

The LORD Is There

Session 16. The River and the Name

The book ends with a river that heals the deadest water on earth and a city with a new name: The LORD is there.

What We Found

Water begins as a trickle under the temple threshold and flows east, the direction the glory left by and came home by. Four measurements in, it is a river too deep to cross, and it never took on a single tributary: it deepens from its source alone. It heads straight for the Dead Sea, the deadest water in the land, and makes it fresh, with fishermen on the shore and trees on both banks bearing fruit every month, their leaves for healing, because the water flows from the sanctuary. It is Eden restored and exceeded.

We traced the river out of Ezekiel and into the New Testament with our own hands. In John's Gospel, Jesus stands up at the climax of the feast of Tabernacles and cries out that the thirsty should come to him and drink, and John tells us plainly what the living water is: the Holy Spirit. On the Bible's final page the river appears one last time, flowing not from a building but from the throne of God and of the Lamb, through a city that needs no temple because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. Ezekiel saw the river start under a threshold; John, read christologically, saw it start in a person; Revelation sees it start from a throne, forever.

And then the last verse of the whole book, where our study got its title. The city is not renamed for its walls, its people, or even its past. Its name henceforth is *YHWH-shammah*, The LORD is there. From a refugee camp in chapter 1 to this name in chapter 48, the whole story is God refusing to be defeated by our sin or by our ruins, because his purpose was never merely a building. It was communion with his people.

Voices of the Church

St. Ignatius of Antioch, d. c. 107

Writing to the Church in Rome while being transported to his martyrdom, St. Ignatius says in substance that he no longer takes pleasure in corruptible food or in the delights of this life; what he desires is the bread of God, the flesh of Jesus Christ, and he describes a living water within him, speaking inside him and saying, Come to the Father.

Letter to the Romans 7. Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. Ezekiel's river is not scenery to admire from the bank. For the baptized it flows inside, and it is going somewhere: toward the Father. Ignatius felt its current strongly enough to follow it through a Roman arena.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, d. 386

Teaching candidates for baptism, St. Cyril asks why Scripture calls the grace of the Spirit water, and answers in substance: because water comes down from heaven as one and the same thing, yet works differently in everything that receives it, becoming white in the lily and red in the rose; so the one Spirit, remaining one and undivided, apportions his grace to each person as he wills.

Catechetical Lectures 16 (On the Holy Spirit). Summary of his teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. One river, sixteen weeks, and it has not been doing the same thing in any two people in this room. That is not a flaw in the water; it is how this water works.

St. Augustine, d. 430

There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end.

The City of God 22.30.

For the group. Augustine wrote this as the final sentence of a twenty-two book work, describing the city Ezekiel could only name. A study that began with a shattered priest in a refugee camp ends where Augustine ends: at rest, in the city where the LORD is.

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Spend twenty minutes this week before the tabernacle, in adoration or simply in an open church. The lamp is burning because the LORD is there. Bring nothing to accomplish; just be in the city.
2. Every time you bless yourself with holy water this week, do it slowly, and remember where that water starts: shallow at the door, deeper the farther in you go.
3. Read the last two chapters of the Bible in one sitting, out loud if you can, and count how many things you now recognize from Ezekiel.
4. Write one sentence naming what these sixteen weeks changed for you. Keep it somewhere you will find it in a year, and share it with one person before the month is out.
5. Sometime this week, reread Ezekiel 47:1-12 slowly, then go to Mass and watch what flows from the altar.

Scripture Memory

Ezekiel 48:35

"And the name of the city henceforth shall be, The LORD is there."

Ezekiel 48:35

Ready Response

If a friend asks what you got out of fourteen weeks in an Old Testament prophet, try answering in one breath:

God is not trapped in his buildings, and he is not defeated by our ruins.

He does not wait for better behaviour; he gives a new heart first, and the Spirit to go with it.

The whole story ends with a name, and the name is a promise: The LORD is there.

Go Further in the Catechism

- **CCC 694.** water as symbol of the Spirit in baptism
- **CCC 1137.** the heavenly liturgy and the river from the throne
- **CCC 1044.** God's dwelling among men in the new Jerusalem
- **CCC 2550.** Augustine on the end without end

Before next session. There is no next session; this line retires with the study.