Introduction

Context

- Ezekiel's visions and his task has been a hard one
  - for much of the early part of the book, unremitting gloom!
  - but in the latter part of the book that gloom lifts as God allows him to see something of the hope there is for those who cling in faith to God
  - saw something of that in the vision of the resurrected bones last week
  - that vision is part of a larger, cohesive sweep that runs through the latter part of the book
  - namely: (i) God's people revived (bones), (ii) with God at the centre (new temple from 40-46), and particularly the glory of God returning to the temple in 43, and (iii) now flowing from that temple the river of life
  - chapter 47:13-48:35 will describe this transformed land, into which the river flows and transforms - and where the exiles are resettled
  - and the conclusion of this majestic, vivid, rich vision is in 48:35 "the Lord is there"

- This vision came to Ezekiel in April 573 BC:
  - *"In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city - on that very day the hand of the LORD was upon me and he took me there." (Eze 40:1)*
  - a time when Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed, a time when many of the Jews were in exile, a time when those that remained were scraping out a subsistence existence, and time when the royal line had vanished
  - there was nothing to indicate that the old way of life and the promise it held of God's help and protection would return
- Its a reminder of what Israel's religion had been and a vision of what it should be:
  - God transforming, and people responding in trust, centering their lives on Him and His worship

Its a River from God (vs.1-6a)

- *Image of river flowing under Temple door*
- Want to say 2 things about this river that point to its divine origin

First

- It flows from the Temple, where God is
  - there since the glory returned in ch.43
  - describe the flow of the narrative, Ezekiel coming out from the inside round the north, because that eastern door permanently shut as a sign of God's never leaving or deserting again
  - its a river that comes from God

Second

- The other thing about the river that point to its divine origin is its miraculous size
  - at 500m out its ankle deep
  - at 1000m out its knee deep
  - at 1500m out its waist deep
  - at 2000m out Ezekiel is out of his depth
  - this is some river!!
  - this is a dry land; rainfall is sporadic, certainly not enough to feed such a huge river; this is a miraculous outpouring of blessing, far beyond what anyone could dream of; an utter transformation of the land; a river this size would do for Israel what the Nile does for Egypt - turn desert into fertile, productive, dependable land!

- Yesterday I drove up to Aviemore and back...
  - saw many streams tumbling off the hills...
  - flowing together to make the rivers...

- including crossing the Tay a number of times, and each time it is a greater river...
- but that comes from tributaries!! Ezekiel's river had no tributaries! It just grew in size, miraculously!

• Its a river that comes from God

• All blessing, all real life comes from God
- whatever our world says: money, fitness, pleasure, fun...
- true life, true hope, comes from God

Its a River Bringing Life (vs.6b-12)

• *Image of river flowing down from Jerusalem*
• Geography of Israel...
- *map of Israel*
- Jerusalem up high in the centre
- one way down to the Meditteranean coast
- other way into very low lying valley of the Jordan - from Galilee in the north to the Dead Sea in the south
- the top end of the Dead Sea is about level with Jerusalem
- Dead Sea so called because of its very high salt content; nothing can live in it; no water flows out, so the salt just builds up; any fish swept down the Jordan into the Dead Sea, by a storm or whatever, end up dead on the shores...
- land surrounding it is equally barren - see photos!

• *Image of river flowing down from Jerusalem*
• This is a river that brings life!!
- fruit trees! (v.7, 12)
- turning the Dead Sea into the alive sea! (v.8,9)
- fishermen on the Dead Sea!! (v.10)
- not just in one place, by the mouth of the river, but right round
- En-Gedi we know (map), and best guess for En Eglaim is right on the other side, signify all round the shores...
- fruit meeting needs (food), and bringing healing (v.12)

• God brings life, fruit, sustaining, refreshment

Conclusion

• How does that vivid picture relate to us?
- to our living? to our hopes?

• First, our hope is in God alone
• Second, that hope in God is a fruitful hope