

Ezekiel 47:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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 ancles.

Analysis

The progressive depth measurement—ankle deep at 1,000 cubits—introduces the principle: God's blessings start small but increase exponentially. The Hebrew **עָפְסָה** (ephes, 'ankle') suggests initial engagement is shallow, manageable, accessible. This prevents overwhelming newcomers while inviting deeper immersion. The thousand-cubit measurement (approximately 1,750 feet) indicates substantial progression—God's grace doesn't remain static but continually deepens. Reformed theology applies this to spiritual growth: initial faith (ankle deep) must progress toward maturity (swimming depth). Hebrews 5:11-14 warns against remaining perpetually in shallow waters. The guide brings Ezekiel 'through the waters,' not merely beside them—spiritual growth requires experiential engagement, not theoretical observation. Ankle-deep water is controllable; swimming depth requires surrender—picturing progression from self-reliance to complete dependence on God.

Historical Context

The measuring reed (approximately 10.5 feet) times 1,000 cubits equals substantial distance, demonstrating methodical divine measurement. Ancient irrigation systems used progressive depth to manage water distribution—shallow channels for planting, deeper channels for storage. The thousand-cubit intervals suggest deliberate stages in God's purposes. Psalm 1:3 describes the righteous as 'a tree planted by the rivers of water,' thriving through proximity to life-source.

Isaiah prophesied dry lands becoming pools (Isaiah 35:6-7, 41:18). This vision illustrates Joel's promise: 'I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh' (Joel 2:28). Church history shows similar pattern: Pentecost began as trickle (120 believers, Acts 1:15), grew to thousands (Acts 2:41), spread globally—God's kingdom advancing from small beginnings to worldwide impact.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Are you still ankle-deep in spiritual experience, or have you ventured into deeper waters of faith and commitment?
2. What prevents you from moving beyond shallow, comfortable spirituality into depths that require complete dependence on God?
3. How do you help others progress from ankle-deep initial faith toward mature, swimming-depth discipleship?

Interlinear Text

בָּצֵאת	וְהָאִישׁ	קָדַם	וְהָיָה	בְּיָדוֹ	וַיִּמְדֹּד
went forth	And when the man	eastward	that had the line	in his hand	he measured
H3318	H376	H6921	H6957	H3027	H4058
אֶל	בָּאֲמָה	וַעֲבַרְתִּי	מִן	מִן	
a thousand	cubits	and he brought me through	the waters	the waters	
H505	H520	H5674	H4325	H4325	
אֶפְסָם:					
were to the ankles					
H657					

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 40:3 (Parallel theme): And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate.

Revelation 11:1 (Parallel theme): And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

Revelation 21:15 (Parallel theme): And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

Acts 2:33 (Parallel theme): Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

Acts 2:4 (Parallel theme): And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Zechariah 2:1 (Parallel theme): I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand.

Luke 24:49 (Parallel theme): And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.