literature. He certainly works through religion. He is beautiful, but he's hideously beautiful. He is brilliant, but he is brilliantly stupid. He has a blemished beauty. He has a warped wisdom. But, he is not against religion. He, Satan, doesn't want casualties as much as he wants converts, and Satan has always worked through religion.

When he tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, what was the temptation? To go away from God. Well, that was what was behind the temptation, but that's not the way the temptation came. Satan said to Eve, “Eve, if you will eat of this fruit, then”—now, listen to this—“you'll be like God” (Genesis 3:5). You see that? “You will be like God.” It wasn't a temptation to be ungodly; it was a temptation to be like God. It wasn't a temptation to fall down, but to step up. It was the same ungodly temptation that made the devil the devil when he said, *“I will be like the most High.”* Now, God wants us to be godly, but not as God. Do you see the difference? Do you see how subtle that is? You see, Satan

is into religion. Now, God did not create a devil. God created a perfect being who became the devil, because God gave him a choice.

Now, God has given everybody a choice. The angels in Heaven have a choice. Why? Because God wants love. Forced love is not love at all. And, if you can't choose to love, you can't choose not to love. So, He created an angel, a perfect angel, and that angel had perfect freedom.

III. Satan Continues with Power

Now, here's the third thing. Not only was Satan created in perfection, and not only was Satan corrupted through pride, but, thirdly, Satan continues with power. Why doesn't God just obliterate the devil? Why doesn't God just destroy the devil? Because God is a righteous and a holy God, and God is going to deal with the devil, and is dealing with the devil, and has dealt with the devil, but not the way that you might think that He will, but the way that He ought to do it.

Look, if you will now, in verses 16 and following: *“By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee,”*—and God is doing that—*“O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee”* (Ezekiel 28:16–17). And so, here he is in Heaven. He's cast out of Heaven. Ultimately, he is going down to the pit, that kings may behold him and bow their knee to Jesus who is the King of kings.

Now, what happened is this. Adam was conned by Satan. Adam, our father, was given dominion over the earth. Satan conned Adam out of that dominion. Adam turned that over to the devil. And, whether or not it was the right thing to do is beside the point. It was the wrong thing to do, but he did it. And, he gave his dominion that God gave to him, he gave it to Satan. And, Satan now has that dominion here on this earth. You say, “Does he really have that dominion?”

Let me give you some Scripture here, and it's important that you get this. For example, Jesus said, in John 14, verse 30, that Satan is *“the prince of this world”* (John 14:30). Paul said, in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4, that Satan is *“the god of this world”* (2 Corinthians 4:4), spelled with a little *g*. The Apostle Paul speaks, in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12, of the “rulers of darkness” (Ephesians 6:12). There is a kingdom that is ruled over by Satan himself. He is the chief commander, and he has all of these underlings, fallen angels that fell with him. We call them demons. And so, when Satan said to Jesus in the temptation, he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and he said to Jesus, “Look, I'll give you all of this if you will bow down

and worship me.” Satan has always wanted worship. That’s what he wants today. And, he had the audacity, the unmitigated gall, to say to the Son of God, “I’ll give it to you, if you’ll fall down and worship me.” Now, Jesus did not say, “It’s not yours to give.” Jesus said, “I’ll not worship you, for the Scripture says, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only” (Matthew 4:8–10; Luke 4:5–8). Jesus knew the Scripture. But Jesus did not say, “Satan, it’s not yours to give,” because at this point it was Satan’s to give, because Adam had given it to Satan, and now Satan is *“the prince of the power of the air”* (Ephesians 2:2). Satan is *“the god of this world.”* He is the dark prince, as Jesus said, and he continues with power. He has this devilish power.

Martin Luther, who wrote that great song, “A Mighty Fortress is our God,” which is one of my favorite hymns, said of Satan,

*His craft and pow’r are great, and
armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.*

—MARTIN LUTHER

So, I don’t want you just to sally forth lightly and think carelessly about the devil, for the Bible says, “Be sober, be vigilant, your adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

You want to know what’s in the power that’s in the world today? It’s the power of the wicked one. Behind every dictator, behind all crime, behind the mafia, behind the liquor business, behind the abortion business is the devil. Listen to these scriptures. Acts chapter 10, verse 38—the Bible speaks of those who are “oppressed by the devil” (Acts 10:38). Luke 13, verse 16, speaks of those who are bound by the devil (Luke 13:16). The Apostle Paul said, in 2 Corinthians 12, verse 7, that there was sent a *“messenger of Satan to buffet me”* (2 Corinthians 12:7).

So, Satan is the chief terrorist, has a reign of terror, subversion, perversion, diversion. He wants to divide. He wants to depress. He wants to destroy. Depression and oppression, wickedness, violence—behind it all is the devil.

Now, listen to me. The devil especially hates little babies. It’s an amazing thing, but he especially hates little babies. In the Old Testament, there was a demon god whose name was Molech. Molech had a hollow belly, and they heated this brazen god, a great brass hideous god, made of brass and a hollow belly. They built a fire inside this god, Molech. Molech would have his hands outstretched like this. And, the drummers would beat their drums and beat their drums and beat their drums. And, the mothers would bring their little babies, and put their babies in Molech’s hands, and the baby would tumble down into the fire. And, the priests would be beating the drums and beating the drums and beating the drums so the mothers could not hear the cries of the little babies, just like the politicians today beating their drums and beating their drums, trying to

deafen our ears. There's another god, the god Baal. Baal was a sex god. That's what he was, a sex god, the god of fertility. And, how did they worship Baal? They worshiped Baal by the killing of the infants to show Baal, the sex god, how much they loved him.

Think of old Pharaoh, wicked King Pharaoh. What did Pharaoh do? He killed the babies. Think of wicked King Herod. What did wicked King Herod do? He killed the babies. What does the ACLU and Planned Parenthood want you to do? Kill the babies. The old gods—just new names. May I get political with you? I'm never going to vote for a baby killer. You can call it Democrat, Republican, or Steamboat, for all I care. But, I'm telling you there is a dark, wicked, malevolent power that's in this world today, the power behind the throne, still beating the drums, still beating the drums, so we cannot hear the truth. Satan created in perfection. Satan corrupted through pride. Pride is a terrible, horrible thing. The Bible says, concerning a new minister, don't ordain "a novice, lest he be lifted up with pride and fall under the condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6). *Nothing will put you further out of the reach of Satan than genuine humility.* "Lest he be lifted up with pride and fall under the condemnation of the devil." Satan created in perfection, corrupted through pride, continues in power, because Adam turned it all over to him.

IV. Satan Is Consigned to the Pit

But, here's the last thing. I want you to see this, friend. Satan is consigned to the pit. He is consigned to the pit. You say, "Why doesn't God do something?" Bless God, God has done something. Put this scripture down—Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14: "*Forasmuch then as the children*"—talking about us as children of God—"*are partakers of flesh and blood, he also*"—speaking of Jesus—"*likewise took part of the same...*"—that is, Jesus took flesh and blood—"*took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*" (Hebrews 2:14). Jesus through death has destroyed the one who has the power of death. Now, the word *destroy* here does not mean, "obliterate." It is a Greek word which means, "to render helpless." Satan's dominion that he had usurped from Adam has been now taken from him and given to those who will put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if you continue to refuse Jesus, then Satan's dominion continues over you. But, if you're a child of God, I want you to listen to me. Jesus, through death, has destroyed, rendered helpless, the one who has the power of death; that is, the devil.

One of my favorite Scriptures in all of the Bible is Colossians 2, verse 15. Now, listen to it carefully, because it applies to you. The Bible speaks of Jesus, and it says, "*Having spoiled*"—underscore the word *spoiled*—"*principalities and powers, he made a shew of them*"—underscore *shew*—"*openly, triumphing over them in it*" (Colossians 2:15). Now, what did He do? First of all, Satan is stripped. "*Having spoiled principalities and*

powers”—what does that mean? It’s a word *ekduo*, which means, “to strip.” It’s just like if you were to see a general who’s been conquered. And the conquering general comes up to this general with all his regalia, his medals and his amulets, on his arms, and so forth, and this conquering general just takes and he just shreds all of that off of him, and he stands there stripped. That’s exactly what this word means. Jesus has taken all the medals off Satan’s chest. He’s taken all the scrambled eggs off of Satan’s shoulders. He has taken all of the regalia that Satan has. He has been, by Calvary, stripped. And then, he’s been shamed. They would take a vanquished general, and they would chain him behind their chariot, and he would walk naked in chains behind the chariot. And, they call that “making a show of him openly.” Satan—listen—he has been stripped. He’s been shamed. And then, it says, “triumphing over them in it.” He has been subdued. Satan sails a sinking ship. Satan rules a doomed domain. By death, Jesus has destroyed him that has the power of death; that is, the devil.

Now, you listen to your pastor. Satan has no power over you—none! none! none! I hope you understand that. None! Don’t you come whining to me and saying, “The devil made me do it.” Jesus said, “I give you authority over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19). Jesus said, “Greater is he that’s in you than he that’s in the world” (1 John 4:4). We’re not victims. We are victors. “Thanks be unto God who causes us always to triumph in Christ Jesus” (2 Corinthians 2:14). Satan is on the way down. There’s coming that final, glorious day when Jesus will come, and with His bruised heel put His heel upon Satan’s head and crush the serpent’s head. Satan is headed to the pit.

He was created in perfection. He was corrupted through pride. He continues with power. But he is consigned to the pit. He is going down. Revelation chapter 20 speaks of it as a “*bottomless pit*” (Revelation 20:1). He is falling and falling and falling and falling. Here was one who walked in the midst of the stones of fire, and now he’s in the lowest of the low. Here’s one who had all the power and pomp and pride and circumstance. Here is one who terrorized the earth. And, do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says we will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). Did you know we’re going to sit at the judgment of Satan? You think about it. We will judge angels. When the court is called, when the war crimes are there, and this archenemy is there, sitting there in the jury box, the saints of God, we are going to judge angels.

Friend, when you get saved—you listen to me—God gives to the child of God, the twice-born child of God—listen, and don’t miss it—a higher position than Satan had before he fell. You say, “I don’t believe that.” Well, help yourself. I believe it. We twice-born received through the Lord Jesus Christ a higher position than Satan had before he fell. I’d rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel. Listen. Satan may have been the prime minister of Heaven, but I’m a brother to Jesus Christ. He’s not ashamed to call me His brother. That’s what the Bible says. We are next of kin to the Holy Trinity.

We are going to judge angels—to judge angels. Read it—2 Corinthians chapter 6. Satan created in perfection, corrupted with pride, continuing in power, but consigned to the pit—to the pit, to the pit.

Conclusion

Now, who are you following? If you follow Satan, you'd better be prepared for what you're about to receive, because the Bible says Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. God didn't make Hell for you. If you go to Hell, you'll be an intruder. But, if you follow Satan, that's where you're going to end up. Now, who wants to follow a loser? I'm going with Jesus. I'm going with Jesus. Friend, we have the victory in Christ. God gave Satan a choice, and he became Satan. God gives you a choice, and you can become a saint.

Four Dangers in Dealing with the Devil

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 7, 1988

Main Scripture Text: Ezekiel 28:11–19

Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.”

EZEKIEL 28:17–18

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Danger of Passivity
- II. The Danger of Pride
- III. The Danger of Presumption
- IV. The Danger of Pessimism

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take the Word of God, the Holy Bible, and open, please, to the Old Testament? Ezekiel chapter 28. Tonight is a very serious and somber subject. We're going to be talking about his majesty, the devil—that sinister minister of evil, the prince of darkness. The title of the message is “Four Dangers in Dealing with the Devil.”

I begin our reading, tonight, in verse 11—Ezekiel chapter 28 and verse 11: *“Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the Holy Mountain of God; thou hast walked up and*

down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more” (Ezekiel 28:11–19).

Now in dealing with the devil, we need to be warned. We don't need to be flippant. We don't need to be careless. We don't try to be crafty or to out-manuever him. We need to understand exactly who he is, and what God has said to His people. And as I look at this passage of Scripture, there's so much taught here. But there are four basic things that I want to lay on your heart, because, dear friend, whether you know it or not, you deal with the devil every day. You deal with the prince of darkness every day. If you don't deal directly with him, you deal with one of his emissaries, one of his demons. Now you may not know that you're dealing with him, and you may not know that he is affecting your life—that he's controlling you, harming you, or else you are having victory over him—but I can assure you that you are not immune. If the Lord Jesus, the very Son of God, was not immune, you are not immune.

I. The Danger of Passivity

The very first danger that I want to warn you of is the danger of passivity—the danger of passivity—that is, feeling that you don't have to do anything—feeling secure, not really being aware of the devil, of his kingdom, and this king of terrors.

Now you do need to be informed. You cannot afford the luxury of being passive. You need to understand that, as a Christian, you've been born again; you are a member of the Kingdom of Heaven; you are a citizen of another Kingdom; and, while you live and dwell here on Earth, you are dwelling in hostile territory. *We are citizens of heaven, but we live in hell's headquarters.*

Now let me give you a verse that points that out in the Book of the Revelation; you may just want to put this in the margin. In Revelation chapter 2 and verse 13, Jesus was speaking to that church at Pergamos. And this is what Jesus said to that church, to encourage them: *“I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat”—s-e-a-t—“is”* (Revelation 2:13). That literally means, “where Satan's throne is.”

Now Jesus said, “I know that you love me, but I also know that you dwell where Satan’s throne is.” You see, the Kingdom of God has a King, and the kingdom of evil has a king: his satanic majesty, the devil. And Jesus very clearly called the devil, in John 14 and verse 30, “*the prince of this world*” (John 14:30). Jesus said that about him. He is the prince of this world. He is the dark prince.

Now notice, in verses 11 and 12: “*Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus*” (Ezekiel 28:11–12). Now you say, “Pastor, is this scripture directed to the king of Tyrus?” Yes and no. It was directed not only to the king of Tyrus, but it was directed *through* the king of Tyrus, to the power behind the throne. The king of Tyrus was a wicked, demonic, demon-infested, devil-inspired, malicious, vile, corrupt, and violent king. But now, our Lord speaks to the power behind his throne—the devil himself. It’s very obvious that, from the context, our Lord is speaking, not merely to the king of Tyrus, but to Satan, who was behind the king of Tyrus.

Now this is not unusual. Before, in the Bible, we have seen the Lord address the devil through an individual. For example, Jesus said to Peter, “*Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me*” (Matthew 16:23). Now Jesus was talking to Peter, but He was really talking through Peter, right on to the devil, who had motivated Peter to say what he had said. In the Garden of Eden, the serpent was used of the devil. And the devil took an animal, a serpent, and used the serpent to defile and to deceive Adam and Eve. So God, when He addressed the serpent, was really speaking to the power behind the serpent, to the devil himself.

Now his reign of terror. The king of Tyrus had a reign of terror that was energized by the devil. Now I want you to notice how he is described here, in this passage of Scripture. Notice, in verse 12: “*Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.*” Obviously, you know that was not a human king; certainly not the king of Tyrus: “*Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God;*”—the king of Tyrus was never in the Garden of Eden—“*every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold*” (Ezekiel 28:12–13). You see, here is a creature that is described as being scintillatingly brilliant, dazzling in his beauty, surpassing in beauty, and superlative in wisdom. Isaiah tells us that his name was Lucifer. *Lucifer* literally means, “light-bearer.”

And then, the Bible says that he had pipes in him. Notice the last part of verse 13: “*The workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created*” (Ezekiel 28:13). Now Bible expositors have sometimes said, “Could it be that this man—this being, rather—was a master musician, that music resided in him, and when he spoke, when he expressed himself, it was like a great vast pipe organ

speaking, that there was melody that fell from his lips?”

And he dwelt in a jeweled city of rare mineral beauty. Does that remind you of anything? One day, the saints are going to dwell in a city just like that. The Bible says he was upon the Holy Mountain. Now this certainly doesn't mean the king of Tyrus; he was not like this. What does a mountain, a Holy Mountain, stand for, in Bible prophecy and typology? The Mount of God stands for the government of God; the mountain stands for the authority of God. This one had something to do with the government of God, the authority of God.

Many believe that he was the prime minister of heaven. He is called, in this same passage, the “*cherub that covereth*” (Ezekiel 28:14). The word *covereth* means that he spreads forth his wings. That is, he was there as the prime minister of God; there, before the throne of God; there, beholding the glory of God, spreading out his wings there. He was a cherub; that is the highest class of angels.

Over in verse 18, it mentions his sanctuaries; notice, here, “*Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries*” (Ezekiel 28:18). This means that he evidently had a priesthood, that he received the worship of other creatures, and passed it on to the throne as an angelic priest, spreading out his wings there, to the throne. We can only begin to wonder what all of this cryptic language means. We can see glimmers and facets that here was a person highly, highly exalted.

But now, I want to tell you something, folks: In all that we said about him, I don't want you to make a tragic mistake that some people make when they consider the devil. Have you ever played the game of antonyms? Do you know what a synonym is? A word, a different word, but it has the same meaning as the first word, right? Now an antonym is an opposite word. All right? Let's play the game of antonyms. I'll mention a word; you give me the opposite word, okay?

“Up” (congregation: “down”). Good. What a smart congregation! All right. “Backward” (congregation: “forward”). “Left” (congregation: “right”). “God” (congregation: “Satan”). Satan? You were wrong. Now that's the mistake that many of us make. Don't ever think of Satan as the opposite of God. You see, God has no opposites. God has no antonyms; and God has no synonyms. There is nothing like God to compare God with. And Satan is not the opposite of God.

So many people have the idea that *over here* is the kingdom of Satan and *over here* is the Kingdom of God, and that, somehow, these are polarized opposites, equal opposites. They are not—they are not. God is God, and Satan is a created being. I want you to understand that. And as a created being, he is subject to Almighty God. And you need to understand this. Now he is great; but notice, he was created: “*Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created*” (Ezekiel 28:15). Now all I have done is to try and show you of the greatness, something of the majesty, that was

inherently his.

II. The Danger of Pride

But I want you to notice something else in dealing with the devil. Number one: Beware of passivity. Beware of acting as if the devil doesn't exist, or that he is of no consequence. But no, my dear friend, he is a person of great, great, great, great, magnitude and consequence. And he has an effect on your life, like it or not. You cannot afford to be ignorant; you cannot afford to be passive. Secondly, in dealing with the devil, I want you to also beware of pride.

Now it was pride that made the devil the devil. Continue to read here, in verse 15: *"Thou wast perfect..."*—speaking to the king of Tyrus; actually, the power behind the throne, the devil himself—*"Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise"*—underscore that phrase, "by the multitude of thy merchandise"—*"they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground"* (Ezekiel 28:15–17). The Bible says, *"[He that] exalteth himself shall be abased"* (Luke 14:11), and, certainly, this has been fulfilled in Lucifer himself. Now Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night. He became a fallen angel, a fallen spirit-being, through the sin of pride.

Now we don't have to guess about that; the Bible makes it very clear to us that it was the sin of pride. First Timothy chapter 3 and verse 6: God gives instructions for the qualifications of a minister, and one of these is that he *"not [be] a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil"* (1 Timothy 3:6). It doesn't mean that the devil will condemn him; it means that the same thing that happened to the devil will happen to him—that it was pride that made the devil the devil.

Now what happened is this: that the devil was handling holy things, and it got to him. Merchandise is that which passes through our hands. Notice in verse 16: *"By the multitude of thy merchandise"* (Ezekiel 28:16). Now here was a person who made merchandise his office. And I want to warn every young preacher-boy who's listening to me, every Sunday School teacher, every child of God, to beware when God blesses you—when God anoints you, when God uses you—that you don't make merchandise of your office.

"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6). Now it was pride that made the devil the devil—not only because of his merchandise, but because of his inherent beauty. Notice verse 17: *"Thine heart*

was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness” (Ezekiel 28:17). His brightness and his beauty brought him down. His pride brought him down.

Now let me say this: that his beauty and his brightness are corrupted, but traces are still there. So when you consider the devil, and think about the devil, don't think of him primarily as some scaly monster with hooves and a horn. No, the Bible describes him, strangely enough, not as a repulsive monster—though he is one; but the Bible says he has the ability to transform himself and his ministers as angels of light. Listen to this scripture: 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 14 and 15. The Apostle Paul is warning about the seductiveness of false apostles. My dear friend, let me say, that *when you look for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpit.*

I was preaching one time, and a little boy came up to me, after the service, and said, “Pastor, when you were up there preaching, I could see the devil, just as plain.”

But in all seriousness, here's what the Apostle Paul says, speaking of false apostles—and he said, in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 14: *“And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works”* (2 Corinthians 11:14–15). *Ministers of righteousness* who are truly ministers of Satan.

You see, Satan has always been able to deceive. He still has his beauty, but it is a blemished beauty. He still has his wisdom, but it is a warped wisdom. Let me tell you, let me describe the devil, if I can describe the devil, for you: He is brilliantly stupid, hideously beautiful. Have you got that? Brilliantly stupid. Now when you think about it, the devil's a knucklehead. I mean, he'd have to be to be the devil, wouldn't he? I mean, to think about it, that he thinks that he can overthrow God! That is unmitigated stupidity. And yet, when the Bible describes the nefarious working of Satan, it does it in these words: *“more subtil than any beast of the field”* (Genesis 3:1). Angel of light, the wiles of the devil, the snares of the devil, the devices of the devil; wisdom, but wisdom corrupted.

Dr. Davidson, you know that many people who have mental problems sometimes are cunningly wise, but yet so far from being at *home base* mentally. This is what has happened to Satan. He is brilliantly stupid, hideously beautiful; and you see, dear friend, there are signs of that beauty that remain. I am convinced that the devil works through some of the world's best music, some of the world's best light creations, some of the world's best literature. Don't just look for the devil in the bowery or in the slums. You'll find him in the finest universities; you'll find him in the art galleries; you will find him in the halls of learning; and you'll find him, sometimes, in the pulpits, as he transforms his ministers as angels of light. But what was it that brought him down? It was pride!

Now listen. When you allow pride in your heart, when I allow pride in my life, I become in league with the devil, more than any other way. There is nothing that makes us more untouchable by Satan than a genuine humility—a genuine humility. Pride is the devil’s stock-in-trade. And the Apostle Paul warned: When you have a minister, make sure that he is seasoned, that he knows God, lest being a novice, he be lifted up with pride and come under the condemnation of the devil (1 Timothy 3:6). The devil knows how powerful the tool of pride is. How did he get Eve to fall in the Garden? It wasn’t a temptation to fall down; it was a temptation to fall up—not to be ungodly, but to be godly. “Do this; you’ll be like God—only, just do it my way.” And the temptation to her was pride. And to every mother’s child since then, it is the temptation of pride.

III. The Danger of Presumption

Now there’s a third thing I want you to be aware of, in dealing with the devil. Beware of passivity; beware of pride; and beware of presumption. Beware of presumption.

So many times, we have the idea, when we sing, “Oh, victory in Jesus!” and, when we hear who Jesus is, and what He’s done for us, that, evidently, the devil has been so incapacitated, so demolished, so diminished, that we just simply are going to steamroll over him. And my friend, I want you to see something of the devilish power that still resides in him.

Again, I remind you that Jesus said, in John chapter 14 and verse 30, that Satan is “*the prince of this world*” (John 14:30). And in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 4, the Apostle Paul called him “*the god of this world*”—little “g”: “*The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not*” (2 Corinthians 4:4). The Apostle Paul, when describing the nefarious kingdom of darkness, said, in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12, he spoke of “*the rulers of the darkness*”; he spoke of the principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12). Now the devil is commander-in-chief of vast numbers of spirit-beings called *demons*, who are in full sympathy with him, who rebelled with him, and do his bidding.

I’ve said that you will deal with the devil, but I said maybe not directly. As a matter of fact, the devil is not omnipresent. He can’t be everywhere at the same time, as the Holy Spirit of God. But he has myriads—multitudes—of demons. We talk about, “We’ve been wrestling with the devil all day.” Maybe we’re bragging a little; probably, a puny demon could handle most folks. But my dear friend, you do come in contact with him. And he is in control of the kingdoms of this world. He offered those kingdoms to Jesus, and Jesus refused them; but Jesus did not rebut his right to offer them, for he, Satan, said, “All of them have been delivered to me” (Luke 4:6). Jesus did not challenge Satan’s charge, or Satan’s statement; but Jesus simply refused, and He won the kingdom back by His death on the cross. But He did not deny Satan’s right to give these kingdoms.

Now Satan is known for a multitude of iniquities. Notice, in verse 18: *“Thou hast defiled thy sanctuary by the multitude of thine iniquities”* (Ezekiel 28:18). Notice, in verse 16, he’s known for his violence: *“By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence”* (Ezekiel 28:16). My dear friend, Martin Luther, who wrote that great grand hymn—one of the grandest I believe has ever been written, Jim Whitmire—*“A Mighty Fortress is Our God,”* said of Satan, and he would say to us, of Satan:

*His craft and pow’r are great, and
armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.*

—MARTIN LUTHER

I hear people today talking flippantly, casually, sarcastically, about Satan, and I think Satan is sitting over in the corner smiling, when they do that. Acts chapter 10, verse 38: the Bible speaks of those who were oppressed by the devil (Acts 10:38). Luke 13, verse 16, speaks of those: a woman, whom Satan has bound (Luke 13:16). Second Corinthians chapter 12, verse 7—even the Apostle Paul spoke of a *“messenger of Satan to buffet me”* (2 Corinthians 12:7). The King of Tyrus still has a reign of terror: subversion, perversion, diversion. He wants to divide, to depress, to destroy. Depression, oppression, possession. Satan, sin and suffering are a trinity of terrors that are inseparable: Satan, sin and suffering.

Now I don’t want to frighten you, *“because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4). But I do want to warn you not to be presumptuous. If you’re presumptuous, you’re going down. Beware of passivity; you’re going to be involved. Beware of pride; you’ll get over in the devil’s territory. Beware of presumption, as thinking that he is just simply a piece of cake, and that there is no struggle with the powers of darkness.

IV. The Danger of Pessimism

One last thing I want to say, and that is to beware of pessimism. Beware of pessimism. Don’t get the idea that, somehow, Satan may win, or that things are going to get so bad or so terrible that everything is just going to go wrong. I’ve said before, and I want to say again: *There is no panic in heaven. The Holy Trinity never meets in emergency session.*

Notice what God said in Ezekiel, so long ago: “It’s going to happen.” Chapter 28 and verse 17: *“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness:”—now, watch this—“I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the*

earth in the sight of all them that behold thee” (Ezekiel 28:17–18). When Satan said, “I will ascend,” Jesus said, “I will descend.” And Jesus has conquered Satan at Calvary. And the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14, that He destroyed “*him that had the power of death*” (Hebrews 2:14). And *katargese* is the word that is used there, and it doesn’t mean, “to obliterate”; it means, “to make of no effect.”

When Jesus Christ was on the cross, as I preached a few Sundays ago, the demons of Hell were there. They had a holiday, when Jesus was on the cross; they pointed at Him, and they said, “He’s finished.” But they were wrong. He wasn’t finished; *it* was finished. The plan of salvation was finished. And here’s what Jesus did on that cross: Colossians chapter 2 and verse 15—the Bible says, “*And having spoiled principalities and powers, he*”—Jesus—“*made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it*” (Colossians 2:15). In what? In His death on the cross. What has happened to Satan is he has been spoiled; that means he’s been stripped. And then, he has been shamed; He made a show of them openly. And then, he has been subdued, “*triumphing over them.*” Every time you think of Satan, I want you to think of someone who has been stripped, shamed, and subdued.

Now do not be presumptuous. If you get yourself out of God’s protection, the devil can harm you. When I was in West Palm Beach, recently, I drove past a place, and it said *Lion Country Safari*. And there are wild lions out there, in the area. The way you see those lions is you get in your automobile, and you go driving. And I don’t think anybody needs to get in an automobile and go driving among those lions and be the least bit intimidated, the least bit afraid, the least bit threatened, unless *what?* He decides he’ll get out of the car and take a stroll.

And dear friend, as long as you abide in Christ, you don’t have to worry about Satan. “*Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*” (1 John 4:4). Satan has been stripped, shamed, subdued; he has been vanquished, but he’s not vanished. He is present, but he is not prevailing. First John 4, verse 4: “*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*” (1 John 4:4). Now Jesus, at the cross, overcame Satan.

But wait a minute. Is Satan going to continue his reign of terror forever? No. One of these days, the King of kings, the Lord Jesus, is going to be enthroned, and Satan is going to be cast into Hell. Look at verse 19: “*All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more*” (Ezekiel 28:19). That means, “Never are you going to be in power; never, anymore, are you going to have a reign of terror in the world.”

Let me show you the counterpart of that; and this is one of the greatest blessings in the Bible, so turn to it—Isaiah chapter 14—and look with me in verse 13. Again, Isaiah 14 deals with the demise of Satan. And it talks about how Satan has exalted himself,

and lifted himself up. But notice what God says He is going to do to Satan: *“Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High”* (Isaiah 14:13–14). One of these days, I’m going to preach a sermon on the five “I wills” of Satan: “I will...,” “I will...,” “I will...,” “I will...” God willing, I’ll do that. Five times he says, “I will.” But there came the Son of God who said, *“Not my will, but thine, be done”* (Luke 22:42). And He defeated this one, who was defeated by the great “I will.”

And notice what has happened to him, what God says to him, in verse 15: *“Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit”* (Isaiah 14:15). My friend, Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels; and, notice verse 16: *“They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee,”*—that is, they are just going to squint in unbelief—*“and consider thee,”*—they’re going to stroke their chins—*“saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?”* (Isaiah 14:16–17).

God is going to bring the end of created intelligences of the universe. And when Jesus Christ, the King of kings, is finally enthroned and glorified, and Satan is finally put in his place in the lowest Hell, our great God is going to say, “Come over here, now, and look; look at it. You see him? Do you see him down there, ignominiously groveling? Do you see him like a worm on hot coals? Do you see this highest of a high, who’s been brought to the lowest of the low?” And you’re going say, “You mean, that’s him? That’s the devil? That’s this mighty one? That’s the cherub? That’s the one who stretched his wings before the throne? That’s the one who was full of wisdom? That’s the one who was surpassing in glory and beauty? That was the one who handled the merchandise of Heaven? That is him? He’s the one that made the world a wilderness?”

I’ll tell you what else is going to happen: You’re going to find folks just like us—just like him, like me, like you—and, you know where we’re going to be? We’re going to be just like Jesus—just like Jesus, made like Christ. You cannot imagine the glory. Now you get this, my dear friend, and get it big, and get it plain, and get it straight: You are going to have greater glory in heaven than Satan had before he fell—greater glory in Heaven than Satan had before he fell—because you will be like Jesus Christ. And there you are; there he is. Who do you want to follow? Who do you want to follow? Choose sides carefully, my dear friend; think about it. Listen. I had rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel. We have gained more in Christ than we lost in Adam.

Conclusion

Friend, listen. How wonderful, how glorious it’s going to be, when we are there, at the

throne of God! Satan is real. But please beware of passivity—trying to ignore him. Please beware, my dear friend, of pride—being like him. Please beware of presumption—thinking that there is no need to be prepared, and to pray, and to stay and abide in the Lord Jesus. But oh, beware of pessimism, my dear friend. There's a great day for the children of God, for the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 11:15). And God's people said, "Amen."

Let's pray. O God, our hearts are so full, tonight, as we think about the great victory of Calvary. Lord, as human beings, we don't deserve to be saved. Thank You, Lord, for the grace that the choir sang about tonight—wonderful, marvelous, grace. Thank You for that. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Power Behind the Throne

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August/18/1996

Main Scripture Text: Ezekiel 28:11–19

“By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.”

EZEKIEL 28:16

Outline

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Introduction

I. Satan Was Created in Perfection

II. Satan Was Corrupted Through Pride

III. Satan Continues with Power

IV. Satan Is Condemned to Perdition

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Introduction

Be finding in the Old Testament the Book of Ezekiel chapter 28. When you've found it, we're going to begin reading in verse 11 in a few moments. Ezekiel chapter 28, beginning, in a few moments, in verse 11.

Now, everybody knows that there's a crisis in the world, and that crisis is in America, and that crisis is in this city, and it is in your city. We're in a war. Some say it is a political war: Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians, Independents. Others say that this war is a cultural war. Others say it's a philosophical war—a war of ideas. But, it is a spiritual war. And, we're not going to win the war—we're not even going to understand the war—until we expose the enemy, the power behind the throne. What is really behind the abortion industry? And, it is an industry. Many are getting wealthy killing babies. What is behind the gambling empires? What is behind the narcotics cartels? What is behind the pornographic producers? What underlies the sexual perversion that's in the world today? Who is the mastermind of all of this? I say, again, we're not going to come close to winning the war if we think that it's political, or philosophical, or economic. We're not even showing up for the battle. We are in a spiritual war. The enemy is Satan himself.

Begin reading in verse 11: *“Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*

Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus.” Now, there was an ancient king, a wicked king. He was the political ruler of his day. And, Ezekiel was told to preach to him and to warn him, to take up a lamentation against him. But then, Ezekiel the prophet looks right on through, right on past the king of Tyrus, to the real power behind the throne. I want us to understand what is happening today in America. And, I want us to look through the political structure, look right on through it, to the real power behind the throne.

So many times, God, in the Bible, would address Satan through another instrumentality. For example, in the Garden of Eden, the serpent was there, but God addressed Satan through the serpent, who was using the serpent. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ addressed Satan through Simon Peter. Simon Peter had said something that proved that there was a power behind Simon Peter when Simon Peter said it that Simon Peter himself may not have been aware of. And, Jesus said, looking at Simon Peter, *“Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God.”* That is, there was a power behind the serpent. There was a power behind Peter. There was a power behind the king of Tyrus.

Now, listen: *“Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”* Now, here God is talking about Satan himself, the dark prince, and God describes him in this particular passage. And, there are four basic things I want us to learn today about Satan as we look at this passage: “The Power Behind the Throne”—“His Satanic Majesty, the Devil.”

I. Satan Was Created in Perfection

The very first thing I want you to learn is this: that God did not create a devil. Now, the devil is a created person, but God did not create a devil. When God created Satan, he was not Satan. When God created him, he was a cherub; he was an angel. He was created in absolute perfection. The Bible says, in verse 15, “You were perfect in all your ways from the day you were created until iniquity was found in you.”

So many people ask the question, “Where did the devil come from? Why do we have a devil? Why did God create him to begin with?” God did not create the devil as the

devil. God created him in absolute perfection, and the Bible says that he was perfect when he was created. He was surpassing in beauty. He was superlative in wisdom. His name was Lucifer. Now, that sounds like an evil name to us today, because of the evil connotation, but the name *Lucifer* literally means, “bearer of light; light-bearer.” He was a bright shining individual. Verse 13 speaks of his pipes being prepared in him. He didn’t need an instrument, Brother Jim, to praise God with; he was an instrument. When he spoke, it was like a great pipe organ. His very voice was melody and music. Why, he lived in a jeweled city. Verse 13 tells us that he was in the Garden of God, in Eden. Every precious stone was his covering. His garments were bedecked with jewels like the jewels of the high priest in the Old Testament. Oh, how exquisitely beautiful were the coverings of this individual! He lived in a city whose very stones were fire. I’m going to live in a city like that one day: streets of gold, walls of jasper, foundations of perfect gems. That’s where this creature was! He lived in this incredible environment. Verse 14 tells us that he was in the holy mount of God, the mountain of God.

Now, when you read in the Old Testament—when the Bible mentions the mountain of God—it speaks of God’s authority, God’s rule, God’s government. That is, he was right there at the place of authority. He was the anointed cherub that covers. He was the prime minister of Heaven. Imagine this one! Imagine him full of wisdom, full of beauty, full of music, full of light, bedecked with gems, walking up and down in the midst of the stones of fire, the burning holiness of God. He was the anointed cherub. Look, if you will, in verse 14: *“Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth.”* That is, he stretched out his wings before the throne of God. Anointed and appointed of God—what a creature was this one! The cherubim of the highest classes of angels, and he was the chief among them. Verse 18—that we’ve not yet read—speaks of his sanctuaries: *“Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries.”* What is a sanctuary? It’s a place of worship! He was there in the sanctuary, the mount of God, the government of God, the stones of fire, giving glory to God—incredibly, incredibly beautiful!

But, remember this: he was a created being—verse 15: *“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created.”* Don’t ever get the idea that Satan is co-equal and co-eternal with God. Don’t ever get the idea that somehow there’s some sort of a dualism in the universe, that from everlasting to everlasting there’s always been Satan, there’s always been God the Father. Oh, no. There never was a time when God was not. There was a time when Satan was not. He was created. When he was created, he was not created a devil. He was created Lucifer, the son of the morning. He became Satan, the father of the night, when he fell, as we’re going to see in a moment. But, he was created in absolute perfection, but he was a created being. You know the trouble with many people today? They fail to understand that Satan was created. And, the God that spoke him into existence is the same God that will speak him into oblivion. We’re

not wondering today who's going to win, whether there's some sort of a battle with two great cosmic forces.

Do you know what an antonym is? You know what a synonym is? That's one word that's very much like another word—only it's a different word. An antonym is the opposite. So, let's play antonyms. I'll give you a word; you give me the opposite. Up? (Down.) Big? (Small.) Rich? (Poor.) God? (Satan.) See, you made a mistake. Satan is not the opposite of God. Satan is not the... I tricked you. That was dirty. I know that, but I'm just trying to make a point. Satan is not the opposite of God. God has no opposite! God has no other. There is only one God. You can't even have an opposite to God, much less a like to God. God is God! Satan is not the opposite of God. Satan is a created being.

II. Satan Was Corrupted Through Pride

Now, remember this: He was created in perfection. Number two: He was corrupted through pride. He was corrupted through pride. Look in verse 16: *“By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence.”* Verse 17: *“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty.”* Here was a man whose heart was lifted up.

I read this this morning in several translations. One of them said, “He was lifted up because of his pride.” It's the same. His heart was filled with pride. Do you know when the Bible says that, when we are in the process of ordaining or setting aside a minister, one of the prime requisites for a minister is that he be a man that has walked with God, that he has experience, that he's humble, that he is not a novice. Put this verse down—1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 6. The Bible is speaking here of the requirement for a minister, and the Bible says, *“Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.”* It was pride that made the devil the devil. Nothing will keep a minister of the gospel, or a teacher of the gospel, or a singer of the gospel, or a servant of the gospel further away from Satan than true, genuine humility. Nothing makes a man more vulnerable to falling than pride. “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” And, the prime requisite for a minister of the gospel is that he is a humble man.

Now, God did not create a devil; God created a holy angel. But, this holy angel was lifted up with pride. When God made that angel, God gave that angel an ability to choose between good and evil. And, that angel chose evil, and the thing that motivated his choice was his pride. Isaiah chapter 14 describes it also, when he said, *“I will be like the most High.”* It was then that Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night. Now, understand this: Satan had indescribable beauty. Now, that beauty still remains. Notice verse 17: *“Thine heart wast lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.”* Now, look at that very

carefully, because the implication is that the beauty is still there; the wisdom is still there. But, what he has now is a corrupted wisdom; what he has now is a blemished beauty. Now, don't miss this. Satan is still wise, but his wisdom is corrupted. Satan is still beautiful, but his beauty is blemished.

Now, if you don't listen to anything else that I say today, I hope that you will learn this about Satan: Satan is brilliantly stupid; he is hideously beautiful. That's worth writing down. He is brilliantly stupid; he is hideously beautiful. Now, don't get the idea that because Satan has sinned against God that he is a knucklehead in every area of the word. Now, he is ultimately a knucklehead. I mean, to think that he could overthrow God! But, still, he is brilliantly stupid; he is hideously beautiful. Don't look for some scaly monster with red skin and scales and a pitchfork trying to catch somebody bending over. That's not the way the Bible describes the devil—not as some repulsive monster. That's his character, but that's not his appearance. Here's his appearance; here's the camouflage that he wears—2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 14 and 15—the Apostle Paul is speaking about some false teachers that were in the pulpit of his day. And, then the Apostle Paul says, *“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed”*—as what?—*“into an angel of light”*—an angel of light! If Satan were to walk into this building today, you'd say, “Ooh, isn't that beautiful? An angel! We've seen an angel! An angel of light!” And then, the Apostle Paul, with that great logic of his, says, *“Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”* He's talking about ministers now—Satan's ministers—and he's saying they can be found in the pulpits.

Did you know all across America Satan has put in his ministers? I mean, Sunday people will come down and sit in a service, and the man in the pulpit will be a minister, but he will be transformed by Satan as a minister of righteousness, but he is a minister of Satan. Isn't that frightening? Folks, you need to understand that Satan is not against religion. His chief tool is religion. He's always wanted to be like God. He has always wanted to be worshiped. And, his temptation to you is not to be ungodly; it is to be like God Satan's way. Isn't that what he told Eve? “In the day that you eat thereof”—what?—“you will be like God.” It wasn't a temptation to fall down; it was a temptation to fall upward. It was the same temptation that he had when he said, *“I will be like the most High.”* He's an angel of light!

I was preaching one day a sermon something like this, and a little boy met me afterward at the door. He said, “That was a good sermon, preacher.” He said, “When you were up there preaching, I could see the devil just as plain.” I'm going to tell you something, folks. Don't forget to look for the devil when you look in the pulpit, because sometimes he's there! Listen to it again: *“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be*

transformed as the ministers of righteousness.” Satan wears this camouflage. He is the master of deception. Don’t think that you would recognize him with human ingenuity. The Bible says, *“If it were possible, [he would] deceive the very elect.”* That’s the reason we have to walk closely to God.

I picked out some words that describe the way that Satan works. These words have come right out of the Bible: “more subtle than any beast of the field,” “angel of light,” “wiles,” “snares,” “devices.” Do you understand how he works? Again, he is in religion. He’s not opposed to religion. Why, when he tempted the Lord Jesus, he had the audacity to say to Jesus, “Fall down and worship me!” He has always wanted to be worshiped. And, he’s in theological institutions today; he’s in liberal, worldly, ungodly churches, false cults. And, we’re going to see more and more of it in the last day. First Timothy chapter 4, verse 1: *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits...”*—have you ever watched or seen a man seduce a woman? Maybe it’s happened in your office—or a woman seduce a man. There are seducing spirits. But, they don’t seduce sexually; they seduce theologically—*“seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”* Listen to this scripture again—1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 1: *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly”*—talking about the Holy Spirit—*“that in the latter times”*—I believe those are these days—*“some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”*

III. Satan Continues with Power

Now, what have we said therefore? We have said that Satan was created in perfection, but he was corrupted through pride. He was lifted up because of his beauty. He said, “I’m too wise, too beautiful, too great, too magnificent, to be any less than God Himself.” Here’s the third thing—here’s the third thing: Satan continues with power. Sometimes we have the idea that he doesn’t have any power in this world today. But, notice, if you will, in verse 16: *“By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned.”* Satan is a master of control, manipulating the hearts and minds of people. That’s why we live in such a violent society: because it’s energized by Satan himself.

Well, why does God allow this power? Why doesn’t God just kill the devil? Why doesn’t God just destroy the devil? If God did that, He would not be working according to His plan, His holiness, and His justice. God has a plan, and God is working that plan out. But, that plan is in perfect synchronization with God’s holiness. Now, you can find that in Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14—Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14. Here’s what Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14, has to say about Satan and his destruction: *“Forasmuch then as the children...”*—he’s talking about us, calling us the children of God—*“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood,”*—that is, we live in

flesh and blood—*“he also himself...”*—now, he’s talking about Jesus—*“he also himself took part of the same;”*—that is, Jesus became flesh and blood; God was incarnated; that is, He took a human body—*“that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”*

Somebody says, “Why doesn’t God just kill the devil?” God says, “No, I’ll put My Son on the cross.” Now, why? Why does it say that Jesus took flesh and blood? Because we’re flesh and blood; that Jesus, through death, *“might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”* Because the wages of sin is death, and we’re sinners, and we deserve it. And, God is a holy and a righteous God, and God cannot overlook sin. And, that sin must be paid for. And, if God were to simply kill the devil and take us to Heaven without dealing with sin, God would no longer be a righteous and a holy God. And, man’s dominion was legally lost, and it will be legally regained. And, God said a man lost it, and a Man will regain it. The first Adam lost it; the second Adam will get it back. That’s why! God is doing it in concert with His perfect plan! And, the battle that began in Heaven will be won here on Earth. As a matter of fact, it already has been won at dark Calvary when Jesus suffered, bled, and died, and said, “Now is the prince of this world cast out.” When Jesus died, He broke Satan’s back.

And, did you know that one day you and I are going to have a part in judging Satan? Did you know one day he’s going to report to us? You ever thought about that? You know, people say, “Well, I’m not afraid of the devil.” That’s not the big question. Is the devil afraid of you? He ought to be. The Bible tells us, in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 2 and 3, that we as saints don’t need to go to a judge, to court, against one another. He said, “Aren’t you saved? Can’t you settle these things among yourselves with Christian brothers? Why,” he says, “don’t you understand that one of these days we’re going to judge angels?” We are going to judge angels! But, Satan is continuing with power to those who do not know him.

Remember when Jesus was tempted of Satan, Satan said, “If You will bow down and worship me...”—you find this in Luke chapter 4. He said—“If You’ll fall down and worship me, I’ll give You all the kingdoms of the world, because they have been delivered unto me, and I can give them to whoever I will. You just fall down; worship me. I’ll give You all of the kingdoms of the world!” What is he saying? He’s saying, “They’re mine! They were delivered unto me.” How were they delivered unto him? Adam delivered them unto him. They were given to Adam. When God created Adam and Eve, God said, “I give you dominion.” Adam and Eve gave that dominion to Satan, and Jesus never said to Satan, “Satan, you don’t have that dominion.” Jesus knew that it was legally lost, and it had to be legally regained. And, Jesus knew that He would suffer, bleed, and die upon that cross. But, in the meanwhile, to those who refuse what Jesus did on the cross, to those who are ignorant of it, or to those who rebel against it, they

are still the pawns of Satan.

One of my favorite hymns—if not my favorite of all favorites—is “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” What a great song that is: great in music; great in theology. There’s one line in there where Martin Luther spoke of Satan and he said this of Satan,

*His craft and pow’r are great, and
armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.*

—MARTIN LUTHER

That is true! Don’t you think lightly of Satan! We’re up against an enemy—brilliantly stupid, hideously beautiful. And, verse 18 speaks of his multitude of iniquities. That’s where the cultural war is coming from: a multitude of iniquities.

Why does Satan have you for an enemy? Because you’re made in the image of God. He cannot get at God directly; and so—why, wicked people have always known if you can’t get at somebody, hurt somebody that somebody loves, and you’ve hurt that somebody anyway. Isn’t that true—and so if Satan can get at you, that’s his way of getting at God, because he cannot get at God directly. Acts chapter 10, verse 38, speaks of those who are oppressed of the devil. Luke 13, verse 16, spoke of a woman whom Satan has bound. Even the Apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 7, spoke of a messenger of Satan that was buffeting him. Satan is filling the world with terror. He is the ultimate terrorist. There’s a reign of evil—subversion, perversion, diversion. He wants to divide, to depress, to destroy. Depression, oppression, possession: these are works of the devil.

And, you know what I found by reading the Bible? That this devil has a special war on babies. It’s an interesting thing—it’s an interesting thing. You just read the Bible all the way through. You find where the Canaanite nation was demon-possessed. What would they do? Kill their babies. You find old Herod. What did he do? Kill the babies! Old Pharaoh—what did he do? Kill the babies. And, you-know-who is doing the same thing today. And, I’ll tell you the power behind the throne is the devil himself! Can’t we understand this? It’s a reign of terror! He’s a bloodthirsty monster. Power behind the throne.

IV. Satan Is Condemned to Perdition

He was created in perfection. He was corrupted with pride. He continues in power. But, here’s the last thing: He is condemned to perdition—he is condemned to perdition.

Begin reading, again, in verse 17: *“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom because of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a*

fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: and thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.”

From the stones of fire to the lake of fire—that’s where he’s going, friend—from the highest place to the lowest place. And, God is going to shame him on this earth, where he’s done his reign of terror. Satan said, *“I will ascend... I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.”* Jesus said, *“I will descend.”* Jesus left Heaven and came to this earth, and Jesus destroyed Satan at Calvary. I’ve already given you that scripture, Hebrews 2, verse 14, that says, *“Through death he might destroy him that had the power of death.”* That word *destroy* is the word *katargeo*. It doesn’t mean, “to destroy.” It does not mean, “to annihilate so it doesn’t exist anymore.” It literally means, “to make of none effect.” When Jesus was on that cross, Jesus bowed His head—the cross that we sang about today—and He said, *“It is finished.”* And, the hosts of Hell said, “Ha hah! He’s finished!” But, that’s not what He said. He said, *“It is finished.”* What is finished? The payment of sin is paid in full. The prophecies are finished. And, Satan’s kingdom is finished, done. His back was broken! He sails a sinking ship! He rules a doomed domain!

They put Jesus Christ in that grave for three days and three nights. Death, that cruel monarch of terror, shrieked in glee, “He’s finished! He’s finished!” Hell had a holiday. But, on that Sunday morning Jesus stretched and yawned. That tomb was just a motel room: three days and three nights. He got up. He folded the bedclothes. How’d you leave your bed this morning? Not in a hurry. They came in there. They found that napkin—folded, folded! Jesus then has that stone rolled away. And, by the way, the stone wasn’t rolled away to let Him out; it was just rolled away to let them in. Death, that monarch of terror, that sinister minister of evil, energized by Satan, sees Jesus risen victorious. He slinks back. Death has keys in his hand, the crown on his head. Jesus pulls death from the throne. Jesus puts His thumbs in the neck of death and strangles death. Jesus puts His heel on the neck of death, reaches down, takes the crown, puts it on His own head, takes the keys of death, Hell, and the grave, and walks out of that grave. Friend, it is finished indeed! Satan is finished! Death is finished! Hell is finished—through the death of Jesus on that cross. *“Through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”* And, he is destined for Hell.

Let me tell you this. Hell was not created for you. Hell was created for the devil and his angels. Now, you can go to Hell if you wish, but if you go, you’ll be an intruder. You don’t belong there. Hell was created for the devil and his angels. God made you for Himself. God made you to know Him, and love Him, and worship Him. Don’t ever get the idea that God made anybody to go to Hell. He didn’t. And, when Jesus comes, we’re going to be made just like Jesus.

Conclusion

Are you ready for some good news? Are you ready? If you give your heart to Christ, if you get saved, in the Resurrection, when you arise in the likeness of Jesus Christ, God is going to make you—now, listen to this—God is going to make you... God's going to give you a position—are you listening?—greater than that that Satan had before he fell. Now, remember how we described Satan? You in the resurrection will not be made better than Satan; you will be made like Jesus. Hey, hey, where's your *amen*? Listen. You're not going to be made better than Satan. That's not it. You're going to be made like the Lord Jesus! I had rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel. To know Jesus! Hallelujah! I say, hallelujah! Praise the Lord God. Praise Him.

There are two categories of people in the world today. There are those who, like Satan, will say to God, "Not Your will, but mine, be done." And, there are those like Jesus who say, "Not my will, Father, but Yours, be done." Folks, it doesn't make sense to follow a loser. Give your heart to Jesus.

The God of the Impossible

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 29, 1985

Main Scripture Text: Ezekiel 37:1–12

“Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.”

EZEKIEL 37:12

Outline

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Introduction

I want you to turn, if you will, please, to Ezekiel chapter 37. Keep your Bibles open there for just a moment, and let me ask you a question. Do you know somebody who needs Jesus, but it just seems like it is absolutely impossible for God to save them? You believe it is theoretically possible, but you just think that, as far as they are concerned,

they're just a lost cause. I mean they are just so lost, so antagonistic, so spiritually ignorant, so set against the things of God, that there is no hope for your loved one. Maybe it is a mother, a father, a brother, a sister, a son, a daughter, a neighbor, an employer, or an employee—somebody that you are concerned about, but you just wonder, "Is it really possible for God to save that individual?"

The title of our message today is, "The God of the Impossible." And I want us to read here, in Ezekiel chapter 37, beginning in verse 1—Ezekiel the prophet said: *The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel" (Ezekiel 37:1–12).*

Now Ezekiel the prophet is God's man, and so he is carried by the Spirit of God into a very strange place. God brings him into a valley. And in that valley there has been a tremendous battle. And many people have been slain in that particular battle. The battle had taken place a long time ago, because now there is nothing but bones strewn in the valley. It is a valley of dry bones. And Ezekiel looks at these bones. Perhaps over here there is a skull that is lying in a crushed helmet, and over here is a bony hand still gripping a rusty sword.

But the bones have been picked clean by the birds of the air. They have been washed by the rain; they have been bleached by the sun; and now, they are baked, and they are very dry, scattered all over that valley. And then, God said to Ezekiel, "I want to

ask you a question, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’” (Ezekiel 37:3). I’m certain that Ezekiel was tempted to say, “No, that’s impossible.” But he was smart. He said, “God, you know” (Ezekiel 27:3). That’s a good answer, wasn’t it? “God, you know.” He could have been a politician. “Lord, you know whether or not these bones can live.” And of course God—who is the God of the impossible—is going to show Ezekiel that, indeed, those bones can live. And there is a marvelous message in that story for us.

Now I want to say, before I get started, that the prime interpretation and application is to the nation Israel, because He said, *“These bones are the whole house of Israel”* (Ezekiel 37:11). It is the prophecy of what God is going to do in the end times, as He brings the nation Israel from all over the world, where they have been scattered in unbelief like dry brittle bones. God is going to bring them from this nation and that nation, and bone is going to come to bone, until again there is a nation. God is going to cover them with flesh, and they are going to become like a corpse. And then, God is going to breathe His breath into them, and a nation is going to be born in a day. And God still has a mighty future for the nation Israel. And I want to say, that is the prime application and interpretation.

But the secondary application and interpretation is not only prophetic, but practical. Because in this passage of Scripture, we also see how God brings life from death. And we see that God is the God of the impossible, and what God has done for Israel God can do for any situation where there needs to come life out of death. So let’s take the application, and apply it today to your lost friend, neighbor, person—or your friend who is dead in trespasses and sin—and let’s see what the Lord Jesus Christ can do for them.

I. A Deadly Condition

Now the very first thing I want you to notice is what I’m going to call a deadly condition. Verses 1 and 2 tell us about these bones.

A. Dead Bones

First of all, obviously, they were dead bones, because a man without Christ is dead in trespasses and sins: *“For the wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). And these had been slain. And the Bible says of the devil, *“He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth”* (Job 8:44). His motive is murder, and he wants to bring death to life, death to purity, death to health, death to happiness, and death to hope. He is a murderer. They have been slain, and *“the wages of sin is death.”*

The Bible says, even of the beautiful gaudy woman who is the belle of the ball, the life of the party, *“But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth”* (1 Timothy 5:6). And the girl who may be running the elevator where you go to work tomorrow, she

may be a skeleton. Your office may be operated by a skeleton crew. The pilot who flies your airplane, he may be a dead man, for all you know, because they are the living dead. These were dead bones.

B. **Dry Bones**

But not only were they dead bones, verse 2 says, *“they were very dry”* (Ezekiel 37:2). They were dry bones. That is, there is no meat and no marrow. They had been out there for a long time. Not even any moisture in these bones. If you wanted to raise a corpse, at least, you’d like to have one that had some meat on the bones, wouldn’t you? But here are just bones. I mean no marrow or meat on the inside. They are very dry.

What does that mean? Well, if you’ll look in verse 11, it depicted hopelessness. *“Our bones are dried, and there is no hope”* (Ezekiel 37:1). Because God speaks of the unsaved man as *“without Christ, and without hope in this world”* (Ephesians 2:12). I mean, naturally, you look at a person who is dead in trespasses and sin, and indeed he is a hopeless. He is in a hopeless situation.

C. **Depressed Bones**

So they are dead bones, they are dry bones, and they are depressed bones. Where were they? Verse 1 tells us they were in a valley (Ezekiel 37:1). Now valleys speak of depression. A valley is a depressed place. We talk about *“being down in the valley,”* we talk about *“the valley of sorrow,”* and we talk about *“the valley of the shadow of death”* (Psalm 23:4). And here is a picture of these bones in some dark ravine, in some gloomy valley, in a place, not only of death and dryness, but a place of depression.

And again, this speaks to me of the condition of our friends without Christ: depression. Oh, outwardly, they laugh; outwardly, they’re having a big time; but the reason they do all of that—friend—is because they are depressed. Did you know that nobody has any joy apart from Jesus? He may have happiness, but he doesn’t have real joy apart from Jesus. Nobody has peace apart from Jesus. Oh, he may not be at war with somebody, at this particular moment. But the Bible says, *“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked”* (Isaiah 57:21).

A college newspaper had a contest for the best definition of life. Here’s some that won honorable mention: Someone said, *“Life is a joke that isn’t even funny.”* Another one said, *“Life is a disease. The only cure for it is death.”* Another one said, *“Life is a jail sentence that you get for the crime of being born.”*

I was shaving this morning, listening to the radio. They were talking about suicide among teenagers. And it said the leading cause of death among college students is suicide. Now we are not talking about those down in the ghetto, we are not talking about those who are deprived, and we are not talking about those who have no hope. We are talking about those who have a good enough mind to go to college, those who have

enough money to go to college, and those who have enough background or enough opportunity. The leading cause of death among college students is suicide. You see, depression. These bones were down in a valley.

D. **Disjointed Bones**

And so look—they were dead bones. They were dry bones. They were depressed bones. And they were disjointed bones. They are scattered all over. I mean nothing makes sense. There is no cohesion. Life is fragmented, because it is not life at all. It is death. And so here is a picture of dry bones. And you can just write over that picture just “impossible.” But God specializes in things that seem impossible.

II. **A Divine Commission**

Point number one is a deadly condition. Point number two is a divine commission. Now God comes to Ezekiel and gives him a commission. But what God says to Ezekiel, God is not just saying to Ezekiel—God is saying to Adrian, God is saying to Jim, God is saying to Phil, God is saying to the choir, God is saying to you dead ones, God is saying to Buck Jones, and God is saying to you, there is a divine commission.

A. **Proceed with Divine Expectancy**

Now first of all, what is this divine commission? Well it is, first of all, just to believe God is the God of the impossible. And I would say, if God has called, you should proceed with divine expectancy. Proceed with divine expectancy. Now in verse 3, God says to Ezekiel, and Ezekiel says, “Lord, you know” (Ezekiel 37:3). And He does know. And the God who knows says, “I’m going to bring life to them.” He is the God of the impossible, and don’t ever get in the business of saying what God will not do, and what God cannot do.

*Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to God alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries it shall be done.*

—CHARLES WESLEY

Now if God calls you to witness to your unsaved friends and neighbors—and he has—proceed with divine expectancy. Don’t you ever let the devil intimidate you and say, “It can’t be done,” “It will not be done,” “It is impossible,” “It is too hard,” “They have gone too far they are too dry,” “They are too hard,” “They are too scattered,” and “God can’t do it.” God can do it. But He is not going to do it, if you believe He won’t do it. Believe God for a miracle, and proceed with divine expectancy. He is the God of the impossible.

B. Preach with Divine Urgency

Number two is: preach with divine urgency. Notice what it says in verse 4—he says here, in verse 4, *“Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD”* (Ezekiel 37:4). Now look—do you want your dry bones to come to life? Do you want your neighbor to come to Jesus? Do you want your child to come to Jesus? Do you want your friend to come to Jesus? Not only must you proceed with expectancy; you must preach, dear friend, with urgency. Divine urgency! Hear the word of the Lord!

Now my friend, listen. They don’t need a lecture; they need life. They don’t need to be organized; they need to be vitalized. Now it is not going to happen apart from the Word of the Lord. I’ll tell you why. Only life can beget life. Only life can generate life. Out of death life never comes. Now that’s the problem with evolution. The evolutionist cannot explain the origin of life. No one can, apart from God: *“In him was life; and the life was the light of men”* (John 1:4). Only life can beget life.

Now listen. The Word of God is alive—it is alive. You see, Hebrews chapter 4, verse 12, says, *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful”* (Hebrews 4:12)—and that word *quick—zoa*—means, “It’s alive.” The Word of God is alive. This Bible is different from any other book. Other books write about events. There is no life in events. Or they may write about fiction. There is no truth in fiction. Or they may write about historical characters. But those historical characters are dead, or they will die. But this book presents the Lord Jesus Christ, and Christ is alive. He lives. And you cannot separate the Word of the Lord from the Lord of the Lord. This is His Word, and Jesus said, in John chapter 6, *“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63). They are life. Life is in this book.

Listen. I have preached it for more than 30 years. Boy, I’m getting old. That’s longer than some of you have been here. How old are you, Cindy? You don’t have to tell. All right, look—I have preached it long enough to know there is life in this book. I mean, folks, there is life in this book. There is power. It is not like any other book. You read other books. This book reads you. Man, I want to tell you this: There is power in the Word of God. It is quick and it is powerful (Hebrews 4:12). And if you want the God of the impossible to rise up those dry bones, then you must give them the Word of God.

Now you can’t stand in the pulpit, necessarily, and do it like I do it. You may do it in a Sunday School class; you may do it by song, as Debbie did; you may do it by a gospel tract; you may do it in a Sunday School lesson; and, you may do it over a cup of coffee. You may give a booklet, you may give a tract, you may somehow give the Word of God, *but you may just as well expect corn to come when you plant marbles as to expect people to get saved apart from the Word of God.* You’ve got to prophesy to those bones. Say to those bones, “Hear the Word of the Lord.” There is where the power is.

C. Pray with Divine Fervency

Now look—proceed with divine expectancy; preach with divine urgency; and then, pray with divine fervency. Look, if you will again, in verse 9: *“Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live”* (Ezekiel 37:9).

Now in the Old Testament—as in the New Testament—the word *spirit* and *breath* and *wind* are all interchangeable. When the Bible speaks of this breath, it is talking about the breath of God. Just like when God breathed into man’s nostrils, and man became a living soul, “All Scripture is given by the breath of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). It is God-breathed. The word *pneuma* is translated “spirit.” *Pneuma* is “wind” or “spirit.” What he is talking about here is the Holy Spirit of God. Here is the prophet saying, “O God, it is not enough for me to preach. O God, You must move. You see, look—I can preach a sermon that is exegetically correct. I can preach a sermon that may be doctrinally pure. But dear friend, nobody is going to get saved by that kind of preaching, unless God breathes on them—unless the Spirit of God moves.

*All is vain unless the Spirit
of the Holy One comes down.*

—GEORGE ATKINS

Don’t you get the idea that sermons save people. Jesus saves people. And until there is the breath of God—the freshness of God upon it—people are not going to be saved.

Now my dear friend, if you want those dead bones—that you know—to come to life you are going to have to cover them with the Word and soak them with prayer. And then God is going to bring death to life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

*All is vain unless the Spirit
of the Holy One comes down.*

—GEORGE ATKINS

D. God Begins to Move

Now what happens when that happens? When we proceed with divine expectancy, when we preach with divine urgency, and when we pray with divine fervency, then God begins to move.

1. A Commotion

First of all, there is what I want to call commotion. There is a commotion. Look, if you will, in verse 7: *“So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone”* (Ezekiel 37:7). The first thing God did was to shake them up. Wake them up and shake them up. I mean, there is a shaking, a noise, a commotion—a holy commotion. God disturbs

those bones. I've seen bones get disturbed. Sometimes, they get mean when they get disturbed. You start shaking, rattling those bones around.

Listen, folks. When you start praying for a person, give them the Word of God, and it'll move them. They've been lying there in the dust so long, they don't like to be disturbed, and they don't like to be shaken. God's Word begins to stir those bones. There's what I want to call a commotion. Maybe you are going through deep difficulty, maybe you have never had so many problems, maybe so much discontent in your life, or maybe so much futility. Oh, thank God for it. Anything is better than the deadly stillness and barrenness that you've been in. It is just God stirring you. It is just a holy commotion. So first of all, there was a commotion.

2. A Connection

And then, there was a connection. Look: *"And the bones came together"* (Ezekiel 37:7). Things that were scattered began to coalesce. They began to make sense. There is a connection. And you know the old the Negro spiritual—I never can remember where it starts: the head or the foot? Where does it start? The head or the leg? Where does it start—"the head bone connected to the neck bone," or "the heel bone connected to the leg bone"? I don't know. Well, anyway, it starts this way: "And the head bone to the neck bone, the neck bone to the back bone, the back bone to the hip bone to the side bone, the side bone to" the what? The foot bone, I guess. And those bones come together. There is cohesion.

Now what happens is this: Things that have been disconnected, and don't seem to make sense, God brings it together; and things begin to form up, and come together in your mind. That's a miracle of God. You begin to see. You begin to understand. There is a logical connection—a loud commotion, and a logical connection—as God begins to bring things together, and to make sense out of things that never made any sense to you before.

3. A Corpse

But first of all, a commotion; then, a connection; and then, a corpse. Why, he takes it, according to this scripture, and puts skin upon it. And now there are intestines; now, there is a brain; now, there are eyes; now, there is a tongue; now, there are hands; and now, there are feet; but it is a corpse—it is dead. If God wants people to see, He has got to give them eyes. If He wants them to speak, He has got to give them a tongue. If He wants them to smell, they have to have a nose. If He wants them to hear, they have to have ears. To think, they have to have a brain.

All of this is pre-evangelism. I've seen it, as God begins to work. I've seen it, as He shakes people up. I've seen it, as He brings people together. I've seen it, as He gives them spiritual faculties to see, to hear, to understand, to know all or this is God's Word, God's work of grace. But they are not yet saved. And God forbid that we should stop

here. So many people do. They stop right here, but the person has not yet found the Lord Jesus Christ. All they are is a nice-looking corpse, but they are not yet saved. And so I want you to see what happens. The Bible says here, in verse 7, *“So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them”* (Ezekiel 37:7–8).

Now skip down to verse 10: *“So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army”* (Ezekiel 37:10).

III. A Dynamic Completion

Now look—first of all, a deadly condition; secondly, a divine commission; thirdly, a wonderful dynamic completion. I want you to see what God did. First of all, as this man speaks, and he prophesies in the power of God, in the Word of God, and in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, expecting God and believing God to do something, something happens to these dry bones.

A. They Were Vitalized

First of all, they were vitalized. The Bible says, in verse 10, *“They lived”* (Ezekiel 37:10). Vitality—life—came into them. I’m not just trying to manipulate you. Friend, I’m not just trying to get you to join something. I want you to receive life.

Jesus said, in John 10, verse 10, *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”* (John 10:10). Don’t ever let anybody tell you that you have to stop living to become a Christian. Friend, you don’t begin to live until you give your heart to Jesus Christ. Hey, folks, don’t feel sorry for me because I’m saved.

I had a wonderful day, yesterday. Now don’t you tell my wife, but part of it was because she was gone. I was by myself all day, yesterday. I had the most blessed time praising God—I mean, all day long, just shouting and praising God. You know, when you praise the Lord, you don’t want anybody to be around you too much, because you look so ridiculous. You are afraid that somebody might mock you, or ridicule you a little bit, when you praise God. I drove out to *Canaan*. I walked around *Canaan*, and boy, just shouted, leaped, danced, praised God, hallelujahed, cried, wept, and sang. Jim, you ought to have heard me sing. I was singing to the Lord, “Happy in Jesus.” I mean it with all of my heart. “You take this world, but give me Jesus.”

Brother, I am thrilled to know the Lord Jesus Christ. And being saved is not like taking bad medicine in order to get well. I thank God for the joy, the peace, and the happiness. Christ said, *“I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly”*

(John 10:10).

B. They Were Energized

Listen, folks. They were vitalized. But not only were they vitalized; they were energized. You look in verse 10—it says, “*And they stood upon their feet*” (Ezekiel 37:10). Now what good is life, if you don’t have energy? And so the breath of God came into them. “*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you*” (Acts 1:8). You are strengthened with might in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16). By His Spirit, they stood up, because God gave them power to stand for Himself. And we have power to stand for Christ, to stand for the Church, and to stand against the devil.

*Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Ye soldiers of the Cross.*

—GEORGE DUFFIELD, JR.

It is the God that saves you, and it is the God that empowers you. That is one of the ways I know they had life, because they had energy to stand. They were vitalized, and they were energized.

C. They Were Mobilized

I’ll tell you something else about them, folks: They were mobilized. The Bible says they became an exceeding great army. He didn’t just rise up a unit here—that’s one little unit—and, another little bag of bones over here, all coming together. Oh, no! Oh, no! They became a mighty army. Why were they a mighty army? Well, the same God that was in this soldier was in that soldier. The same spirit that was in this body was in that body. And because they had a common body, a common spirit, and a common commander-in-chief, they became a mighty army.

Now why does God save us? One of the reasons that He saves us is to make a mighty army out of us. And you know, is it so through this church? Dear friend, what God’s plan is for Israel—or will be in the future—and what God’s plan is for our church, right now, is for us—dear friend—to be a mighty army for the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to have what the Bible calls the unity of the Spirit.

And by the way, you know what the devil would love to do more than anything else here at Bellevue Baptist Church? Divide us. Isn’t that right? And do you know one of the easy ways for a church to be divided? Go into a building program. Sure. Go into a building program. Why? Because so many people have so many different ideas about building. Somebody says, “I think we ought to have this contractor”; somebody else says, that one. Somebody says, “I think we ought to have this architect”; somebody else says, that one. Somebody says, “I think it ought to be purple”; somebody else says, “No, it ought to be...” And so you are going to have all of those differences of opinion. Folks, that doesn’t matter. Do you know what matters? “*That we endeavor to keep the unity of*

the spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Say, "Amen."

Now listen, folks. We are to be a mighty army. We are to be vitalized, we are to be energized, we are to be mobilized—and we are to be an army for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord Nelson, before a great naval battle, the battle of Trafalgar, found out that two of his most trusted associates couldn't get along. Two people that he needed, and depended on so much, were barely speaking to one another. He brought those two officers to the edge of the ship, and pointed it out, and said, "Gentlemen, the enemy is out there." They were mobilized.

Years ago, I heard a story, and I think I shall never forget it. In a province in western Canada, there was a father, and a mother, and a little son. They were walking through the wheat fields. It was late in the year. The grain was ripe, but the winter was about to come. The harvest had not yet come, but it was already below freezing in that Canadian province. The father and mother evidently had forgotten to look for the child, and when they turned around, they recognized that their little fellow was missing.

Now the grain was almost over his head. They couldn't see him just by looking at the field of grain. They made a mistake by not marking the spot where they first noticed he was gone. But they went off frantically in this direction and that direction to call for him, but they couldn't find him. There were thousands and thousands of acres of wheat. Finally, one stayed there, and the other went back to the community, and got others to come and search. Virtually the whole town turned out. And they began to thrash the wheat fields, calling the little boy, looking for him, because they knew that, as the night got more bitterly cold, he was not dressed for that kind of weather. They were afraid exposure would take his life, and he was just a little fellow. The night grew on, and fear set in for his life.

Finally, one man, who had a logical mind, lifted his voice, and said, "Everybody come here." And they all came together. He said, "Listen to me. We are too disorganized. We are not working together. We've got to get a plan." He said, "I suggest that we all join hands and that we make a human chain. That we just join hands and start to sweep these wheat fields. And when we go up this side, we'll turn, and then, we'll go back down the other side. And," he said, "we'll not leave any place unturned. And if he is in here, we'll find him."

And so the people of that community joined their hands together, and started to sweep through those wheat fields. After a while, there was a shout. Somebody said, "Come here! I've found him!" They gathered to the lifeless corpse of a little boy, because they found him too late. The elements and the exposure had done their work. Strong men wept, and somebody said, "O God, why didn't we go sooner, before it was too late?"

I believe that's a parable of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that, one

of these days, we are going to look at the souls that were lost—without God, without Christ, without hope—and say, “O God, why did we not join hands together sooner?”

D. They Were Utilized

Listen. They were vitalized, they were energized, they were mobilized, and they were utilized. The Bible says that, “I’m going to bring you into your land. You are going to fulfill the purpose for which I have called you” (Joshua 1). God has a purpose for every life. God has a purpose for my life. God has a purpose for your life. God has a purpose for those dry bones ‘round about you. Say, can these bones live?

Conclusion

When I was down in Florida, I used to pastor in Fort Pierce. In Fort Pierce, I met with a group of men every morning for prayer. We would pray for revival, and we would pray for the church. These were some godly laymen—not many, just about a half dozen of us—and we would meet. We met at 7:00 for prayer. And God blessed those prayer meetings in a very remarkable way.

In those prayer meetings, we decided we would do something unusual. We decided that we would pray for the meanest man in Fort Pierce to be saved. We had heard that the way to get revival started was to find the meanest man in town, and get him saved. We didn’t know who the meanest man in Fort Pierce was. We held an election, and nominations were made. And there were several people who were nominated as the meanest man in that city. But the man who won the election was a man who was a bootlegger, a gambler, an adulterer, a wife-beater, a street fighter, and a gun-carrying individual. He was mean. I went by to see him, one time, prior to that time. I said, “I want to see thus and such a person.” His wife came to the door—she said, “They are in the back room there gambling, drinking, drunk, and mean,” and said, “I wouldn’t go back there, if I were you.” So I didn’t.

But that’s the kind of a guy he was. This particular man was arrested for so many different things. One time, he stole a pig out of the back of a game warden’s truck. He was just a brazen man. He was a bootlegger. At this particular time, he had a gun shot. A woman shot him. Now this woman wasn’t his wife—but she was jealous, because he was spending too much time with his wife, and she shot him. And he had this bullet in him. The doctor didn’t think it was wise to remove the bullet at this particular time.

We began to pray for this man. Morning after morning, we prayed for him, and said, in effect, “O Spirit of God, breathe on these bones.” I decided the time had come to go see him. He was at home, recuperating from that gunshot wound. I knocked on his door, and I’ll have to confess, there was a little fear and trembling. When I knocked on his door, I told his wife—I said, “I’m Pastor Rogers. I want to come speak to your

husband.” She said, “Come in, he needs to talk to somebody.” And I walked in there, and when I talked to that man that we had decided would be the meanest man in our city—after we had soaked him in prayer—and I shared the gospel of Jesus with him, I said, “I want to talk to you about Jesus,” he just kind of looked at me.

And I gave him the gospel. And I said, “Sir, would you like to be saved?” Folks, I want to tell you it was like talking to a 12-year-old boy. The tears welled up in his eyes. He said, “Oh, yes, yes—I need Jesus. I want to be saved.” Like picking a ripe apple, he just fell right off in my hand. And God showed me then a lesson I trust I never forget. When you see some bones that look mighty brittle and mighty dry, I want you to learn, dear friend, that, if we’ll proclaim the Word, and seek them in prayer, and believe God, He is the God of the impossible, and dry bones can live. Let’s bow in prayer.

Will There Be Peace in the Middle East?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 8, 1978

Main Scripture Text: Ezekiel 38:1–23

“And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.”

EZEKIEL 38:16

Outline

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Introduction

Turn, please, to Ezekiel chapter 38—Ezekiel chapter 38. We begin today a new series of Bible studies on prophecy—things to come—and I believe it's a wonderful way to begin this new year. Today, we're speaking on this subject: "Will There Be Peace in the Middle East?"—"Will There Be Peace in the Middle East?" Ezekiel chapter 38—I'm reading the first three verses: "*And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog*"—G-O-G, Gog—"the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws." (Ezekiel 38:1–4) "*I am against thee, O Gog.*" (Ezekiel 38:3)

Now, is there going to be peace in the Middle East? I read from *Time* magazine this month where Anwar Sadat, the President of Egypt, is called "the man of the year." And, this newspaper article or news article from *Time* magazine has this heading: "Man of the Year, Anwar Sadat, architect of a new Mid-East. With one stunning stroke he designed a daring approach to peace. He called it a 'sacred mission,' and history may judge it so." And then, this article goes on to say, "Not in three decades had the dream of a real peace seemed more probable. As Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat have met first of all in Israel and then in Egypt, the world is dreaming, hoping, longing, sighing, daring to believe that, in our day, there may be peace in the Middle East."

Now, the question is, will there be peace in the Middle East? The answer is yes, emphatically, but not now. As a matter of fact, what we are seeing now is but a harbinger of even greater disaster and greater war one day in the Middle East. The Bible prophesies that one day Russia will invade the Middle East. No *ifs, ands, doubts, maybe so's, perchances* about it—Russia will invade Israel. Are you listening? Russia—Soviet Russia—will invade Israel. And, I believe if you'll pay attention and use your Bibles this morning, you will agree with me that the next major event that we can look for in the Middle East is a Russian invasion of the Middle East. There is coming a time when that Russian bear is going to meet the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And, the current negotiations in the Middle East seem, in my mind, to be setting the stage for just such a thing.

Now, I read to you a very strange passage of Scripture in Ezekiel chapter 38, verses 1 through 3, and I want to show you that this passage of Scripture is talking about Russia, so pay attention. And, what I'm saying is not an idea that is new with me, but conservative Bible scholars everywhere seem to agree that this reference is to the land of Russia. Let's look at it. First of all, I'm reading in verse 2: "*Son of man, set thy face against Gog*"—now, what does the word *Gog* mean? G-O-G? It means "prince" or "leader." And then, it goes on to say—"the land of Magog"—now, the land of Magog

means “the land over which this prince rules.” And then, we go on to read—“*the chief prince of Meshech*”—now, the word “chief prince” means literally “and the prince of Rosh”—R-O-S-H—“the prince of Rosh,” which is a variant spelling for Russia. We continue to go on and read—“*the chief prince of Meshech*”—at one time that was the name of the present city of Moscow. We continue to read—“*and Tubal*.” (Ezekiel 38:2–3) On the Tubal River—sometimes today called “Tobolsk,” an industrial and military center right now in Soviet Russia.

Mr. Scofield, who wrote the notes for the Scofield Bible, as far back in 1909, before Soviet Russia was at all the power in the world that she is today, said this (and I quote), as he was commenting on these first three verses—listen to Mr. Scofield; “That the primary reference is to the northern European powers headed up by Russia all agree. The reference to Meshech and Tubal”—“Moscow and Tobolsk,” he says—“is a clear mark of identification. Russia and the northern powers have been the latest persecutors of dispersed Israel”—that was written back in 1909 by Mr. Scofield, but listen—“The geographical fixation or positioning of this people makes it clear that we’re speaking about Russia.”

Let me show you what I mean. For example, read Ezekiel chapter 38, verse 15, as God speaks of the coming invasion and He says, “*Thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts.*” (Ezekiel 38:15) And, this word “north parts” means “the uttermost north”—“You’re going to come out of the north parts.” I want you to read again in Ezekiel chapter 39, verse 2: and God says, “*And I will turn thee back, and leave but [one] sixth part of thee, and I will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel.*” (Ezekiel 39:2) Now, in the Bible, when directions are given, directions are always given from the land of Israel. Things are north of Israel, south of Israel, east of Israel, west of Israel. Israel is the center, the hub, the navel of the earth. Ezekiel 5:5: God said, “*I have set [thee] in the midst of the nations.*” (Ezekiel 5:5) And so, directions are reckoned from Israel. Now, you take your map when you get home and study it and see what great nation is directly north of Israel. Of course, it is Russia—it is Russia. To the uttermost north of Israel is Russia. As a matter of fact, when you go home, you take your globe, get it down, and draw a line or take a piece of string and go from Jerusalem to the north pole and you will find that that string goes precisely through Moscow.

Now, God is speaking here of a land—He’s prophesying about a land—called Rosh. He has identified the cities; He has identified it geographically. He is speaking here, I am convinced, about Russia. Now, having said that and having set the stage for that, let us look for just a few moments at the coming invasion of Palestine under four headings.

I. The Russian Adversary

First of all, I want you to notice the Russian adversary—the Russian adversary. Russia has an enemy; Russia has an adversary. And, it may surprise you or it may not surprise you to know who this adversary is. It is God Himself. Again, listen to these first three verses: *“And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.”* (Ezekiel 38:1–3) Here is a land and a people that God is against. Now, why would God be against Russia? For two primary reasons:

A. Russia Is Against God

Number one: Russia is against God. This giant Russian bear that controls one-third of the world’s population and one-fifth of the lands—the earth’s land surface—has set herself against God. Her leaders are followers of Karl Marx, and Karl Marx taught that there is no God, that religion is the weapon of capitalism, that it is the opiate of the people. And, the Russian leaders are sworn enemies of belief in God, much less the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Russia has raised her clinched red fist in the face of Almighty God, and that’s one reason that God is against Russia: because Russia is against God. You know, it seems strange to me that when the Russian economy seems to fail, we want to bail them out. We read a sign in the park that says, “Don’t feed the bears. They’re dangerous.” Looks like we’d learn that lesson, doesn’t it?

B. Russia Is Against Israel

But listen, not only is Russia against God, but Russia is against Israel, and because Russia is against Israel, God is against Russia. You know, God said those people who set themselves to be against Israel, God is going to be against them, and Russia is against Israel. As a matter of fact, a top Soviet official said not long ago in Asia—and I’m quoting: “Of course, we have an anti-Jewish campaign going on inside the Soviet Union. What do you expect since we have lined up with the Arabs against Israel? You Americans may prefer two million Jews in Israel as allies, but we prefer a hundred million Arabs from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean.” Jews in Russia must carry a passport that designates them as Jews—not as Ukrainians, not as Russians, but as Jews. When they want to come out of Russia, they cannot, except under very extenuating circumstances, and they do not know the freedoms that even the Russian citizens know, if you can call that “freedom” in Russia. No, God is against Russia, for Russia is against God and Russia is against Israel. And, God says, *“Prophesy against [this land].”* (Ezekiel 38:2) Now, Russia’s taken a mighty foolish stance when she raises a clinched fist in the face of God and when she raises an iron mace over the land of Israel.

Ol' Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine were talking—Thomas Paine, who was a half-infidel, an agnostic, wrote a book called *The Age of Reason* that lampooned the ideas of God and the faith that we have in this Bible—and he asked Benjamin Franklin to read it. And, he said, “Ben, what do you think of my book?” And, ol' Benjamin Franklin, that wise maker of proverbs, said this to Thomas Paine—he said, “Tom, when a man spits against the wind, he spits in his own face.” Russia is spitting against the wind, and she'll end up spitting in her own face. God is against Soviet Russia, for Soviet Russia is against God and Soviet Russia is against Israel. Now, Russia's adversary—that's the first thing I want us to notice: the Russian adversary.

II. The Russian Allies

The second thing I want us to notice is this: the Russian allies. Who are the nations that are going to align themselves with Russia when she invades the Middle East? Let's notice who they are, beginning in verse 4: “*And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws*”—God is going to lead the old Russian bear around, just put a hook in her jaw and just turn her around—“*and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords*”—and then, He mentions the allies who will come with her—“*Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee. Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them.*” (Ezekiel 38:4–7) The word *guard* means “commander” or “leader”; that is, Russia is going to be the instigator and the organizer. And, these are the allies that will come with Russia when Russia comes against Israel.

A. Persia

The Bible says concerning these allies, first of all, Persia. Persia is modern-day Iran, which, of course, would make a natural bridge for Russia to come down against the land of Israel. Iran, of course, allied with the Arab nations.

B. Ethiopia

Next, there's Ethiopia, or “Kush,” as the Bible calls it. This is the area south of Egypt, down in what we call “northern Africa,” which is becoming, right now, a most active area for the propagation of the communist gospel. And, the Russians are exporting their communism and their leadership into that area very strongly.

C. Libya

The next mentioned is Libya, and, of course, you know that Libya now has made such a

strong alliance with Russia that just recently, in the last months, the armies of Libya were installing some very sophisticated surveillance equipment there at the airport in Libya. And, the Egyptians asked them to take it out, and they wouldn't do it. And, the Egyptians went to the Russians and said, "Take this equipment out," and they wouldn't do it. And, Anwar Sadat had it bombed—do you remember?—not long ago. Arab bombing Arab. But, the Libyans are incensed against this, and they've become fast friends with Russia. Isn't it amazing how modern the Bible is here, as it mentions Libya?

D. Gomer

And then, Gomer—what is Gomer? Gomer is what we would today call "Eastern Germany"—those areas there in eastern Europe behind the iron curtain.

E. Togarmah

And then, Togarmah—and what is that? That is Armenia or southern (modern) Russia. These are the lands—these are the people—who are going to ally themselves with Russia in the last days.

But, wait a minute—wait a minute. Did you notice something? Look at the allies again. Listen to them; look at them. What company is missing? What country is not there? Egypt. Isn't that strange? You would think that, certainly, Egypt would be mentioned as one of these allies of Russia coming against Israel in the last days. We would have all had thought so, except for what's just happened in the last few months, right? But, isn't it amazing how the Bible puts Libya as an enemy of Israel but not Egypt? As a matter of fact, Egypt is not mentioned in these nations that are going to come against Israel in the last days. How strange it is, yet not strange. And, as a matter of fact, as I was studying this and looking, commentator after commentator—commentator after commentator—said, "We can't understand it, but Egypt is not mentioned." Well, those of us who live in these days, we can understand now why Egypt would not be mentioned, because now Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat have sat down and made some sort of a tenuous agreement that one day may be a peace treaty. But, these are the allies that are going to come down against Israel in the last days.

III. The Russian Aggression

Now, we have noticed the Russian adversary. Now, we have noticed the Russian allies. The third thing I want you to notice is the Russia aggression. I want you to notice how it's going to start. I want you to notice what Russia's going to do in the last days. Now remember, this is not my idea; this is the Word of God. I want you to listen to it now, beginning in verse 8: *"After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is*

brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee. Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall...come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.” (Ezekiel 38:8–12) Now, here, I want you to notice some “P’s.”

A. The Period

First of all, I want you to notice the period of time when this is going to take place. Look again in verse 8: *“After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years.”* (Ezekiel 38:8) “After many days”—“Ezekiel, this is not a prophecy for your time or for those people right after you. This is in the later days, in the end of the age.” I believe, ladies and gentlemen, this is a prophecy for our time, for our day, for our age. This is the period of time.

B. The People

But, not only the period—the people who are going to be attacked. Who is the Bible speaking about? Who is Russia going to come against? Who is this old northern bear going to come down against? Listen again in verse 8: *“thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people”—*what people have been gathered out of many people? What people have migrated back to their homeland? Well, of course, it’s Israel; we don’t have to guess about it. The Bible tells us—*“against the mountains of Israel, which have always been waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.”* (Ezekiel 38:8) God is saying that “you’re going to come down against my people, Israel, my regathered nation.” And, how we’ve seen in the last days that this prophecy could have been fulfilled, or will be fulfilled. If I’d been preaching in 1930 or 1920, people would have laughed, but after May 14 and 15, 1948—when the Republic of Israel was born, and Israel became a nation, and a nation was born in a day, and this people gathered out of many lands became again Israel—people can’t laugh any more.

And, the Bible says that when Russia comes down, Israel will be dwelling safely—safely. (Ezekiel 38:8) Now, that word *safely*—don’t misinterpret that. It literally means “confidently”—“confidently.” Of course, if they were so safe, Russia wouldn’t be able to come down against them. Don’t... They’re not safe; they’re confident—almost arrogant, almost cocky. I believe some of those young Israeli soldiers believe they could whip the

whole Russian army. They believe that. They are dwelling confidently, and how much more confidently will they be dwelling when they have finally made a league with Egypt. They think, “Aha! Now—now—we are getting what we wanted for such a long time.” Dwelling confidently—dwelling safely—in their land. Yes, the people is Israel.

C. The Purpose

Now, notice not only the period and the people, but the purpose. Why? Why is Russia going to come down? What is in Russia’s mind? What would cause her to do such a thing? Well, we’re going to see, ultimately, it’s God that causes her to do it. But, what is the thinking in Russia’s mind? Beginning in verse 9: *“Thou shalt...come like a storm, [and] thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee. [And] thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind”*—“come into thy mind.” You know, the Bible says, *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, [and] as...rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”* (Proverbs 21:1) Things will come into this old Russian bear’s mind—*“and thou shalt think an evil thought: And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages”*—when Ezekiel wrote this, all of the great cities had walls around them. But, if you go to modern Israel today, you don’t see those walls because there are no such things. And—*“I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, To take a spoil, and to take a prey.”* (Ezekiel 38:9–12) This is why Russia is coming: Russia is coming for economic gain, for spoil, for booty. Let me give you some factors that would cause Russia to want to invade the Middle East.

1. Russia Wants a Warm-Water Port

Number one: Russia’s always wanted a warm-water port.

2. Russia Wants Control of the Suez Canal

Number two: Russia has always wanted to control the Suez Canal. Russia would like to be able to take her ships from the Mediterranean and go through the Suez Canal, through the Red Sea, into the Gulf of Persia and right on down to deal with the developing nations of Africa without having to sail all the way out the mouth of the Mediterranean and all the way around the tip of Africa.

3. Russia Wants Israel’s Great Wealth

I’ll tell you another reason that Russia is coming down: because of the great wealth in Israel. You read your papers, and you’ll find again this year that Russia’s wheat crop is down and Russia’s economy is faltering. And, of course, if it weren’t for the U. S. of A. she might not be able to keep going. But, we’ll bail her out, won’t we? My soul! Don’t feed the bears. But, Russia needs help! Did you know that Israel is one of the few nations in the world that produce—Israel is one of the few nations in the world that

produces—enough food for its own people? Only about six nations in the world produce enough food for themselves. But, Israel is now exporting food, and as they continue to make the desert blossom as a rose, she is fast becoming the breadbasket of Europe. And, Russia knows this, and the old hungry bear is looking in that direction.

4. Russia Wants the Wealth in the Dead Sea

But, let me give you another reason why Russia would want to invade the Middle East, and it is because of the vast, vast, vast wealth that is in the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea has been called “the jewel box of the Orient.” There is inestimable, unfathomable wealth in the Dead Sea—mineral wealth. As a matter of fact, those who know say that the wealth deposited in the Dead Sea is more than four times greater than the total amassed wealth of the whole United States—the wealth in that Dead Sea. The Israelis are now just learning how to mine those minerals, those phosphates, those salts, the potash that’s there in the Dead Sea—the bromides and the rest of it. You see, in a world that is facing famine, potash and phosphate, principle ingredients of fertilizer, will be so desperately, desperately needed. And, those things, in great abundance, are found in the Dead Sea, controlled primarily by Israel. And, Russia wants that.

5. Russia Wants Oil

Another reason that Russia wants to exert her influence in the Middle East is, of course, because of the oil in the Middle East, and whoever has the oil, friend, by and large, they have it. And, Russia wants that oil, of course. Israel doesn’t have so much oil. She has some, but she’s right in the middle. There is the place to exert an influence because whoever controls the Middle East controls the oil, and whoever controls the oil controls the world. And, that’s Russia’s gain—that’s Russia’s goal.

6. Russia Wants to Spread Communism

Another reason that Russia wants to come down into the land of Israel is that she doesn’t like the presence of Israel, because, you see, Israel is primarily a democratic society, and communism doesn’t go too well there. And so, they want to remove that bastion of democracy and move in and take over that part of the earth.

D. The Protest

Now, the next thing I want you to notice—not only the purpose that Russia will have, but I want you to notice the protest that’s going to take place when Russia begins this.

Notice in verse 13: “*Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee*”—that is, shall say to Russia—“*Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?*” (Ezekiel 38:13)

Now, we’re not too sure who Sheba and Dedan are. Commentators seem to vary, but among evangelical scholars there seems to be an agreement that Tarshish stand for

England. The people of Tarshish were a seagoing—a seafaring—people, and most commentators say that Tarshish stands for Great Britain. And, I think there's another clue here when it says, “[and] the young lions thereof.” (Ezekiel 38:13) If you were to go to England today and get a British coin, on some coins you'd find, on one side, a picture of Queen Elizabeth, but if you were to turn that coin over, on the other side, you would see a mother lion—a mother lion. Who are the young lions of England—the young cubs that have been spawned by England? Australia, Canada, the United States—countries like this. And, when Russia comes down, “Tarshish, [and] the young lions thereof, [will] say...[Are you] come [down here] to take a spoil...[and] to take a prey?” (Ezekiel 38:13) As a matter of fact, they're going to start talking. Israel will turn to the West for support, but all she will get is diplomacy, and the Western powers will begin to talk and speak to Russia as if to say, “Tsk, tsk, tsk, naughty, naughty. You ought not to do that.” And, that's about what's going to happen there, and Israel is desperately going to need help. And, where is that help coming from?

IV. Russia's Annihilation

The next thing I want you to notice, therefore, is this: Russia's annihilation—not only Russia's aggression, but Russia's annihilation; not the annihilation that she will do, but the annihilation that shall be done unto her. It's all going to be guided by an unseen power, and that power is Almighty God. I want you to begin reading now in verse 14: Ezekiel has a vision of this coming invasion, and then he says, “Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army”—some people take this literally. And, the Cossacks, those people of Togarmah, are known for their horseflesh, and some people say that Russia will use horses in her invasion of the Middle East. I tend to think this is prophetic language that speaks in the terms of warfare of those days that we must have enough sense to apply to the warfare of our day. But regardless, let's go on to read—“And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days”—and notice this phrase now—“and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.” (Ezekiel 38:14–16)

Do you know what God is going to do, ladies and gentlemen? God Himself is going to bring Russia against Israel. Read it right here: God says, “I will bring thee against my land”—why?—“that the heathen may know me, [and that] I [may] be sanctified in...their eyes.” (Ezekiel 38:16) One of the mightiest sermons that's ever going to be preached in the last days will be preached unwittingly by Soviet Russia when she makes the stupid,

colossal blunder of invading the Middle East. When she does that, God is going to get the glory.

Do you know why God has allowed Russia to be raised up? One reason is so that He might knock her down. Look, for example, in Romans chapter 9, verse 17, and I think this will make it very clear. Romans 9, verse 17: God is speaking about another one of Israel's ancient foes, Egypt, and He speaks about ol' Pharaoh—Pharaoh, who was living high, wide and handsome; Pharaoh, who was so full of arrogance—this is what God said concerning Pharaoh. Romans 9, verse 17: *“For the scriptures saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name...declared throughout all the earth.”* (Romans 9:17) We're still talking today about what God did to Pharaoh, aren't we? And, every time we want to talk about how great our God is we talk about God's deliverance of His ancient people from Pharaoh—how they crossed the Red Sea and how God did a mighty thing. And, one of the greatest sermons ever preached was preached by ol' Pharaoh. God raised him up so God could show His power.

And, I want to tell you, the Bible teaches precisely the same thing has happened with modern-day Russia. God said, “I am doing this, that I might be sanctified in thee, and that the heathen might know me.” (Ezekiel 38:16) You see, God has a purpose over it all. We say, “He who laughs last laughs best.” The Russians are laughing at the idea of God now, but the Bible prophesies a time when, it says, *“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.”* (Psalms 2:4) God will have the last laugh.

What's going to happen? All right, God is going to bring them down. And then, at the precise moment when Russia strikes Israel, God will strike Russia. Did you hear me? When Russia strikes Israel, God will strike Russia. Look in verse 19—verse 18: *“And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord...that my fury [will] come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath [I] have...spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel.”* (Ezekiel 38:19) Now, ladies and gentlemen, this scripture has not yet been fulfilled, but it will be. It must be fulfilled. When Russia comes against Israel, God's fury will come up. Can you think of the fury—the wrath—of Almighty God? And, things are going to come loose in Israel. Everything that's not nailed down is going to come loose. There's going to be a great shaking. What's going to happen?

A. A Great Earthquake

Well, first of all, there's going to be an earthquake. Look—the last part of verse 19: *“there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel”*—verse 20—*“So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and [the] creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth,*

shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.” (Ezekiel 38:19–20) There’s going to be such a mighty earthquake in the area effected that the walls will not stand. The mountains will quake, and tremble, and quiver, and begin to melt.

I personally believe that this is when the Dome of the Rock may be destroyed—that Muslim mosque. The Bible prophesies that, in the last days, that the Jews are going to rebuild a temple in Jerusalem. They dare not do it now. There’s a law in Israel that no holy place can be destroyed, and the Jewish people in Israel would not destroy a mosque. They would not destroy a synagogue. They would not destroy a church. They would not—they would not; they would not. Yet how can they rebuild their temple? When one of the old rabbis was asked about this, he said, “Well, perhaps one day there will be an earthquake.” Well, friend, there will be. God says right here, “And the walls will fall.” (Ezekiel 38:20) There’s going to be a mighty earthquake.

B. Great Confusion

But, not only is there going to be an earthquake—a great earthquake—there’s going to be great confusion among the armies of the invaders. Look in verse 21: and God says, “*And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man’s sword shall be against his brother.*” (Ezekiel 38:21) This is not the sword of Israel; this is the sword of Russian against Russian, invader against invader. They will turn in their consternation and in their confusion, and they will begin to fight. The allies will turn among themselves, and there will be a horrible, terrible bloodshed.

C. Great Convulsions of Nature

And then, on top of this, look in verse 22: there are going to be great convulsions of nature, and God says, “*And I will plead against him*”—the word *plead* means, “I will ‘war’ against him”—“*I will [war] against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.*” (Ezekiel 38:22)

Now, who is going to do the fighting in this day? Listen very carefully: it will not be the Israeli army, and this is one time that Israelis will not be the heroes. The hero of this battle will be God Himself, who, as you read what happens Israel—listen to me now—is supernaturally victorious. Russia is supernaturally defeated—not by the hand of Israel but by the hand of God: by pestilence, by hail, by flood, by fire, by earthquake. The Bible tells us in chapter 39, verse 2 that eighty-four percent of the Russian army will be destroyed—five-sixths of the Russian army will be destroyed. (Ezekiel 39:2) That’s an amazing thing. Russia will be ignominiously defeated. She will be wiped out. The back of Russian communism will be snapped and broken right here, and this is what will pave the way for the antichrist to take over the world.

But, something else is going to happen: when this happens—when Russia is so ignominiously defeated, and it is so obviously the hand of God—the eyes of many people are going to be opened. Look in verse 23: *“Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.”* (Ezekiel 38:23) And, those of us who know our Bibles will say, “I told you so”—amen?—“I told you so.”

I want you to turn over, if you will, to chapter 39, and look in verse 21 and 22. This thrills me to read this. And, God says, *“And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the [nations] shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them”*—this will not be what the Israeli has done; this is what God has done. When they strike Israel, God will strike them. And, notice what it says in verse 22—*“So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day...forward.”* (Ezekiel 39:21–22) Oh, my dear friend, God’s people are going to turn to Him. God’s ancient people are going to turn for Him when, one more time, the Lord fights for Israel. When God Himself moves against communistic, atheistic, Jewish-hating Russia, there’s going to be a great opening. I believe that Jews from all over the world will flood back into Israel to help rebuild that country after the earthquake. I believe, at that time, the temple will be rebuilt and other great things are going to take place. We don’t have time to talk to you about them right now, but we’re going to continue to speak on a series of prophecy.

Conclusion

But, ladies and gentlemen, let me just ask this as we close. Look at me. When is this invasion going to take place? Before or after the Rapture? The Bible doesn’t say. The Rapture could take place this afternoon, and all of these things could take place after the Rapture. Or, the invasion of Israel could take place this year. We don’t know. But, I’ll tell you one thing I know: when I read something like this it makes me know we’re living in the last days, folks. It makes me know that we’re living in the twilight of this age. It makes me know that the sands of time are running low, and it makes me know that people ought to be right with God.

You know, it’s an amazement to me that people could read things like this in the Bible and not have a desire to get right with God. And, I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, it’s time you got right with God—before He sends an earthquake into your life, into your home, into your family. It’s time that you gave your heart to Jesus Christ. I want to tell you that God loves you more than you’ll ever know. *“God is love,”* (1 John 4:8) and even the God who sends judgment is a God who, first of all, offers mercy. And, I want to tell you that if anybody will turn to God—whether he be Russian, Jew, or Arab; whether he be American, Israeli. It makes no difference—if he’ll turn to God and say,

“God, have mercy,” God will. Aren’t you glad? He is a God of mercy, and the Bible says, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* (Romans 10:13)

There are many of you here today—you’re not ready to meet God; you’re not saved; you’ve never repented of your sins. Some who are listening to me by means of television—you don’t know that you that you’re saved. You ought to know it. God sent His Son to die upon a cross to purchase your redemption. The Bible says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* (Acts 16:31) And, I promise you on the authority of this book that if you will trust Jesus Christ to save you, He will save you, He promises. Don’t you want to receive Jesus? Don’t you want Him as your Lord and Savior? Why not pray a prayer like this: “God, I’m a sinner, and I’m lost. And, I can’t save myself, but right now, today, with all of my heart, I trust you, Lord Jesus, to save me. Come into my life. Forgive my sins. Cleanse me. Save me”? Pray a prayer like that and mean it, and He will save you. For the Bible says, *“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* (Romans 10:13)

Father in heaven, I pray that you will bless as we give the invitation, and I pray, Heavenly Father, that those who need Jesus will come to Him. And Father, I pray that those of us who are saved will have our faith strengthened by this study of your Word. I pray, Father, for others who need to transfer their church membership, that you would lead them and guide them as they come. Have your way in the invitation.

Now, I want us to stand with heads bowed and eyes closed.

A River of Revival

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 02, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Ezekiel 47:1–12

“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 47:5

Outline

Introduction

- A. You Are the Temple
- B. The River Is the Holy Spirit
- I. It Is a Holy Flow
- II. It Is a Humble Flow
- III. It Is a Heated Flow
- IV. It Is a Hard, Sweeping Flow
- V. It Is a High-Rising Flow
- VI. It Is a Health-Giving Flow
- VII. It Is a Harvest-Calling Flow

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to the Book of Ezekiel in the Old Testament—chapter 47—the Book of Ezekiel. I want to talk to you tonight about “A River of Revival.” My heart yearns for revival, and by the way, the only thing that can preserve this nation is a genuine, Heaven-sent, God-breathed, Holy Ghost, devil-defying, sin-killing revival. I believe that with all of my heart. America was born in a revival, and America will survive in revival. Now, we are living in a dry and barren time, and the river of revival has dried up. We’re living today in a barren wasteland. We’re living in a spiritual wilderness, and there is very little fruit. It is very, very dry.

A pastor was trying to get a man to come to church, and the man had been staying out of church. And, the pastor said, “Why don’t you attend?” He said, “Well,” he said, “The children are having difficulty at school.” He said, “My wife has not been feeling well.” He said, “And, it has rained every Sunday; it just rains and rains.” But the minister said, “But it’s dry at church.” He said, “And, that’s another reason I haven’t been coming.” Well, I want us to have a great, overflowing revival.

Now, Ezekiel chapter 47 is a highly symbolic chapter and wonderfully, beautifully

colored by the Holy Spirit to remind us of what the river of revival really is. Let's look at it. Ezekiel is having a vision now, and he says this: *"Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house;"*—and when he says *"the house,"* he's talking about the holy temple—*"and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward:"*—can you see that little trickle now just running under the door, over the threshold? Just waters are running out of the temple—*"for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward,"*—that is, those of you who've been there, that's the gate that is on the north side—*"and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward"*—some of you have seen the eastward, east gate—*"and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. 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. 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"*—that is, to the waist. *"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. 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. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then he said unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and into the sea:"*—and the sea, by the way, that he's talking about now is the Dead Sea, the lowest place on Earth—*"which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. 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. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi even unto Eneglaim; 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."* "Like fish in the Mediterranean," he's saying. *"But the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt. 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,"*—that literally means "for food"—*"and the leaf thereof for medicine"* (Ezekiel 47:1–12). Now, what a wonderful story this is. "And, pastor, what on Earth does all of that speak of?" It speaks of revival. It speaks prophetically, symbolically, in a parable—it speaks of

rivers of revival.

A. You Are the Temple

Now, I want you to see the picture here. The house that he's speaking of is the temple. And, flowing out of the temple comes a river. Now, what does that mean to us who live here, those of us in this building tonight in Memphis, Tennessee? What relationship does this have to you, sir? To you, teenager? To you, mother and housekeeper? What relationship does this have to you? Well, I want you tell you. You are the temple. You are the temple. Now, put in your margin 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 19 and 20. The Apostle Paul says, *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God... For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). You are a temple. I am a temple of God. In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people; in the New Testament, God has a people for His temple. And, what salvation is, is not getting man out of Earth into Heaven; it is getting God out of Heaven into His holy temple. You are the temple of God.

B. The River Is the Holy Spirit

Now, out of this temple in this Old Testament picture is flowing a river. What does that river represent flowing out of the temple? That river represents the Holy Spirit of God that is to be flowing out of your life. Put this verse down in your margin—John 7, verses 37 through 39: *"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."* Out of the temple is going to flow a river of living water. Well, what does that river of living water—what does it speak of? Well, look in verse 39: *"(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)"* (John 7:37–39). But, when Jesus went up, the Spirit came down; and that Spirit fills the temple. It not only fills the temple. Then that river, that Holy Spirit river, begins to flow out of us.

God brought me here tonight to tell you that you are His temple and He wants a river of revival to be flowing out of you. Now, don't miss this. Don't come sit in church tonight and miss it. God wants you to be a river of revival. A Spirit-filled man, a Spirit-filled woman, is a river of revival. A Spirit-filled person is not only having his needs met, her needs met, but a Spirit-filled person has a life that's overflowing. Those of you who are going to Extremadura, Spain, those of you who are going to Managua, Nicaragua, are going to let the life of God flow out of you.

Now, down in Florida—and I suppose here—we have artesian wells. An artesian well is a well that has gone down into the earth and it strikes an underground river. Now,

that underground river has such force that all you have to do is tap into it and the water will flow. You don't have to pump it. But, when I was a boy, I can remember some houses did not have running water, and they did not have artesian wells. They had pitcher pumps. Any of you ever seen a pitcher pump? You know, you have to pour water into it and prime it. And then, it's got a handle, and it pumps it. Well, you know, I've been pastoring long enough to know that we have some pitcher pump Christians, and we have some artesian well Christians.

Now, the pitcher pump, they always keep a bucket of water there, or something to prime the pump with. And, if you want water, you pour water into that old-fashioned pitcher pump, and then you begin to pump. And, after a while the water begins to flow out. And, it's just coming out, just flowing out like that. But, you know what happens? If you stop pumping, you have to prime it all over again. You know, we've got a lot of pitcher pump Christians in our church. You know, you want them to do something: you've got to prime them. "Won't you please teach in Vacation Bible School?" "Won't you please lead a choir?" "Won't you please give some money to the Love Offering?" "Well, hmm, well, ah, okay, I'll do that." "Oh, thank you, that's wonderful." And so, they do this for a while. And now, you get over here, and here's another member. "Won't you please do this, and won't you please do that?" And, the pastor and the staff, they always just prime the pump, trying to get this one going and that one going. The only trouble is, when you stop pumping this one and start priming that one, then you've got to come back and prime that one again. And, most of the pastors spend their time priming pumps. And, people, they don't seem to have that river of living water just springing up in them. Thank God for the artesian wells. Thank God for those you don't have to prime; you don't have to keep pumping—that they have something different. And, the whole congregation is divided into pitcher pumps and artesian wells.

Now, I would to God that all of us had a river of living water just flowing out of us. And, I know I'm looking out at some of you, and I say, "That one's a river." "That one's a river." "That one's a river." I'm not going to call names, because that would be embarrassing a little bit, but, friend, you need to have flowing out of you what Jesus said is a river of living water.

Now, I want to mention tonight seven things about this river of revival, and I pray God that you will catch it tonight, that you'll understand it, and that you will apply it.

I. It Is a Holy Flow

This river of revival, first of all, is a holy flow. It is a holy flow. If you'll notice, it runs past the altar. It's right there in the Word of God. This river is flowing right past the altar. And, notice in verse 1: "*at the south side of the altar*" (Ezekiel 47:1). Spiritual power always begins at the altar. In the Old Testament, every altar was a prophecy and a picture of

the cross of Jesus Christ. And, you see God does not release spiritual power to unclean vessels, people who have never been to the cross. What is a cross? Here's the upright standard, and here's the crossbeam. The cross is the / crossed out—the big /—when we come to Him and we turn from sin. God does not release spiritual power through the lives of unclean people. And so, this river of revival, it is a holy flow.

Question: Do you want power in your life? Question: Is there un-confessed, un-repent-ed of sin in your life? Now, I want to tell you something: As I stand here tonight, there is no un-confessed, un-repent-ed of sin in my life that I know of. Well, you say, “Oh, don't you think you're something wonderful?” You missed it altogether. I would be a fool to stand up here and try and preach with sin in my heart—an absolute, sheer, unmitigated, unvarnished fool. Anyone is a fool who tries to serve God with un-confessed, un-repent-ed of sin in his or her life. Don't get the idea that we're all supposed to have a little bit of sin, and this one is mine, and that one is hers, and whatever. No! The flow—the flow—is a holy flow. It flows past the altar, and the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. You ought to be clean. I said clean—totally clean—because God has made a provision through the altar, amen? The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. That's in the perfect tense. It continually is cleansing us.

II. It Is a Humble Flow

But, not only is it a holy flow; number two: It is a humble flow. It comes from under the threshold. That's about as low as you can get: if you can walk under the door. You see, real revival starts with God's people on their face, crying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts.” None of us are in a place where we cannot be used, unless we're too big to be used. I've met people too big to be used. I've never met anybody too small to be used. God resists the proud. God gives grace to the humble. God takes ordinary people, just like these who are going on this mission trip. They're ordinary people, but God is going to do extraordinary things through ordinary people. On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit fell, the people looked at them and said, almost sneeringly, “Are not all these Galileans?” A *Galilean* was just another way of saying *redneck* in that day. I'm serious. It was a way of saying *country bumpkin*. “These are they. Why, these Galileans, how are they able—these unlearned, uncouth people?” I'm telling you, they turned the world upside down. Revival begins with God's people on their face.

III. It Is a Heated Flow

It is a holy flow. It is a humble flow. I'll tell you a third thing about it: It's a heated flow. It comes from the south side of the altar. That's the sunny side of the altar. You know, I

really believe that real revival will touch the sunny side of our nature. Now, we've got too many North Pole Christians.

I was listening to you sing, "Victory in Jesus." You sang it fairly good the first time. The choir sang it. You ought to have heard yourself singing it the third time. It was wonderful, as you began to let the joy of the Lord, the warmth of the Lord Jesus, come into your heart. If you don't have a radiant, warm love for Jesus, don't you look down your long nose at the pornographer and the drug dealer. You're probably doing more to hold back revival than anybody else in the world. We need a passionate love for the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe our coldness and our frigid lives are sending souls to Hell. You know what I long for when people come into Bellevue Baptist Church? I want them to see the warmth of God's love.

A Scottish poet, Bobbie Burns, came into a church one time. He was dejected. He needed some help; he needed some blessing. Maybe you've come here tonight just wanting a blessing. And, Bobbie Burns went into this church, and a little crowd was there. And, it looked like the Church of the Holy Refrigerator, where Jack Frost is the pastor. And, you've seen those churches. You can almost ice skate down the aisle. Bobbie Burns sat there, and the song service sounded like a couple of calves dying in a hailstorm. Nobody spoke to him. They didn't know it was the famous poet. He picked up a hymnal and wrote in the hymnal:

*As cold a wind as ever blew;
As cold a church, and in it but few;
As cold a minister as ever spake,
You'll all be hot ere I come back*

—ROBERT BURNS

They found that in the hymnal later on. They didn't even know that Bobbie Burns had been there. I believe sometimes people come to our churches, and they feel the same way. Listen. When we welcome the guests, you make sure that everybody gets a handshake—would you do it?—that everybody gets a smile, everybody is spoken to.

As you go in and out of this building, let that flow—that flow, which is a holy flow; and that flow, which is a humble flow—let it be heated flow, and let it come from the sunny side of the altar. What we need: we need a warm river of revival. I'm not talking about being wild-eyed; I'm not talking about being super-emotional. "Pastor, do we lift our hands in praise?" If it's normal and natural for you to do so. If what you do distracts from what is going on, it's wrong. God is not the author of confusion. But, if you want to praise God, fine. If somebody doesn't feel like doing that, that's fine. But, let the warmth and the joy of the Lord Jesus be in your heart and in your life. Dr. Stephen Olford said, "Some Christians are like arctic rivers: frozen at the mouth."

IV. It Is a Hard, Sweeping Flow

Now, number four—number four: It is a hard, sweeping flow. Look, if you will, in verse 2 again. And, the Bible says, *“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”* (Ezekiel 47:2). It’s a sweeping flow.

You know, a river is an interesting thing. You can’t stop a river. You just can’t stop a river. The only way that you can stop a river is to stop it at its source. And, if the source is a God-given source, then you cannot stop that river. You throw stones at a river: it doesn’t stop it. You dam it up: all it does is rise up higher and generate power. It overflows its banks. It floods everywhere. It may go underground, or it will come up somewhere else. The only way that you can stop a river is to cut it off at its source. And, all Hell cannot stop Bellevue Baptist Church. All Hell cannot stop the Holy Spirit of God flowing out of you, if you will let that river flow. The water is going to run out. People can say all manner of evil about you. They can criticize you. They can do everything. But, they cannot stop what God is doing in your life. Is that not an encouragement? That’s been an encouragement to me. Friend, it is a hard, sweeping flow.

V. It Is a High-Rising Flow

I’ll tell you something else: It is a high-rising flow. Look, if you will, in verses 3 through 5. As this river flows, it gets deeper and deeper, and wider and wider. That’s what I want in my life. I want to go deeper. I want my ministry to be wider. And, the man with a measuring tape begins to measure the river. In about 500 yard increments, he measures the river. At first, the river is ankle deep. And then, after a while, the river is up to the knees. And then, after a while, the river is up to the waist. And then, after a while, the river is so high, so deep, that the only way you can get across is to swim across this river (Ezekiel 47:3–5). It’s a river that cannot be ignored.

I want God to do something in this church and through you that cannot be ignored. I mean, there’s no way that anybody could have ignored this river that is coming out of this temple. And, notice, as the river goes, the river gets wider and deeper at the same time. Now, don’t ever let your ministry get wider without getting deeper. If it gets wider without getting deeper, all you have is a stagnant swamp. It’s to get wider, and it is to get deeper as we go.

You know, I hope that you have a growing pastor. I want to be a growing Christian. I prayed tonight, and I meant it with all of my heart: “Lord, don’t let us have a perfunctory service.” I do not want to have business as usual. I do not want to become a professional pastor. I want to be growing in the Lord Jesus, and I want you to be growing in the Lord Jesus. I want my life to get deeper, and I want my influence to get wider. And, I want yours to do the same thing, because God has a ministry for every

one of us. This is a high-rising flow. And, we don't need to be some sort of a stagnant swamp.

VI. It Is a Health-Giving Flow

Now, next, it was a health-giving flow. Look, if you will, in verses 6 through 9. Look at it. It's very interesting here, about the health that comes from this river, as this river begins to flow. Look in verse 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. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then he said unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country,"*—now, if you've been to Israel—and some of you have been to Israel with me—we're talking about the desert. You've been down there to the desert. That's the east country between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea—*"and go down into the desert, and go into the sea:"*—the Dead Sea—*"which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live"* (Ezekiel 47:6–9). Now, it is a health-giving flow.

See if you can remember this: Where the waters go, the trees will grow. That's verse 7. Where the trees grow, the fruit will show. That's verse 12. Where the fruit will show, the health will glow. That's verse 12. You see, on these trees that are growing by this river are leaves for the healing of the nations, fruit for food and healing. Galatians 5:22 tells us about that fruit: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith."* That's the fruit that ought to be growing on the banks of this river of revival that is flowing out of me, flowing out of you.

Now, friend, you can tell the difference where the river is flowing and where the river is not flowing. Look, if you will, in verse 11, and there the river is not flowing. And, it says, *"But the miry places thereof and the marishes shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt"* (Ezekiel 47:11). I'll tell you, we have a lot of miry places, a lot of marshes, that have never felt this river. And, there is a difference. Where this river goes, friend, there is going to be health. It is a healing flow.

VII. It Is a Harvest-Calling Flow

Next of all—and last—it's going to be a harvest-calling flow. Notice verses 9 and 10 of this same chapter. The last part of verse 9: *"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. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi even unto Eneglaim; 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"*

(Ezekiel 47:9–10). You know, Jesus called us to be fishers of men. Wouldn't you like to have a river of revival flowing out of you, a river of revival that causes the fruit to grow, that luscious fruit of the Spirit that we mentioned in Galatians 5:22? And, wouldn't you like to see it so attractive, and the water so crystalline and pure, that the fish would come and swim, and you just be able to harvest fish and catch fish, and catch fish, and catch fish, and bring people to Jesus Christ?

There's something very attractive about this river of revival that is to flow out of us. I just long to stand on the banks of that river and say, "I got a big one! Bring him in! I got another one! Bring him in! There's another one! Spread out the nets!" Friend, I'm telling you, this church ought to be winning thousands and thousands and thousands of souls. We can do it, if you as an individual would just let that river of revival flow out of you.

Now, what is the secret? How does it happen? Do you want this river to flow? Remember, I believe that Jesus is talking about this in John chapter 7, verse 37. He said this: *"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink...out of his belly"*—or "out of his innermost being"—*"shall flow rivers of living water"* (John 7:37–38). Now, that passage in John chapter 7 says, "As the scripture saith." You can search the Scripture, and you'll never find these exact words. And yet, Jesus said, "That's what the Scripture says." I believe Jesus was referring to Ezekiel 47 right here. I believe that's what He's talking about. He saying, "This is the picture. Out of your innermost being will flow a river of living water."

Conclusion

Now, are you a pitcher pump, or are you an artesian well? Is your life a life that comes past the altar, just over the threshold, because you're that low? Is your life a life that is sweeping now, getting deeper and wider, and deeper and wider? And, is the fruit of the Spirit showing in your life? And, are people feasting on that fruit in your life? And, are the fish coming to you and then coming to Jesus? What is the secret? Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink; and then, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of water" (John 7:37–38). First, you drink of Him; and then, He flows out of you.

Are you thirsty? Are you thirsty? I didn't say, "Are you empty?" My car's been empty many times and never thirsty once. You say, "God knows I'm empty." I'm not asking, "Are you empty?" I'm asking, "Are you thirsty?" Are you tired of just playing church? Do you want to just live, and die, and go to Heaven without being filled with the Holy Spirit of God; without living supernaturally; without seeing your family, your friends, your neighbors come to Christ; without being used of God; without having the joy of the Holy Ghost? Don't you want to be a river of revival? Say, "Yes, I want to be."

I'm going to tell you something. Jesus said, "*If any man thirst...*" (John 7:37). Now, listen to me carefully. I don't know how much of God you have—I don't know. But I'm going to tell you something. You have all you want—you have all you want. Now, don't get the idea that God is a tyrant and you're a hero. I mean, "Old God—if I could just persuade God to fill me; if I could just persuade God to use me." No, no, no, no. You don't persuade Him to do it; you permit Him to do it. The *if* is on you. "*If any man thirst,*"—if he thirsts—"*let him come unto me, and drink*" (John 7:37). You know the reason we're not thirsty? We are so filled with the stagnant waters of self-love. And, we need to say, "Dear God, I want to be thirsty." And, Jesus will take you, friend. He will come into you, and out of your innermost being will flow a river.

You know something about a river? A river will go places its source never even thought of. Sometimes I have people come to me and tell me, "I got saved listening to you," or, "You were preaching in a meeting, and God called me to preach," or this thing and that thing. I didn't know that. I didn't know that. You know, a river just goes places its source doesn't know anything about. That's the wonderful thing of letting Jesus flow out of you. He wants to flow out of you. Out of your innermost being a river of living water.

Beloved members of this church, let me tell you something that this man right here, and this lady right here, and this young man right here, and this sweet thing right here, and this young man here, and this man right here—give me your hand—will let God use them—if we say, "Oh, God, use me. Lord, I don't care what the world says. They can throw rocks at the river if they want to. They can't stop it. I'm going for God." God has put so many of us here. God has given us so much. It's time to let the river flow, amen? But it's a holy flow. It goes past the altar. You've got to come by way of the altar. It's a humble flow. But you let it flow. It will get deeper and wider, and deeper and wider, and deeper and wider; and life and health will come.

How to Turn Your Desert into a Garden

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 11, 1993

Main Scripture Text: Ezekiel 47:1–12

“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.”

EZEKIEL 47:1

Outline

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- I. Recognize the Presence of the Holy Spirit in You
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- II. Reflect upon the Personality of the Holy Spirit
 - A. A Holy Flow
 - B. A Humble Flow
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- III. Rely upon the Power of the Spirit
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Conclusion

Introduction

Chapter 47—one of the great chapters in the Old Testament. I want to talk to you today, if your life has not been a fruitful life. You’re saying, “What is wrong with me? Why don’t I bear fruit? Why is it other people’s lives are blessed and productive? And why is it that my life is so dry, and barren, and fruitless?” Well, we’re talking, tonight, on this subject: “How to Turn Your Desert into a Garden.” If you’re tired of living in a dry and a barren land, if you’re tired of fruitlessness and barrenness, I want you to pay attention. Ezekiel 47, verse 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”* (Ezekiel 47:1).

Now Ezekiel has a vision for the future, and he sees the millennial temple; and, it is full of symbolism, and grandeur, and all of this. But also, tucked into this message is a wonderful picture of the Spirit-filled life, and this is the prophecy of the Holy Spirit of God.

I. Recognize the Presence of the Holy Spirit in You

If you would turn your desert into a garden—number one—you must recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in you. Recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit.

A. The Temple Speaks of the Believer

Now every temple that you see in the Old Testament—and, here, it talks about the house—it's really talking about the temple of the house of God. Every temple in the Old Testament is only a picture, only a prophecy, only an illustration of you. It speaks of you. You see, in the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people; in the New Testament, He has His people for a temple. And Paul said, in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19: "What? Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost that you have of God?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). You know, some folks don't even realize that? Some people do not even know that they have the Holy Spirit in them. That tells me two things: It tells me—number one—that you can have the Holy Spirit, and not know it; it tells me—number two—that you ought to know that you have the Holy Spirit.

Paul says, "What? Don't you know—don't you even know—that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which you have of God?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). You see, when you got saved, God didn't just forgive our sins—He sent the Holy Spirit into you. Now there's some bogus theology that tells you that you can get saved, and, later, receive the Holy Spirit. That's heresy. The Bible says, "*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*" (Romans 8:9). There's no such thing as getting saved, and then, later, receiving the Holy Spirit.

When you got saved, you received Christ. Well, how did you receive Christ? In the physical body? Did Jesus physically come into you? Of course not. He came in through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Christ in the Christian. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit in him. *And being saved is not just getting man out of Earth into Heaven; it is getting God out of Heaven into man.* And so first of all, when you see this temple—this house—you see a picture of the believer.

B. The Water Speaks of the Holy Spirit

And now look again, in verse 1, and you'll see that there's a river flowing out of the temple (Ezekiel 47:1). The water speaks of the Holy Spirit of God. The temple speaks of you. You are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19). And the water speaks of the Holy Spirit.

Now keep your finger there, in Ezekiel chapter 47, and turn with me to John chapter 7. I believe you're going to find exactly what Jesus is talking about right here, in John 7, and verse 37. What a wonderful passage this is! *"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink"* (John 7:37). Of course, you know Jesus is Living Water. He told that woman, "If you'll drink of me, you'll never thirst again": *"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."* And then, He said, *"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly"*—that literally means, "out of his innermost being"—*"shall flow rivers of living water"* (John 7:37–38).

Now what does the river of living water stand for? Well, we don't have to guess. Look, in verse 39: *"(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)"* (John 7:39). So the temple, here, pictures and prophecies the believer; we are the temple of God. The river that is flowing out of this temple, in Ezekiel 47, represents rivers of revival, represents the Holy Spirit flowing out of us.

Did you know that every Christian has a river that is in him, and God wants that river to flow? We hear folks saying, "Fill my cup, Lord." Well, you don't have to worry about getting your cup filled, if you've got a river on the inside of you. You don't have to go from Bible conference to Bible conference, and from church meeting to church meeting, trying to get somebody to fill your cup, when you have a river that is in you. And that river is the blessed Holy Spirit of God. So—number one—if you would turn your desert into a garden, recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "Out of your innermost being there's a river, and that river is the Holy Spirit" (John 7:38–39).

II. Reflect upon the Personality of the Holy Spirit

Second thing: not only recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit, but reflect upon the personality of the Holy Spirit; because, I believe we see that, also, in verse 1. Look and see how this river flows.

A. A Holy Flow

First of all, it's a holy river, because the last part of this verse says that it flows *"from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar"* (Ezekiel 47:1)—*"at the south side of the altar."* Now it flows right past the altar; and, all spiritual revival must flow, and all spiritual revival must flow right past the altar. The water and the blood were always linked together in spiritual power. And every Old Testament altar that you see—every one—speaks of Jesus Christ dying on the cross. You see, the temple—that speaks of the believer; but, the altar—that speaks of every sacrifice that was made in the Old Testament, which only pictures and prophecies the death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon

that cross. And the way to spiritual power is, your river of revival must flow past the altar. Do you know what a cross is? It's just a great big / crossed down. And that's the way you're going to have the spiritual power to say, "No longer I, but Christ" (Galatians 2:20).

B. A Humble Flow

Friend, it's a holy flow, and it is a humble flow. Look again, in verse 1. The Bible says that it came down from under the threshold. Look in verse 1: The "*waters issued out from under the threshold of the house*" (Ezekiel 47:1). Now that's pretty low. Folks, you can't get lower than water flowing out from under the threshold, under the door. This flow, which is a holy flow, it goes past the altar. It's a humble flow.

Real revival begins with God's people on their faces, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." God uses humble people. God hates pride. God took some humble Galileans at Pentecost—unlettered, uncultured, uncouth—and He turned that world upside down with these people. This flow, this river, has got to be humble. I don't know whether I'm a humble man, or not. I want to be a humble man. But when you say that you're humble, you may just be proud of your humility. And it's kind of a tenuous matter. But I can tell you this: that God hates the sin of pride. The Bible says, "God resists the proud. God gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). Many of us are not so small that we cannot be used. Actually, we're too big that we cannot be used.

When I was a young man, God called me to preach. I was amazed that God called me to preach—I really was. I had no idea that God could use me as a preacher or speaker of any kind. Matter of fact, when I was in a Sunday School class, and there were, to my recollection, five other people in that classroom... I was a boy in high school, and the teacher of that class—or, maybe I was in junior high school. I think I was in junior high school—and the teacher of that class said, "We're going to ask Adrian to pray." That embarrassed me. I didn't know what to say. I didn't know how to pray out loud. I stammered for a while, and I said, "I'm sorry, you'll have to get somebody else. I can't do it." The very thought of even uttering a prayer in a little classroom like that—it intimidated me.

Then, I went off to high school, and our pastor said, "God has a plan for everybody's life. You need to find God's plan for your life." And he said, "The way to find God's plan for you life is to tell God you'll do anything God wants you to do." And I said, "God, anything You want me to do, I'll do." And I don't know how the germ got in my heart and mind that God might want me to preach, because my dad was not a preacher, my grandparents were not preachers, my brothers were not preachers, my uncles were not preachers—that God might want me to be a preacher. There's a germ that got down in there, and I don't know who, or what, put it there. But I began to ask God, "God, do You

want me to preach?” And then, after a while, it seemed as though the Holy Spirit was nodding yes. And I said, “Lord, I think You might want me to be a preacher.” And I’d continue to pray. And after a while, it was like this: “Lord, if You don’t want me to preach, You’d better let me know.” And then, after a while, it was, “Lord, I know that You’ve laid Your hand upon me to preach the gospel.” And I went forward and made a commitment. And I said, “Here I am. I am answering the call. I commit myself—I surrender myself—to God’s calling upon my life to preach the gospel.” I’ve never looked back. I’ve never doubted my call to preach. On some Monday mornings, I’ve wondered about it some, but I never doubted it—thought about how I might get out of it, and figured I couldn’t get out of it—but that’s a little facetious. People talk about “fighting the call to preach.” I am so glad that God has given me the privilege—the glorious privilege—of preaching the gospel, and then, the super-glorious privilege of being the pastor of such a wonderful, wonderful church as this. But God laid His hand on me.

I was in high school. I was not a speaker. I didn’t know much about the Bible. I didn’t know anything about all of the necessities and the accoutrements of the ministry. I knew how to play football—about the only sport I was much good at. I went out on the football field, on a summer night—like the summer nights we’re having now—to pray, to seek the face of God, by myself, at night, under the stars, in South Florida, in West Palm Beach, and walked up and down on that football field, and began to pray, and say, “God, I want You to use me. Lord, I want You to speak through me.” And then, I got on my knees out there, on a football field, and prayed.

Somehow, I felt that I needed to humble myself more; and so, I stretched out on the grass, spread my hands out like that, and put my head, and said, “O God, I want You to anoint my life. I want You to use me.” And that didn’t seem humble enough. And I took a finger, and made a hole in the dirt for my nose to go in. I put my nose down in that hole till the dirt began to come up my nostrils. I said, “God, I’m as low as I know how to get. I want You to use me. I want You to anoint my life.” And I can’t explain all that happened. I didn’t see a vision. I didn’t speak in strange languages. But God’s Holy Spirit came upon me, and God anointed my life. And I’m sure that, by pride, I’ve taken that commitment off the altar, and had to put it back on many times; but, if I’ve learned anything, I’ve learned that God will bless us, if we’ll get low enough, if we’ll get humble enough.

C. A Heated Flow

Here was a river. It flowed past the altar; it flowed under the threshold. And dear friend, not only was it a holy flow, and a humble flow; it was a heated flow. It flowed past the south side of the altar (Ezekiel 47:1). That’s the sunny side; that’s the warm side. True revival will touch the south side of our nature. I think what’s wrong with many churches

is this: that we have too many *North Pole Christians*. I've been in some churches—I thought I'd like to rename it *the Church of the Holy Refrigerator*. And *Jack Frost* is the pastor. If you come forward, you can skate down the aisle. The people in that church will be God's *chosen frozen*.

Do you know, friend, that, when this river flows, there's the warmth of the Holy Spirit. We must never, ever lose here, in this church, conviviality, and warmth, and joy, and friendliness, and hugs, and tears, and smiles, and joy in the Holy Ghost. And if you're one of these folks that are rigid, and caustic, and judgmental, and faultfinding, and censorious, don't look down your long nose at the drunkard; don't look down your nose at somebody who doesn't dress just like you think they ought to dress. You are probably doing more to hold back revival in this church than anybody else.

Friend, listen. We have a world, today, that is longing for love and joy. You've heard me say, many times, *most of the people in America are not all that interested in Heaven or Hell; they want to know how to hack it on Monday*. They're looking for warmth and love. That's the reason that it's so important. When you walk through the aisles of this church, you smile at people. When you see people that you don't know, greet them, and welcome them. And we say, "It's love worth finding." If that's only a motto, and it's not reality, we'd better not have the motto, because they'll say, "Some love that is!" You don't know the person who's going to walk into this church, maybe giving God the last chance, before they go jump off the Mississippi River bridge, saying, "One more time, let's go down there, and see if these people care." Somebody sitting near you in church—and you don't even give a holy grunt; or, you say, "Hey, that's my seat! That seat's been saved; you'll have to move." That's literally happened here. That is, that has happened here. We've actually had folks to come to this church on Sunday morning, never been here, and some of our members have said, "I'm sorry, you can't sit in that seat; that's my seat." Would you believe that? Would you believe that?

Oh, my dear friend, it makes angels weep. We're to love people. Bobby Burns, a Scottish poet, went to a church. And nobody spoke to him; nobody gave him a welcome; nobody cared for him. There was no love; there was no joy. Bobby Burns, the noted Scottish poet, picked up a hymnal, and he wrote on the back of that hymnal:

*As cold a wind as ever blew
As cold a church and in it but few
As cold a minister as ever spake.
You'll all be hot ere I come back.*

—ROBERT BURNS

And he never did come back—Bobby Burns—why? Because, there was no river of revival. This holy river, dear friend, flows past the altar, under the threshold, past the outside of the altar, the sunny side of the altar.

III. Rely upon the Power of the Spirit

Now what we need to do, if we would turn our desert into a garden—Number one, we must recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit: we are a temple, and there's a temple that is to flow out of us. Number two—we must, friend, not only recognize the present, but, we must recognize the personality—or, reflect on the personality—of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is humble. The Holy Spirit, friend, is warm. The Holy Spirit is holy. And then, here's a third thing: We need to rely upon the power of the Spirit.

Look in verse 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...”*—now, watch—*“and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. 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. 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. 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 47:2–5).

Oh, this speaks of power! Think what is happening in the rampaging Mississippi River, now, in the middle part of our nation. Did you know that, when a river begins to flow, you can't stop a river? I mean, you throw stones at a river—it keeps on flowing. You try to dam it up—it just enlarges its banks, and floods out all over the land. The only way to stop a river is to cut it off at its source; and, the source of this river is God. There's nothing the world can do to stop it. Here's a river—a river that it flowing, and picking up power as it goes—and, they begin to measure, now, in 500-yard increments; and, it flows deeper and wider, and deeper and wider. It is ankle-deep, and knee-deep; to the loins; and then, it is a river that cannot be passed over.

I'm going to tell you one thing, folks: The mighty Mississippi has the attention of this nation, right now; and, when this church, and the members of this church, get right with God, when rivers of revival begin to flow, we'll get the attention of this community. No way around it. Friend, you cannot ignore this kind of a work. And here, as this river gets wider, it gets deeper. That's what we need to rely upon: the power of the Spirit of God. Like a mighty river flows, so does the power of the Holy Spirit, when God's people are willing to be channeled for that power.

IV. Remember the Purpose of the Holy Spirit

Recognize His presence. Reflect on His personality. Rely on His power. And then, remember His purpose.

Why does the Holy Spirit flood the land? Well, look, in verse 6: *“And he said unto*

me, Son of man, hast thou seen this?” And I have to say, “No, Lord, I haven’t seen it. I’ve seen a rivulet; I’ve seen a trickle; but I haven’t seen this. O God, I want to see it.” “I know you want to see it, beloved.” “Then, he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country” (Ezekiel 47:6–8).

I stood on Mount Zion, there—Mt. Moriah, there—where the temple was, and I looked out toward the east. And when you look out toward the east, you look out toward the Dead Sea. You look out to the Arabah. You look out to the desert. You look out to the badlands. You look out to the lowest place on the face of the Earth—1,300 feet below sea level is the face of the Dead Sea; and the Dead Sea itself is 1,300 feet deep. And Ezekiel, in his vision, he sees this mighty river coming out of the temple of God, and beginning to flow, and getting deeper and wider, and deeper and wider; and, it is now flowing toward the east. It is flowing down into the desert.

And then, there are trees on either side of the river. There were no trees out there. It was only desert. But now, the trees begin to grow. And look, in verse 8: *“Then he said unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea:”—the sea that he’s talking about is the Dead Sea—“which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.”* He’s talking about the Dead Sea, now, no longer being the Dead Sea. *“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. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi even unto an Eneglaim; 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. But the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat,”*—that is, for food—*“whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruits 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” (Ezekiel 47:8–12).*

What is the purpose of the Spirit? We’ve talked about the power of the Spirit, flowing like a mighty river.

A. To Give Help

But what is the purpose? Well, first of all, to give help—to give help. Look, again, in verses 6 through 9, and you’re going to see that where the waters grow, the trees grow. Do you see it, in verse 7, and on and on? *“Behold, at the bank of the river were very*

many trees on the one side and on the other” (Ezekiel 47:7). There can be no trees without water. And so where the waters go, the trees grow; and, where the trees grow, the fruit will show. Look, if you will, in verse 12—and, he says, “*And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat,*”—that is, for food—“*whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed*” (Ezekiel 47:12). That is, you’ll never be able to eat at all. Where the waters flow, the trees grow; where the trees grow, the fruit will show; and, where the fruit will show, health will glow, because he says that “*the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine*” (Ezekiel 47:12). That is, these waters are going to heal the sickness of society, and going to satisfy the longing of people’s hearts.

What fruit is this? Well, if this river is the Holy Spirit, then the fruit is the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22: “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*” (Galatians 5:22–23). Did you know, folks, that that’s the fruit this world is hungry for? They don’t care. They don’t care what size Bellevue Church is. They don’t care how beautiful our buildings are. They don’t care how many are in our choir. But when they begin to see this river flow, when they begin to see these fruit-bearing trees on either side, when they understand that we have a message that can satisfy, and a message that can heal, and a message that cannot be reproduced by the world, something absolutely unique...

Look, in verse 11: “*But the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt*” (Ezekiel 47:11). What does that mean? It means there’s going to be a difference. Everywhere the water flows, that’s where trees grow; that’s where the fruit will show; that’s where the health will glow. But the miry places, the marshy places—they’re filled with salt, because they have not known the power of the Holy Spirit. There ought to be something absolutely different about the people of Bellevue Baptist Church everywhere that we go.

Now notice what happens when all of this happens. Look, if you will, in verse 9 of this same chapter: “*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...*”—now, friend, you couldn’t catch a fish in the Dead Sea if your life depended upon it, ’cause they’re not there. But now—“*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*” (Ezekiel 47:9).

How are we going to get folks saved? We have a city that’s lost. We have a city of churches. Most of the people in Memphis are on their way to Hell. Does that bother you? Most of the people in Memphis are on their way to Hell; and, here we are, boasting about our church, and all that we do. Why are we not reaching them? Well, I’ll tell you why we’re not reaching them: The river *Revival* is not flowing. But when that river begins to flow, the

deadly places, the depressed places, the desert places, will begin to bloom and blossom as a rose; spiritual fruit and spiritual health will be there; and, there'll be very many fish, and we'll just be able to stand on the banks of this spiritual river, and throw the net in, and catch those fish. People will come to Jesus. People will come to Jesus by the thousands. This church ought to baptize thousands of people every year. Did you know that? Every year, we ought to baptize thousands of people. And it is a monument to the fact that most of us, rather than being a river of revival, have just tried to be a reservoir of blessings. We've wanted God just simply to pour His blessings into us.

Do you know the difference between an artesian well and an old pitcher pump? Did any of you used to have an old pitcher pump at your house? Let me see your hand. Good, you're not all youngsters. You know, one of those old pitcher pumps. Now I have to be honest—we never had one at our house; but, I've been on the farm, where we've had them. And it's a pump like this: It goes down into the ground; it has a handle on it. And if you want to get water out of it, you know what you have to do? You have to prime it. And so there's always a bucket there, or there's a big jar there; there's something there. And in order to get water out of that old pitcher pump, you pour water in; and then, you begin to pump. And after a while, it begins to flow. And as long as you keep pumping, the water will come out— isn't that right? But if you leave it alone, it loses its prime; and then, you have to prime it again.

Also, we have, down in Florida, and, I guess we're having them in Tennessee, though I've not seen one, artesian wells. Do you have them here? Do we have them here? We have them? I'm a Tennessean now. Well, you put a shaft in the ground, and it goes down; and, it hits an underground river—that's what it hits—a reservoir. It's really a river of water, but it's underground; and, there's pressure there, and it begins to bubble up. You don't have to pump it. You don't have to pump it. It just flows. Jesus said, "If any man come unto me, out of his innermost being will flow a river of living water" (John 7:38). He's talking about an artesian well.

Did you know that in Bellevue Baptist Church we have two kinds of members? We've got pitcher pumps and artesian wells. We sure do! Brother Brown, we've got pitcher pumps. I mean, if you want them to do anything, you've got to prime 'em, and we spend a lot of our time in staff meetings talking about priming pumps. That's, I mean, that's what we say: "How are we going to get them to attend? How are we going to get them to come? How are we going to get them to serve? How are we going to get them to tithe? How are we going to get them to do this? How are we going to get them to do that?" We're priming pumps, and the pastor becomes, primarily, a pump primer. And so we have to prime this pump, and we get Brother So-and-So going; and, we're pumping here, a little bit, and he's doing pretty good. But then, when we leave him, to go over and work on Sister So-and-So he loses his prime; so, you've got to go back again, and

re-prime him to get him flowing again. And you've got to keep on priming and working.

But then, I thank God there are some folks—they are artesian wells. You don't have to pump them. They have tapped into an underground system of spiritual power, the Holy Spirit of God. There is a mighty river that flows out of them, a well of living water springing up in them. And that's what we need, folks: We need more artesian wells, and fewer pitcher pumps.

A. J. Gordon, one time, went to the World's Fair—1924 it was. He looked across the field, and he saw a man with an old-fashioned pitcher pump, and the man was pumping water. Gordon said he looked like he was Chinese. He had on a gaudily colored kimono, and he had his hand on the pump handle; and, the water was just spewing out furiously, and the hand was just flying, *like that*. Gordon said to himself, "I don't know who that man is, but he's really pumping water. I want to get a closer look." And when he got up closer, he found out that it wasn't a real man at all; it was a wooden dummy. He had a hinge in his elbow. His hand was strapped to the pump handle. It wasn't a pitcher pump; it was an artesian well. And the man wasn't pumping water; the water was pumping him.

Now folks, listen—listen. Sometimes, we see somebody, and we say, "Oh, look what they're doing for God." Well, if anything's being done, God is doing it. It's surprising what God can do with any dummy who keeps his hand on the handle, and stays in contact with the Holy Spirit of God.

This is what Ezekiel said—He said, "I saw a temple, and out of the temple there flowed a humble flow under the threshold, passed the altar on the south side, and it began to flow, and get wider and deeper, and wider and deeper, and nobody could stop it; and, the trees began to grow, and the fruit began to show, and the health began to glow, and the fishes began to come, and the desert was blossoming like a rose" (Ezekiel 47:1–12). Don't you want that for your life—for your family? Don't you want it for this church? Well, friend, I want to tell you—everybody here has that potential, because God says He "*giveth not the Spirit by measure*" (John 3:34). *You have all of God you want. If you don't have any more, it's just 'cause you don't want any more.*

Conclusion

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Would you say, "Lord, make me a river of revival; make me a channel of that river? Lord, You're the river. But Lord, make me a channel for that river. Lord, turn my desert into a garden. My barren home, Lord—make it fruitful. Make me a soul winner. Let the fruit of the Spirit show in my life. Make me a healer, not a hurter. Lord, make my life so attractive that the fish will swarm, and I'll be fishing out of a crystal-clear river, where fish have come. Make me a soul winner. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Rivers of Revival

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 22, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Ezekiel 47:1–12

“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 47:5

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Conclusion

Introduction

You know, I've been a pastor long enough to know there are three kinds of people in every church—at least three: there are those who make things happen, there are those who watch things happen, and there are those who don't even know anything is happening. Now, I believe we'll have those three categories of people in this fall season. There will be those who will make things happen. Now, revival is the sovereign work of God, but we allow it to happen when we seek Him with all of our hearts. There are others who will come here and say, “You know, Bellevue puts on these programs. Let's go see what the pastor, and Mark, and the choir, and all of these have planned for us.” And, it's for you more like entertainment. We're going to watch it happen. And, there are some who will come who will not have a clue. They come. They don't put it all together. They don't understand what we're about. I pray God that you'll be in that first category.

I want you to take your Bibles today and turn to Ezekiel chapter 47. And, the passage that I'm going to read to you at first will be a little enigmatic; it will be a little confusing. But, there is a dynamic message for us in this passage of scripture. Now, I'm going to read the first five verses to you, and I want you to follow along. Ezekiel chapter 47, verse 1: *"Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house;"*—now, the house he's speaking of is the temple—*"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 under"*—*"from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. 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. 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. 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. 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 47:1–5).

Now, what I want to speak to you about today is "Rivers of Revival." God wants my life to be a river that is flowing from me to you, and yours would be a river that is flowing from you to me. And, together, we will be touching the world with a river of revival. Now, ours is a dry land; ours is a barren land—parched. There is a great, great need for revival in this church, and in many of our homes, and in many of our lives. There is a great, great need for revival in America. I'm very concerned about America. I'm convinced that the only thing that can change our nation is a spiritual revival. I don't believe that the Pentagon can do it. I don't believe that the White House can do it. I don't believe that the educational system can do it. The only thing, I say, that will really change America is a Heaven-sent revival.

Now, God is using this illustration here, or this story here, in Ezekiel chapter 47 as an illustration to all of us. Now, what does all of this mean: water flowing out from under the threshold of the door of the temple? Well, you have to understand that the temple is a gigantic illustration of the Christian. You see, the Apostle Paul said, *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost...which ye have of God... ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price"* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). You, right now, are a temple of God. This building is not a temple of God; it's a meeting place. Your body is a temple of God. In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people; in the New Testament, He has a people for His temple.

You know, there are people who would not think of doing certain things in here. They would not smoke cigarettes in here. They would not drink beer in here. They would not

curse in here. They wouldn't do those things. They say, "Why, this is the house of God." Friend, listen. *This* is the house of God. Now, I'm thankful for these buildings, and we've dedicated them to God; but, friend, it would be far better for you to profane this place than your body. You are a temple of God, and God wants revival to usher from you. And, God likens that revival to a river that flows out of the temple. Got it? Got it? Got it. Okay.

I. The Mysterious Source of This River

Now, there are three things I want us to learn today, and first of all, I want us to see what I'm going to call the mysterious—the mysterious—source of this river. Where does this river come from? It flows out of the temple of God, in verse 1. Now, that reminds me of a passage of scripture in the New Testament. Now, keep your Bible marked there in Ezekiel chapter 47, but I want you to turn also to John chapter 7, because here is the corresponding New Testament passage that helps us to understand all of this. And, it tells about an episode that took place at a feast—the tenth feast in the land of Israel—and it was called the Feast of Tabernacles. And, at the climax of the feast, here's what happened. The priest would take a golden flask and would go down to the Pool of Siloam and fill it with water, and come back and pour that water near the altar. This was the high point of the feast. And, when he did that, the people would shout and leap and dance and praise, and the trumpets would sound. The Talmud says—and that's the Old Testament description of the Jewish life, or the description of the Old Testament Jewish life—that he who has not seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the water has not seen rejoicing. It was a time of great excitement. Now, this is the background for the scripture we're about to read.

Now, right in the middle of that ceremony, Jesus shouted. Now, He wasn't shouting with rapturous shouts of joy. But, He wanted the people to hear something. You see, all of these Old Testament ceremonies and feasts were all about Jesus. Understand that: it's all about Jesus. We sang, "It's not about me; it's about Him"—all about Jesus. And, here they were celebrating. But, Jesus knew that before long, when the enthusiasm had worn off, they would go back to their own fears, their own foibles, their own disappointments. And, all that they had was a religious spasm, but they did not know reality. So, right in this high moment, Jesus, who was the water of life, was right in their midst. And, Jesus cried with a loud voice so they could all hear Him. And here's what He said. Look, if you will now, in verse 37—John 7, verse 37: *"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly"—that is, out of his innermost being—"shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet*

given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)” (John 7:37–38).

Now, what is all of this about? Jesus said, “Look. Are you thirsty? Come to Me and drink, and you won’t just be drawing water from a well. Out of you will begin to flow a river—a river of power and grace and joy.” Now, I ask you a question: Does that characterize your life today? I mean, is there flowing out of you a river of love and power? Everywhere that you go, are you a blessing to those ’round about you? Are you? You know, people go from Bible conference to Bible conference to get their cup filled: “I want to have my cup filled.” Well, friend, if you have a river inside of you, you don’t have to have your cup filled. The Lord is flowing through you. And, Jesus said, *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink”* (John 7:37). Now, I believe that Jesus is using this Old Testament passage of scripture in Ezekiel chapter 47 to talk about that (Ezekiel 47:1–5). The river is the river of God’s power. It is the Holy Ghost. And, Jesus said that it speaks of the Holy Ghost.

Now, Jesus said, in John chapter 7, *“If any man thirst...”* See, here’s the preface. You have to be thirsty. Are you thirsty? That’s the problem. You say, “Well, pastor, I know I’m empty.” My gasoline tank has been empty many times, but it’s never yet been thirsty. Are you thirsty? Do you have a burning, blistering thirst for God? Are you so filled with the stagnant waters of self-love and carnality and television and materialism that you’re not thirsting for the living God? *“If any man thirst...”* Now, let me tell you something: you have all of God you want. Don’t pass that over easily. You have all of God you want. If you don’t have more of God, it’s because you don’t want more of God. What did Jesus say? *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”* (Matthew 5:6). It’s not our job to persuade God to send revival, but to permit Him to do so; to be thirsty. Do you have a real thirst?

A little girl said in the middle of the night to her mommy, “Mommy, I want a drink of water.” The mother got up and gave the little girl some water. Fifteen minutes later, she said, “Mommy, I want some more water.” She got up wearily the second time and gave the child some water. Twenty or thirty minutes later, the little girl cried out and said, “Mommy, I want some water.” The mother got up and gave her water, and said, “If you ask for water one more time, I’m going to spank you.” A little while later, the little girl said, “Mommy, when you get up to spank me, will you bring me some water?” That’s thirst—thirst that will not be denied.

A. It Flows from a Humble Source

Now, we’re talking about the mysterious source of this river. Let me tell you where the river comes from. It comes, number one, from a humble source—from a humble source. In verse 1, the Bible tells us that the river flowed *“from under the threshold”* (Ezekiel 47:1). Now, friend, that’s about as low as you can get. The water is flowing out from

under the threshold of the house. How we need to humble ourselves before God! Many of us sit in church, heady, high-minded, unbent, unbroken, somehow thinking that we're doing God some sort of a service or a favor by being here. If there were ever a time when America needs to be on its face before God, this is the time. And, in our church, we can talk about our buildings and our program and our music and our preaching and our teaching and all of that. That does no good at all without a brokenness before God. We need to have a humbleness in our heart.

B. It Flows from a Holy Source

Now, next, the river flows not only from a humble source, but it flows from a holy source. The Bible tells us that it flows past the altar, in verse 1—from under the threshold and past the altar (Ezekiel 47:1). The altar was the place where the blood was shed. That was the place for the sacrifice of sin; that was the place of cleansing. There can never be any true revival when God's people have un-confessed, un-repenting of sin in their hearts and in their lives. Somebody said, "I heard you had the flu." No, I had a cold. Now, I've got the post-mortem of that cold right now. There can never, never be true revival until we repent. That's what Dr. Gray Allison was talking about. We have to come past the altar. The Bible says, "*The blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son [cleanses] us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7).

C. It Flows from a Heated Source

Now, what I'm trying to say is that this river—this mysterious force of this river—comes out of the Christian, who is a temple of God, but it comes from under the threshold. There's a humble source. And then, it comes past the altar. There is a holy source. And then, notice the Bible says it comes from the east side toward the Dead Sea, and it comes—this water comes—from the south side of the altar, flowing out into the east (Ezekiel 47:1). Now, if you've been to Israel, you know that one of the most glorious sights is to see the sun rise in the east and shine upon Jerusalem. What is he saying here? He's saying that this source of this water is a heated source. It comes from the sunny side; it comes from the warm side.

So many churches are so cold you would think that Jack Frost was the pastor. You could ice skate down the aisle. You know, God does business with those that mean business. Is your heart warm? Are you truly concerned, or are you counting the minutes until the service is over this morning, thinking about what you're going to see on television, thinking about what you're going to have for lunch? May God warm our hearts. May there be a holy fire in our church—in mine, in yours.

Bobbie Burns was a famous Scottish poet. He was dejected, cold, needing a spiritual boost. He found a little church, and he went into it. And, the church was frigid and cold, and the people were indifferent. And, Bobbie Burns did not find what he was

looking for, so he took out a hymnal. This great poet scratched these words in the hymnal:

*As cold a wind as ever blew
As cold a church, and in it but few;
As cold a minister as ever spake,
Ye'll all be hot ere I come back.*

—ROBERT BURNS

Did you know when people walk in here, they ought to see and feel the warmth of Almighty God? This river that flows out of us will flow from a holy place. It will flow from a humble place. It will flow from a heated place. This is the mysterious source of the river.

II. The Marked Course of the River

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see. I want you to see what I'm going to call the marked course of the river. Look again in verses 2 through 5: *"Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the outer gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. 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. 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. And 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 47:2–5).

Now, what's he talking about? Well, I want you to imagine this beautiful, crystal-clear water cascading down a mountainside. And, here it comes, and they begin to measure the water. First of all, would you get me a glass of water? Friend, it's not as bad as it sounds. Here's the situation. This water begins to come out from under the threshold. It flows past the altar. It is warmed by the Spirit of God. And, the man begins to measure the water in 500-yard increments. First of all, the water is up to the ankles. That, to me, speaks of walking in the Spirit. Then, after a while, the water's up to the knees. That speaks to me of praying in the Spirit. Then, the waters are up to the loins. That speaks to me of strength in the Spirit. And then, finally, the waters were too deep to pass over, waters to swim in, waters that would engulf, waters that would sweep you along. That speaks of the overwhelming power of the Holy Spirit—not merely to wade, and to walk, and to pray, and to be strong, but to see something so supernatural that it cannot be explained.

Would you not like to see in your home, in our lives, in this church, in this nation, a

mighty cascading river of revival? Would you not like to see that? Friend, I would... Thank you, brother. That's one of the major jobs of an Associate Pastor. If only people knew what he does here, they'd never speak to him again. You know, this river is such an amazing river because it gets wider and deeper as it goes, and there are no tributaries. Now, the Mississippi is a mighty river, but it has many tributaries. This river gets wider and deeper and wider and deeper because it is a supernatural river.

A. It Flows into the Depressed Places

Now, what is the course of the river? Number one: It flows into the depressed places. Verse 8 says, *"These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea"* (Ezekiel 47:8). Now, what's he talking about? Well, if you know anything about the topography of Israel, you know that the temple sits on a mountaintop 2,700 feet above sea level. And, if you look east, it begins to drop and go down and down and down and down and down and down and down till it comes to the lowest spot on the face of the earth. That's where the Dead Sea is. And, the waters go down and down and down. What they're doing is this: they are flowing into the depressed places. People around us are about as low as they can get. They're demoralized. They're frustrated. They're fearful. They're jaded. They're brokenhearted. One of the major problems in America is depression. And, what those people around you need is a river of life flowing out of you.

B. It Flows into the Desert Places

Not only does the river flow into the depressed places, but it flows, friend, into the desert places. Again, verse 8 says that they go forth to the desert. The Judean desert, called the *Arabah*, is a place where very little can grow. It is a desert. And, there are so many, again, whose lives are fruitless. And, our Lord has told us that we're to go and bring forth fruit and that our fruit should remain. People need a life of fullness and fruitfulness, but they're living in a desert. You may be married to a man living in a desert. You may have children living in a desert. You may have neighbors living in a desert. There's no life. You need to be a river of life to these people.

C. It Flows into Deadly Places

The river flows to the depressed places. The river flows to the desert places. And then, the river flows to the deadly places. The Bible says it goes down into the sea. Now, I've told you the sea there is the Dead Sea—1,300 feet below sea level and itself 1,300 feet. Now, this Dead Sea receives water from the River Jordan, but it does not give up water. The only way it gives up water is by evaporation. And, therefore, the minute particles of salt that are in the Jordan River remain there in the Dead Sea, and the Dead Sea has gotten saltier and saltier and saltier. There is 25 percent more salt in the Dead Sea than

in the ocean waters. The waters are leaden and deadly, and no organic life can live in them. And, this is where this wonderful river begins to flow into the depressed places, into the desert places, into the deadly places.

Now, if there were ever a description of what our world needs, what our church needs, what your family needs, it is for you to have a river of life flowing out of you into those places. And, friend, I'm telling you, they're all around—they're all around. This is not geography; this is theology. God is not talking to you about something way back yonder. God is talking to you about your life being a river of revival. Again, there are those who make things happen. There are those who watch things happen. There are those who don't know anything is happening. I'll probably miss the last two groups this morning, but I'm just praying God will give us a little colony of Christians who will say, "Oh, my God, oh, my God, I want to be a part of a mighty revival, and I want there to come out of me a river of living water."

III. The Mighty Force of This River

Now, let's close this by talking about the mighty force of the river—the mighty force of the river. This river is a powerful river. Look, if you will, in verse 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"* (Ezekiel 47:9). Now, a river has mighty force. It's a very relentless thing. It's hard to handle. There's nothing you can do to stop a river. You say, "Well, we can dam it up." Well, it would just overflow its banks then. You say, "Well, we'll throw rocks into it." Throw all the rocks you want. You can't stop this river. The only way—listen—the only way that a river can be stopped is to stop it at its source. That's the only way. What is the source of this river? You are! The Holy Spirit is flowing out of you. You hold the key to revival. God wants mighty force to come out of you.

A. Where the Waters Flow, the Tree Will Grow

Now, notice. I want you to see what happens here. First of all, where the waters flow, the tree will grow. Look in verse 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"* (Ezekiel 47:7). This is the desert, and now here are these glorious, succulent, green trees—very many growing alongside the river. You know, the Bible says that a righteous man is *"like a tree planted by the rivers"* (Psalm 1:3). What's he talking about: mere trees? No, he's talking about your life—your life fructifying and blessing the lives of many and changing the lives of many. And, because of you, there will be multitudes in Heaven, because they've become like trees planted by the rivers of water.

B. Where the Waters Flow, the Fish Will Go

Not only will the trees grow, but where the waters flow, the fish will go. Look in 47, verses 8 and 9: *“Then saith 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. 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”* (Ezekiel 47:8–9). This is a life-giving river. It flows down into that Dead Sea that I’m talking about, where nobody could live—no fish could live. And now, the sea becomes fresh, clean, pure, and it begins to swarm with fish. You see, Jesus said we’re in the business of fishing for men. You know why we don’t catch many fish? Because we’re fishing in a stagnant pond; we’re fishing in a place where the fish don’t care to come.

Not everybody will be attracted by your life if you’re filled with the Spirit, but I will guarantee you that if you get on fire for Jesus Christ, if there’s coming out of you a humble flow, a holy flow, and heated flow, if those waters are flowing down into the depressed, the desert, and the deadly places, I’ll tell you what’s going to happen: lost people are going to be attracted. You think about the Day of Pentecost. There were probably over a million Jews in the city of Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, and there were 120 disciples—just 120. Now, here’s the question. How are 120 going to reach a multitude? Well, God’s Holy Spirit so came upon them as they were praising and magnifying God, the Bible says *“It was noised abroad”* (Acts 2:6) what happened. And, the multitude came to them. Friend, when we have spiritual revival, we’re going to catch fish by the net full.

You know, on a Sunday morning, I’ll preach and give an invitation. We’ll have six, eight, ten, twelve people come in the service to accept Christ—and I’m grateful for that—but we ought not to have a service without a 100, 200, people saved. I mean, listen. Look at the people out here. Look around you. Look at this crowd. What would happen if out of your life was flowing a river of living water—if you were sharing Jesus Christ?

C. Where the Waters Flow, the Fruit Will Show

I’m telling you, where the rivers flow, the trees grow. Where the rivers flow, the fish will go. And, I’ll tell you what else: where the river flows, the fruit will show. Look in verse 12: *“And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat,”*—that is, “for eating”—*“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”*—

that is, “for food”—“*and the leaf...for medicine*” (Ezekiel 47:12). Delicious clusters of fruit are there. What is the fruit? Simple: the fruit of the Spirit—“*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, [mercy,] faith*” (Galatians 5:22). Where these waters flow, and these trees grow, and these fish go, there will be fruit—there will be fruit that will show. It’ll be very obvious that you’re a child of God. People, when they meet you and walk away from you, will have to say in their heart, whether they believe in you or like you or not, they have to say that you are different, because they see in you the fruit of the Spirit, which is really the character of Jesus Christ.

D. Where the Waters Flow, the Health Will Glow

And, last of all, friend, where the rivers go, the health will glow. Listen. We live in a deadly situation. But, look in verse 12: “*And by the river upon the bank thereof...*” (Ezekiel 47:12). And, these trees, it says here—“*and [their] leaves...[shall be] for the healing*”—“*the healing of the nations*” (Revelation 22:2). The church is sick today. Many saints in this building are weak and anemic. You have become the devil’s plaything. You have no power in your prayer life. You have no substance in your witness. You have no great authority in your spiritual warfare. Very frankly, you need to be healed. And so, you see, the secret to your healing—you know what it is? The man on this platform, or the people sitting next to you—the person next to you. You see, if out of me is flowing a river of living water, my life will be health to you. This is what we need; this is what we must have.

Conclusion

Now, the message is over, but I want you to listen. I want you to go back to the first...as we talk about the source of the river. It is a humble source. Are you willing to humble yourself before God? You say, “Well, I’ll pray and ask God to make me humble.” That’s a dangerous prayer. If you’re wise, you will humble yourself before God. It comes, friend, from a holy source. Is there right now, this morning—answer me, young man in the balcony; answer me—is there any un-confessed sin in your life? Then don’t expect to be a river of revival. Let it flow from under the threshold. Let it flow past the altar. Let it flow from the sunny side of your life. I’m telling you that there are people in your very own family who need this river of revival. And, Jesus said, “*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink*” (John 7:37). Don’t come to Adrian. Don’t come to Bellevue. Don’t come to a sermon. Come to Jesus, and drink of Him today. Are you thirsty? Do you want Jesus? Then thank God—thank God—you may have Him.

Bow your heads in prayer. Now, I want you to do a little spiritual inventory. Nobody knows but you and God—and God already knows—so I want you to ask this question: Is there a river of revival flowing out of me? Is my life touching the lives of others? Are

there Christians alongside the bank of my life that would not have been there? Are there fish, lost people, coming, ready to be saved? Is the fruit of the Spirit being produced by my life in the lives of others? Is my life like medicine to those round about me? Now, just pray for a moment and say, “Lord, that’s what I want. Lord, help me—help me. Lord, really, truly help me. Lord, I’m ankle deep. I want to go knee deep. Lord, I’m knee deep. I want to go waist deep. Lord, I just want You to pick me up and sweep me along”—not in fanaticism, but in reality.

Now, some of you have never been saved at all, and I’ve got good news for you. I’ve been speaking to the saints today. But, you’re not a candidate for this river of revival until you give your heart to Jesus. And, again, the Bible teaches that if you’re thirsty for Him, you can have Him. I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you today if you’ll trust Him. To be saved means that every sin is forgiven, that Christ is in your heart, Heaven is your home for certain, and you have peace and power in this world and in this life. The basis of your salvation is the shed blood of Jesus Christ, who paid your sin debt with His blood on the cross. That does you no good unless you receive it by faith. The Bible says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31). Now, that word *believe* doesn’t mean intellectual belief alone. You can believe an airplane will fly, but you don’t trust it until you get on it. It’s a word that means, “trust.” Trust the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—I promise on the authority of the Word of God. So, if you’ll pray today and say, “God, I’m a sinner. I can’t save myself. Jesus, You died on the cross to save me, and I trust You to do it,” He will save you.

Rivers of Revival

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 22, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Ezekiel 47:1–12

“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 47:5

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Introduction

Would you take God’s precious, holy Word and turn to the Old Testament—Ezekiel 47. The title of the message today is “Rivers of Revival.” Now, we’re praying for, planning for, hoping for, and looking for revival. We’re expecting God to do something supernatural in our midst—not only corporately as a church, but in your life, and in your home, and with your associates.

Now, there are three categories of people in every church—at least three. There are those who make things happen, then there are those who watch things happen, and then there are those who don’t even know anything is happening. Now, I am afraid that we have all three groups here today. There are those here today who’ll say, “Oh, God, begin a mighty revival and send it through me.” There are others who will come Sunday by Sunday and say, “I wonder how it’s going.” And, you’re used to Bellevue programs,

and you say, “Well, that one’s good,” or, “They’re doing thus and such,” and you become a Sunday morning spectator, thinking that perhaps somewhere you’ve done God a wild favor by getting here. You call this the service. This is not the service. The service is when you walk out those doors and begin to serve the Lord. This is just getting ready to serve the Lord. And then, there will be some who will not have a clue. They’ve come here this morning and, for whatever reason, for appearances or because somebody invited them or out of habit, but they really will not understand what is going on. We’re talking about rivers of revival, and I want you to be in that first category.

In a moment, we’re going to read some scripture from Ezekiel chapter 47, but I want to set up the scripture by giving you a passage in the New Testament. Now, I’m not going to ask you to turn to that. Of course, you can if you want to—in John chapter 7, verse 37, and following. But, here’s what happened. There was a feast of the Jews called the Feast of Tabernacles. It was the tenth feast in the Jewish year, and it was a feast of great joy, great exhilaration. And, the climax of that feast, the last day of that feast, the priest would go down to a pool called the Pool of Siloam. He would take a golden flask, fill it with water, go back to the temple. There, by the altar, he would pour out the water by the altar, and the people would begin to shout and to praise God. The trumpets would sound. The Talmud said, “He who has not seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the water”—or, “the drawing of the water”—“has never seen rejoicing.” They were exhilarated.

Now, right in the middle of all of this was Jesus Christ. Now, all of the Old Testament symbols were about Christ. Now, learn that all of these Old Testament symbols, these feasts, all of it, it’s about Jesus. And, there He was, the water of life, standing in their midst. They didn’t recognize Him. They didn’t know who He was. And so, the Bible says, in John chapter 7, verses 37 and following, “[*In the midst*] of the feast, Jesus stood and cried”—now, He had to speak with a voice loud enough that all the multitudes could hear Him. “Jesus stood and shouted”—that’s what it means. And, here’s what He said: “*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink*” (John 7:37). As they were pouring out that sparkling water, it all symbolized the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, Jesus knew that these people, who were full of exhilaration, these people who were full of religious fervor, these people who were full of excitement, would go back to their same old fears, their same old foibles, their same old failures. And, after the enthusiasm of the moment had died, they would go back to their old way of life. Now, Jesus understood that what they need is not to come to a service and get their cup filled but to become a river of living water. You know, people go from Bible conference to Bible conference to get their cup filled. Well, you don’t have to keep going to get your cup filled if you’ve got a river inside of you. Jesus said, “*Out of his [innermost being] shall flow rivers of living water*” (John 7:38). And then, He makes it clear He’s speaking

of the Holy Spirit. Now, you, friend, are to be a river of revival—a one-man, a one-woman, a one-boy, a one-girl river of revival. Revival power is to be flowing through you.

Now, Jesus said, *“As the scripture hath said, out of his [innermost being] shall flow rivers of living water”* (John 7:38). We don’t find that exact text in the Old Testament, but we find the illustration in the Old Testament, and it is in Ezekiel chapter 47. And so, I want you to begin reading with me from the Word of God, and we’re going to read the first five verses: *“Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house;”—now, the house he’s speaking of is the temple—“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. 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. 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. 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. 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 47:1–5). Now, that may sound very convoluted and difficult, but we’re going to break it down a little bit, and you’re going to find out that it applies to you personally today—not just to Bellevue, but to you personally—because Jesus said, if you thirst and come to Him, out of you will flow a river of living water.

Now, the illustration here in Ezekiel is the temple of God, the Old Testament temple. Now, he’s using supernatural symbolism here about something that is happening from the temple. He’s not talking about the literal temple here. There is a greater spiritual lesson. Now, what you need to understand is, friend, you are a temple of God. The Old Testament temple was only an illustration of the Christian. You see, listen. In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people; in the New Testament, He has a people for His temple. You are the temple of God. That’s what Paul had to say in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19: *“What? [Don’t you know] that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [who dwells] in you?”* (1 Corinthians 6:19). That’s what Jesus was talking about. *“Out of his [innermost being]”—out of the temple—“will flow rivers of living water”* (John 7:38). There is a river of revival that should be flowing through me. As I studied this and prayed over it, I thought, “Dear God, make my life a river of revival. Lord, I want to be a river of refreshment to those who are around me. I don’t want anybody to come in contact with me but what somehow they are touched with me.”

I. The Mysterious Source of This River

Now, I want us to notice three major thoughts this morning. And, first of all, I want us to notice what I'm going to call the mysterious source of this river—the mysterious source of the river.

A. It Flows from a Humble Source

This river comes, first of all, from under the threshold. Look, if you will, in verse 1—Ezekiel 47, verse 1—and you'll find out that this river comes *“from under the threshold”* (Ezekiel 47:1). Now, how high is the threshold? Well, about *that* high. And, the water flows *“out from under the threshold.”* Now, what's the idea? It's about as low as you can get: under the threshold. Now, you are the temple, and this water is to be flowing out of you from under the threshold. This river has a humble source. Listen to me, church. Revival never begins without God's people humbling themselves—God's people on their face before God.

May I ask you a question? Have you really, honestly, truly been broken and humbled before God? Are you, right now? We strut into the presence of God. We sit heady, high-minded, and unbent, and unbroken. Sometimes we pray, “Oh, Lord, humble me.” I wouldn't pray that for myself. I want to humble myself before God. That's what the Bible says: *“Humble yourselves [before God], and he [will] lift you up”* (James 4:10). This river comes from a humble source.

B. It Flows from a Heated Source

And, it comes from a holy source. It flows past the altar. You see it there in the Word of God. It flows right past the altar. Now, what is the altar? The altar was the place where the blood was shed. What does that blood shed, in the Old Testament, speak of? The blood of Jesus Christ. First John 1, verse 7: *“The blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son [cleanses] us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7). You see, if you want to be a river of blessing, you've got to be humble and you've got to be holy. Again, I want to ask you this question: not only, are you humble this morning, but are you holy? That seems to be a word that we don't like anymore: *holy, holier-than-thou, holy Joe*. I mean, it's sort of a pejorative term, but it's not, taken out of the Word of God. We are to be holy. And, the only way to be holy is to let your water flow past the altar for cleansing, and let it be a holy flow.

C. It Flows from a Heated Source

And then, it's a heated flow. If you'll look there in the Bible again, you'll find out that the waters came, flowed out towards the east. The east is where the sun would come up and heat the morning chill. And, it flowed from *“the south side of the altar”* (Ezekiel 47:1). That's the sunny side of the altar. Again, if we do business with God, we're going

to have to say, “Oh, God, give me a hot heart. Give me a concern. Lord, may this river that flows out of me—may it come from a sunny side of my disposition.”

I want that for our church. You know, I want people to come in here and feel the warmth of Jesus, don't you? Now, we talk about a family of friends. It can't be a family of friends unless you're friendly. We talk about the warmth of this church. How warm are you? How will you greet our guests this morning? How much of the enthusiasm and the love of Jesus Christ is in you today? And, don't you look down your long nose at those who are drinking whiskey or going to Tunica. If your heart is not hot for the Lord Jesus Christ, you're probably doing more to hold back revival than they are. You know, people come to a church like this, and they want to know do we really love Jesus. Can they see it? Can they sense it? I'm not talking about superficial enthusiasm; I'm talking about a holy glow. I'm talking a warm-hearted flow that comes out of us.

Bobbie Burns was a noted Scot poet. He got depressed one day, and he felt, “I need to go to church. I need to get my spirits lifted.” And, he found a little church and walked in, and it was deader than last Tuesday. There was no joy, no victory, no shouts, no warmth, no welcome. He just felt further depressed. He opened the hymnbook and scribbled these words on the inside cover:

*As cold a wind as ever blew;
As cold a church, and in it but few;
As cold a minister as ever spake.
Ye'll all be hot ere I come back.*

—ROBERT BURNS

Wouldn't you like—wouldn't you like—for people to say, “I want to go back to Bellevue,” or, “I want to be around that individual; their life warms me up and makes me want the things of God”? Now, this is the mysterious source of the river. It comes from under the threshold. It goes past the altar. It comes from the sunny side. And, the river is this wonderful river; it's mysterious.

II. The Marked Course of the River

Here's the second thing I want you to notice: it's what I'm going to call the marked course of the river. Let's see where the river flows in Ezekiel 47, 2 through 5: *“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. 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. 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”—*that is, “the waist.” *“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...that could not be passed over” (Ezekiel 47:2–5).

Now, what is happening? This humble flow, this holy flow, this heated flow that comes out, it becomes an ever-deepening, ever-enlarging river. It’s a supernatural river, because there are no tributaries. The Mississippi River is a mighty river, because, though it starts with a trickle, there are many tributaries that come into the Mississippi. But, this river has no tributaries. And yet, it is supernatural. It begins to grow in width, and it grows in depth. And, there’s a man with a measuring line, and he begins to measure the river and sound it for depth. And, he’s doing it in about 500-yard increments. And, he measures 500 yards, and the water now is cascading, and enough that a man could wade in it and get up ankle deep. That speaks to me of walking in the Spirit. And then, the water gets deeper; it gets to the knees. That speaks to me of praying in the Spirit. Then, another 500 yards the water begins to deepen, and the water is waist deep. That speaks of strength in the Spirit. The loins are spoken of in the Bible as the center of your strength. And, it is today for a wrestler, and the water is up here to the thighs and the loins. And then, finally, 500 more yards and the river is so deep, the waters are so forceful, you couldn’t pass through it—just waters that you’re swept up in, waters that you’re carried along by.

I’m not talking about a false enthusiasm. *“The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets”* (1 Corinthians 14:32). Some people say, “Well, I was just swept away.” I’m not talking about that kind of being swept away. I’m talking about a genuine, Holy Spirit control of your life, where you step into the water of revival, or the water of revival is flowing out of you. It is getting ever wider, ever deeper. What a mighty force this river is!

You know, you can’t stop a river. If you dam it up, what will happen? Well, it will just rise up and overflow the dam and the countryside. You throw rocks into the river, what does it care? You cannot stop a river. The only place that you can stop a river is at its source. And, ladies and gentlemen, listen. The only thing that can stop the river of revival in your life—listen now—is you. Did you hear that? The only thing that can stop the river of revival in your life is you. Nobody can stop a river unless they stop it at the source. This is a supernatural river. Jesus said, *“Out of his [innermost being] shall flow rivers of living water”* (John 7:38).

A. It Flows into the Depressed Places

And, where do the waters flow? First of all, they flow to the depressed places. Now, the water starts up here at the temple, and verse 8 tells us that, *“These waters...go down into the desert, and...into the sea”* (Ezekiel 47:8). They go down, down, down. One day, when we go back to Israel—I hope you’ll go with me—we’ll go to the Mount of Olives,

2,700 feet above sea level, or the Temple Mount, 2,700 feet above sea level. But, as you turn eastward, the topography changes, and you go down and down and down. And, about that time, the guide will say, “We’ve just gotten below sea level. Everybody close the windows of the bus.” And, you go down and down and down and down. And, finally, you come to the lowest place on the face of the earth, right there at the Dead Sea, 1,300 feet below sea level. And, these waters go from the mountain place down into depressed places.

Now, listen. We live in a land of depressed people. There are people today who are up against it. They don’t know what to do. There are people who have loved ones who are sick. There are people who are out of work. There are people who are having domestic scraps. There are people who are having wayward children. There are people who are confused and perplexed and unsatisfied and fearful. They are depressed. And, it’s not going to do you any good just to say, “Buck up; do better.” There needs to be such a supernatural river flowing out of you into those depressed places that you will be a river of revival to these people.

B. It Flows into the Depressed Places

But, not only does the river flow into the depressed places; it flows into the desert places. Now, the Bible says there, in verse 8, these waters “*go down into the desert*” (Ezekiel 47:8). That’s the Judean desert, the Arabah, and nothing much grows there—a few little scrubby things, but there’s no real fruit, there’s no real flower, there’s no real succulence, there’s no real fruitfulness there. And, there are so many who are not depressed, but they’re living desert lives, parched lives. They don’t know the joy that you know. They don’t know joy unspeakable and full of glory. They don’t have the answers to life that you have.

You know, it dawned on me the other day: “Adrian, you are always looking at life through the lens of the Bible and through Jesus Christ.” And then, I had to stop, and I said, “What would it be like if you did not have the ability to see life through those lenses?” Friend, I’m not saying that you ought to get drunk, but I’ll tell you what: if I didn’t know Jesus, I think I’d get drunk and stay drunk. Now, don’t say, “The pastor thinks he’s going to get drunk.” But, what I’m saying is this. What hope is there? What future is there? How are you going to put all this puzzle together? All you have hope for is getting sicker and sicker and sicker, and then going into the ground, dying, and rotting—desert, dryness, fruitlessness.

C. It Flows into Deadly Places

And, not only do the waters go down to the depressed places, and desert places, and the dry places—these waters go down to the deadly places. Verse 8 says they flow “*into the sea*” (Ezekiel 47:8). Now, that sea is the sea I told you about a little while ago; it’s

the Dead Sea. You know why they call it the Dead Sea? Because organic life can't live in it. The Dead Sea receives water from the Jordan River, but it doesn't give off any, because it's so low. It's 1,300 feet below sea level. And, the depth of the Dead Sea itself is 1,300 feet. And so, the waters flow into it. And, the water that flows into it is mostly fresh with just a minute part of saltiness. But, there's constant evaporation in that hot climate, and therefore, the salt does not evaporate, and it gets more and more concentrated. The salt in the Dead Sea is 25 percent saltier than the salt in the ocean. There's so much salt there that if you get in it, as I've done, you can't sink. You could sit in there and read a newspaper, and just bobble along like a cork, because the water is so thick; it has a viscosity to it. But, it is a deadly place. No fish in there, because it is a deadly place.

Now, friend, not only are there people around us who are depressed, and not only are there people around us who are dry, but there are people around us who are dying and going to Hell. There is a place of death. I'm not talking about overseas; I'm talking about next door. I'm talking about the people that you work with. They are living a life of death. *"The wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). *"The soul that sinneth, it shall [surely] die"* (Ezekiel 18:4; Ezekiel 18:20). *"She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she [lives]"* (1 Timothy 5:6). How are these people going to have life? We talked about last Sunday the raising of Lazarus. A river of life has to flow out of you. Do you care? Does it make any difference to you that souls are dying, people are slipping out through the jaws of death into a Christless eternity, and many of them are dead while they live? Do you care? Is there something about your life that will help to change their life? Will you touch their life? This is the force of the river. It flows into the deadly places.

III. The Mighty Force of This River

Now, here's the third thing I want you to see. I want you to see with me what I'm going to call the mighty force of the river—the mighty force of the river. We've seen the source, and the course; let's think about the force of the river. Where does this river flow?

A. Where the Waters Flow, the Tree Will Grow

Well, first of all, look, if you will, in verse 7. And, put this down: where the waters flow, the trees will grow. Look in verse 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"* (Ezekiel 47:7). I can just imagine that. I've been down that Jericho road going down there to the Dead Sea. How dry and barren it is! And, Ezekiel says, "Look—look at the trees: green, succulent, all of them growing by the river that is flowing from the temple." What does that represent: literal trees? Of course not! What that represents is this. Jesus said that a

righteous man should “*be like a tree*”—what?—“*planted by the rivers of water*”—“*like a tree planted by the rivers of water*” (Psalm 1:3)—the Psalm 1. He’s talking about Christians—healthy Christians, Christians now who are finding strength and life, becoming a tree that will not wither. Where the waters flow, the trees will grow. A healthy saint is like a tree.

B. Where the Waters Flow, the Tree Will Grow

And then, watch this. Where the waters flow, the fish will go. Look at it now—verses 8 and 9: “*Then he said 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*”—that is, “these deadly waters of the Dead Sea are going to be healed.” “*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*” (Ezekiel 47:8–9).

Now, here’s this river cascading down, down, down, down, down, down into depressed places, and desert places, and deadly places. And, the water comes to the Dead Sea, and a transformation takes place. That Dead Sea, where no fish could live, begins to swarm with fish. May I tell you what that speaks to me of? Jesus said to me, to you, that we’re to be fishers of men. Why is it that we catch so few fish? Because we’re fishing in a stagnant pond. Friend, when the church gets right, when we have genuine revival—and revival is not evangelism. Evangelism is the fruit of revival; revival is the river flowing—but when the river begins to flow, where the river flows, the fish will go. You know, if we get on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ—or filled with the Spirit, however you want to call it—it will be noised abroad. The Bible says when Jesus was doing His ministry, it “*was noised abroad*” (Luke 1:65) that Jesus was in the house, and the place was filled.

Have you ever thought about the Day of Pentecost? On the Day of Pentecost, there was a little handful of disciples—120. But, they began to pray and praise and give glory to God, and there was a mighty, mighty demonstration of the Holy Spirit. And, the Bible says, “*The multitude came together*” (Acts 2:6). Now, historians tell us there were probably about a million people in Jerusalem at that time for the Feast of the Passover. A hundred and twenty people, how are they going to impact a million people? Well, friend, the unsaved will come when they see the reality of Jesus Christ. The world is not looking for a new definition of the gospel; the world is looking for a new demonstration of the gospel.

It’s almost like it’s the Olympics. And, we’re down on the field, and up there in the stands are the multitudes. And, they say, “Could this really be true what these

Christians are saying?” And, they’re watching, and they want to know whether or not we have reality. Friend, I tell you that souls will come by the multitudes, the sea will swarm with fish, and our nets will be full, when we let the Spirit of God flow out through us. I believe that with all of my heart. *I believe that if you get right with God, you’ll have to backslide to keep from winning souls.* Your life itself will be a testimony.

Have you ever thought of a person coming to a cold, dead, dry, un-revived church, what it must be like? Here’s a man whose wife has begged him to come to Bellevue, or begged him to go to whatever church it is, and he finally comes. But, he says, “This once I’ll come.” And, he sits there, and the choir sings something in Latin—something he can’t understand. Then, the congregation stands to sing, and there’s no enthusiasm. They sound like a couple of calves dying in a hailstorm. And then, the preacher gets up. He’s not anointed of God. He may not even use the Bible. He’ll give some soliloquy or some Reader’s Digest this or that, or some commentary on the news. And, everybody is cold and clammy. I’ll tell you one thing. That man will leave and most likely won’t come back.

But you let this man come into a service where the Spirit of God is there, and the river is flowing, and the people are praising God, and revival is on the face of the choir—it’s in the handshake of the usher, it’s in the way the congregation sings, it’s in the friendliness, it is in the warmth—and you know what’s going to happen to that man? He’s going to stop ticking things off the program with his pen, waiting for it to get over. He’s going to lift up his head and look around, and he’s going to say, “You know, these folks believe that stuff.” And, before long, he’ll be believing it also. You see, look. Where the waters flow, the fish will go.

C. Where the Waters Flow, the Fruit Will Show

Now, here’s another thing. Where the river flows, friend, the fruit will show. Look, if you will, in verse 12. The Bible says, “*And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat,*”—that means, “for food”—“*whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed*” (Ezekiel 47:12). Now, that’s the same thing as Psalm 1 says: “[A man] *planted by the rivers of water [will bring] forth...fruit [and] his leaf...shall not wither*” (Psalm 1:3). You see, there’s fruit.

Do you know what I want my life to be? I want my life to be an encouragement to you and to me, that people will see the fruit of the Spirit in you. You know what the test of my ministry is? It’s not how many buildings we have. It’s not the size of our Bible study. It’s not how much money we receive. It’s not how well we’re organized. It’s not even how wonderful the services are. The test of my ministry is this: Are you becoming more like Jesus? “*That we [might] present every man perfect in Christ*” (Colossians 1:28). That’s what the Apostle Paul says. And, he’s talking about the fruit. What is the

fruit? It is the fruit of the Spirit. Read in Galatians chapter 5: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, mercy, longsuffering, and temperance” (Galatians 5:22). All that is is a description of the character of Jesus Christ. And, when a river is flowing out of you, out of your innermost being, those who are around you are going to be disciplined, and they’re going to become fruitful.

D. Where the Waters Flow, the Health Will Glow

Last of all, where the waters flow, the health will glow. Look in verse 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 consume: 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 [food], and the leaf thereof for medicine”* (Ezekiel 47:12). The church, the Body of Christ, is sick, weak, and anemic. We might sing, “Like a Mighty Army Moves the Church of God,” but really, do you think of most churches as a mighty army? I mean, Bellevue’s certainly above average as a church. I believe that—not boastfully. It’s just a fact, but I wonder, are we a mighty army? My chest almost leaps out of my throat as I look at the congregation here and the earlier congregation this morning. What a mighty multitude! What would happen, Brother Mark, if every man, woman, boy, girl in this building became a river of revival? What would happen if we become real in our service to the Lord?,

Again, I want to tell you that coming to church is good, but don’t think you’ve done God a wild favor because you’ve come. This is only to get you ready to do what you need to do. And, you’re to have a healing force on this world, in this city. Everywhere you go there is to be spiritual health because the river is flowing out of you and touching lives. Now, the question is this—very simply and very plainly: Are you thirsty? Remember how Jesus began this thing? Jesus said, *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink”*—*“come [to] me, and drink”* (John 7:37). Remember, it begins with a thirst. How thirsty are you? Listen to me this morning. I don’t know how much of God you have—now, listen—but you have all you want. You say, “No, I want more.” No, you have all you want. If you wanted more, you’d have it. Jesus said, *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”* (Matthew 5:6). A shallow thirst: a shallow satisfaction. A deep thirst: a deep satisfaction.

A little girl in the middle of the night said, “Mommy, can I have a glass of water?” The mother got up and gave it. Fifteen minutes later: “Mommy, I want some more water.” She breathed a sigh, and got up and gave her another glass of water. Third time: “Mommy, would you bring me some water?” She went in there with water the third time and said, “If you ask for water again, I’m going to spank you.” A little while later, the little girl said, “Mommy, when you get up to spank me, would you bring me some water?” It’s a thirst.

How many of you can say, “I have a genuine thirst for God. Oh, God, my heart cries out for You. Dear Lord, I want You to come into me and then flow out of me toward others”? It’s all predicated with an *if*. “*If any man thirst...*” (John 7:37). Now, I repeat what I said earlier. There will be those who make things happen, there will be those who watch things happen, and there will be those who don’t even know anything is happening.

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. I want you to ask yourself this question earnestly: Which of those categories are you in? I want to ask you a question: Do you have a genuine thirst for Jesus? It’s not a one-time thing; it is a constant thing. You drink and keep on drinking. Ask another question: Do you know people where you live and work who need to be touched by a river of life? Has it ever dawned upon you that you could be that river? Would you pray, “Oh, God, make me a river of revival. Let your supernatural life flow out of me. Oh, God, make me a blessing”?