

Zechariah 14:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.

Analysis

And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem—this stunning image depicts life-giving water flowing from God's holy city. The Hebrew mayim chayyim (מַיִם חַיִים, "living waters") describes fresh, flowing spring water as opposed to stagnant cistern water. Jeremiah 2:13 contrasts God as "fountain of living waters" with broken cisterns that hold no water. Jesus appropriated this imagery in John 4:10-14 (offering living water to the Samaritan woman) and John 7:37-39 ("out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," interpreted as the Holy Spirit).

"Half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea"—the waters flow both east to the Dead Sea (ha-yam ha-qadmoni, the "eastern/former sea") and west to the Mediterranean (ha-yam ha-acharon, the "western/hinder sea"). This bi-directional flow indicates Jerusalem as the source watering the entire land. Ezekiel 47:1-12 parallels this vision: water flowing from the temple's threshold, deepening as it flows, healing the Dead Sea and producing abundant fruit trees. Joel 3:18 similarly prophesies: "a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD."

"In summer and in winter shall it be"—perpetual flow regardless of season. Palestinian streams typically ran in winter rains but dried in summer drought. This supernatural river never fails, providing constant sustenance. Revelation 22:1-2

completes the image: "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," with the tree of life producing fruit monthly. What began in Eden with the river watering the garden (Genesis 2:10) culminates in the new Jerusalem with the river of life.

Historical Context

Jerusalem's geography made this prophecy remarkable—the city sits on a ridge with no significant water source. Ancient Jerusalem depended on the Gihon Spring, Hezekiah's tunnel, and cisterns. The prophecy of abundant water flowing from Jerusalem transforming the landscape demonstrates supernatural provision. Historically, this had no literal fulfillment—no physical river flows from Jerusalem to both seas. The prophecy demands eschatological or spiritual interpretation. Pentecost (Acts 2) saw the Spirit poured out from Jerusalem, spreading to all nations—the gospel flowing from Jerusalem as Jesus commanded (Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8). Ultimate fulfillment awaits the new creation when God's presence in the new Jerusalem provides eternal life.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's identification as the source of living water connect to this prophecy, and what does it mean for believers today?
2. What does the perpetual flow (summer and winter) teach about God's unfailing provision and the consistency of His grace?
3. How does the imagery of water flowing from Jerusalem to heal and bring life picture the gospel's spread from Jerusalem to all nations?

Interlinear Text

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|----------------|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| וְיֹאכַל | בְּיֹום | בְּהַיּוֹם | יִצְאֶת | תְּהִימָּה | מִימָּה |
| H1961 | And it shall be in that day | H1931 | shall go out | waters | that living |
| | H3117 | | H3318 | H4325 | H2416 |
| מִירֵשֶׁל מִן | אֶל וְחַצֵּן מִן | תְּהִימָּה | פְּקָדָמָן יְהִי | אֶל וְחַצֵּן מִן | אֶל |
| from Jerusalem | and half | sea | of them toward the former | and half | H413 |
| H3389 | H2677 | H3220 | H6931 | H2677 | |
| תְּהִימָּה | בְּאַחֲרֵי | בְּקָרְבָּן | וּבְצָהָר | וְבְנֵרֶת | וְבְיַהְוָה |
| sea | of them toward the hinder | in summer | and in winter | | H1961 |
| H3220 | H314 | H7019 | H2779 | | |

Additional Cross-References

John 7:38 (Parallel theme): He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

John 4:14 (Parallel theme): But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

John 4:10 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

Joel 3:18 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.

Isaiah 49:10 (Parallel theme): They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

Joel 2:20 (Parallel theme): But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east

sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things.

Revelation 22:17 (Parallel theme): And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Isaiah 35:7 (Parallel theme): And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

Isaiah 58:11 (Parallel theme): And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

Luke 24:47 (References Jerusalem): And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

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