

# Jesus' Joy

*"5 He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross."*

*Ezekiel 47:4 | Also read Ezekiel 47:1-12*

Ezekiel, was an Israelite priest and prophet who was taken to Babylon among the first wave of captives from Judah in 598 B.C. and a younger contemporary of Jeremiah. His prophetic activity was from around 593 to 571 B.C. The kings of Judah made some bad political choices in the struggle between Egypt and Babylon over supremacy in the area, Nebuchadnezzar eventually laid siege to Jerusalem. King Jehoiachin, and most of Jerusalem's prominent people, including Ezekiel's family were taken into exile and was placed in a refugee settlement south of Babylon near the Kebar River. Apparently many believed this exile was only a temporary blip on the screen of their glorious history as God's people. But Jeremiah had already informed the exiles in writing (Jeremiah 29:1-23) that they were going to be there for the long haul. 5 years later Yahweh called Ezekiel to be a prophet primarily to the exiles in Babylon. His book contained a series of prophecies announcing the fall of Jerusalem, including the departure of Yahweh, followed by Israel's eventual restoration with the return of Yahweh. He emphasizes the inevitability of the fall of Jerusalem because of her sins, specially idolatry. And then the Prophet Ezekiel was shown a vision of the third Temple in 572 BC, just years after the First Temple was destroyed and before the second temple was built. Though the destruction of the second Temple occurred in 70 A.D., a third Temple has not yet been constructed. Some other time we will take a look on the things we should learn about the third temple. Meanwhile, what stood out from Ezekiel's vision of the third Temple is the water coming out from the threshold of the Temple. The deeper it goes, the more fish it yields. Same is true with our faith. The deeper our faith gets the more fish and fruit we will yield.

## THE DEEPER OUR FAITH, THE MORE FRUITS IT WILL YIELD

### I SHOULD \_\_\_\_\_ WITH LESSER THINGS

Isaiah 55:1-3 NIV <sup>1</sup> "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. <sup>2</sup> Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. <sup>3</sup> Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. **Question:** What steals your appetite from gaining better things for your spiritual nourishment? What does it take to gain that craving for incremental growth? And what are you going to do about it?



### ONLY GOD CAN \_\_\_\_\_

1 Corinthians 3:6-7 NIV <sup>6</sup> I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. <sup>7</sup> So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. **Question:** From the scale of 1 to 10, how mature are you in your faith? How would you think God is going to take your faith to its next level?

### I MUST \_\_\_\_\_ OVER TIME

Hebrews 5:11-14 NIV <sup>11</sup> We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. <sup>12</sup> In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! <sup>13</sup> Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." **Question:** Based on the Circles of Commitment, where are you in your walk following Jesus? What would you do to step up to the next level of your commitment to the Lord? And how do you plan to do it?

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