

The River of Life

By George Davis and Michael Clark

For the last few years we have heard a lot of church talk about the river of God. There have been many songs written and sung about the river; river this and river that. But few if any are about the Source of that river and what our part is.



Speaking to His disciples, Jesus foretold an impending event that would forever change man's relationship to God, but more importantly, God's relationship to man. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but you know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you (John 14:16-17 KJ2000).

Up until that time, the disciples had only known the Spirit dwelling with them. This with-relationship to the Spirit of God was about to be enlarged to an in-relationship that, according to the Son of God himself, is nothing less than the creator of the universe taking up residence in earthen vessels, ". . . he . . . shall be in you."

Paul, who was abundantly blessed with this relationship, explains, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in (Greek- en - a primary preposition denoting fixed position) earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:6-7 KJ2000).

God loves contrast. All His creation is filled with contrast; night-day, dark-light, wet-dry, cold-hot, male-female, life-death, and summer-winter. Now we see that He delights to put His indwelling life in vessels of clay, the more humble the state of that clay the better (2 Corinthians 4:7). A diamond is not displayed on a white piece of cloth, but rather black velvet so that the diamond's reflected light is in the highest contrast possible on a non-reflective surface. As in the first day of the creation

account, God commands His Light to shine forth out of our darkness. His power is contrasted by our own weakness and that is the way He wants it... us totally dependent on Him. As He told Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9 KJ2000). Paul rested in this principle of the Power of God and not in his own strength. He told the Corinthians in His first letter:

And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:3-5 KJ2000).

Our Father contrasts His wisdom by choosing the foolish things of this world to confound the wise in their own conceits. And He chooses the weak to confound the world's mighty (See 1 Corinthians 1:26-29). The best way to serve God is not by going out and getting a seminary education, but to become like Mary in Bethany and sit at His feet. Though she seemed worthless to some in that house that day, Jesus told her critics, “Mary has chosen the better part.” God's wisdom is best displayed when it shines forth from a vessel that is not wise in its own conceits, but rather totally dependent on Him.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us [not upon us but in us], Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Ephesians 3:14-21 KJ2000 emphasis added)

We who have been raised in traditional religious environments tend to revert to a default Old Testament mentality regarding our relationship to God. We see Him as a benevolent Being up in heaven, coming down from time to time to engage in the affairs of men when events are holy or desperate enough to warrant His involvement. Unlike Paul's prayer above, our prayers sound more like pleadings, "Oh God, come down and pour out your Spirit upon us and manifest yourself among us in revival fires again." Under the Old Covenant, God's Spirit rested upon individuals from time to time, but in this New and Lasting Covenant, His Spirit is placed within us when we fully believe into Jesus. The Father has already come down and tabernacled among us in the person of His Son. And as promised, He has already poured out His Spirit on all flesh. He has never un-poured His Spirit. Before we can comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, (Note: this is the full dimensional purpose of God in Christ Jesus. Not just the three dimensions of the physical, breadth, depth and height, but the forth of the depth [Greek-banthos- profundity or mystery] of the Spirit filling all three) the Spirit that dwells with us must work mightily in us to the end that we might be filled with all the fullness of God. All the issues of holiness, obedience, redemption, knowledge and wisdom, and healing flow from this inner sanctum, the tabernacles of our bodies in which He has chosen to dwell. Paul wrote to the Roman church about this saying:

But the righteousness which is of faith speaks thus, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what says it? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart... (Romans 10:6-8 KJ2000)

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. We cannot pray Jesus down from His heavenly throne because we who believe are already there. We have been placed into Him. The grave no longer holds Him either, though many professing Christians act like He is dead and it is up to them to do all the godly good works of His kingdom. Those with the Spirit in their hearts will not only manifest Him in their speech but also in their actions.

In chapter forty-seven, Ezekiel saw a vision that depicts our New Covenant relationship to God. An Angel took him to the door of the temple where he saw waters issuing out from under the threshold. The waters came down from under the

right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. For the south side to be on the right side, Ezekiel was facing east in this vision. This is important because Jesus sits at the right side of the Father. As the water flowed out it multiplied and grew in depth and width, “up to the ankles . . . to the knees . . . to the waist . . . waters to swim in . . . a river that could not be passed over.”

There is much to learn from this vision. The command of the angel was for Ezekiel to keep pressing into the waters until He was overwhelmed, “waters to swim in.” Why? Because in the shallow swampy areas there was no life (verse 11). Many Christians today have become content to just have enough Jesus, the River of Life, to be saved, but have elected to stay in the marshes of Christendom so they can live out their own lives as they see fit. Believe us, there is no life there, “its swamps and its marshes shall not be healed.” God wants us to always forsake all and go forth into His fullness. The traditions of men always impede our spiritual progress into the fullness of the Son.

Jesus is the River of Life that flows from the throne of God. On the last day, “the great day” of the feast, the priests took jars and hauled water from the stream of Siloam, which flowed under the temple-mountain through Hezekiah’s tunnel, and poured it out on the altar in the temple in ceremonial washing. As they poured the water mixed with wine and it flowed to the foot of the altar, Jesus stood up and said:

If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believes on [into] me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. (John 7:37-38 KJ2000)

Jesus was the ultimate Teacher and He loved object lessons. Here He compares this rite that could not confer life (nor was it commanded by God, but had evolved as a tradition over a long period of time) to the true Source of living water. He prophesied that day that the only cure for our thirst was to not only drink of Him, but to be so filled with the flow of the River of Life that that same River would flow out of us.

Earlier He had said to Samaritan woman at the well, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that said to you, ‘Give me to drink’; you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water . . . whosoever drinks 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 4:10-14 KJ2000). In the Old Covenant, it was enough for the prophet or whoever was God’s anointed at the time to be in the river, the flow of the Spirit of God. But in the New Covenant we have been given a far greater opportunity and empowerment. God not only wants us to be in the river, but He wants the river to be in us! Not just waters to swim in, but waters to drown in! Thus baptism is a sign of our going into a watery grave, but it is also a sign of us rising up out of it in the power and life of Christ’s Spirit (See Romans 6).

There Is a River

The source of all healing and comfort flows from the temple and throne of God. David found this truth to be a great source of consolation in times of crisis, sometimes so severe that it seemed that the earth itself was being removed. David wrote, “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams of which shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early” (Psalms 46:2-5 KJ2000 emphasis added).

Regardless of all that is happening on the world scene today, there is a river. Though there are demonic forces on every side attacking the family of God, there is a river. Though the floods and tidal waves roar, there is a river. Though the mountains shake with earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, there is a river. Here the psalmist traces this river to the Holy Place in the midst of the City of God and concludes, “God is in the midst of her.” David was not a Pentecostal focusing purely on the river or “the gifts of the Spirit.” His eyes looked further up stream than that. He wasn’t focused on the temple as so much of the religious world is today. He could see beyond Beth-el (the house of God) to El-Beth- El (the God of the house of God). For him the source of all life and blessing was, “God . . . in the midst. . . [who] helps right early.”

This is the central theme of the new covenant; God is in the midst. We, individually and collectively, are the temple of God in whom He dwells (the place of His presence and throne), from which the living waters flow. That river is made up of individual living streams flowing from the innermost being of each of His saints that

make glad the city of God. This river does not pour on us or over us but out from the seat of God's throne in us. All that pertains to life and godliness has already been given and is hidden in Christ in us. Jesus, the last Adam, the life giving Spirit, has taken up residence in our spirits. In Him the fullness of God dwells. God is in the midst! Not only are we with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3) but God is in Christ and Christ is in us.

This is the unity that Jesus prayed for. "I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me" (John 17:23 KJ2000). The world will remain unimpressed until they see this unity caused by God dwelling in us in His Son. This is not a unity based on general consensus. It is more than mere mental ascent to a creed or doctrine. It is a living union; the complete inundation of our beings, in the Father and the Son. ". . . truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (see 1 John 1:3).

The Lord that Healeth Thee

Ezekiel continues to report:

Then he said unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters of the sea shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that everything that lives, which moves, wherever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come there: for they shall be healed; and everything shall live where the river comes... And by the river upon its bank, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for food, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall its fruit be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to its months, because the waters flowed out of the sanctuary: and its fruit shall be for food, and its leaf for medicine.(Ezekiel 47:8-12 KJ2000)

In the Gospel of Mark we read the account of a woman who had suffered much at the hands of many physicians. Can any of you relate? The text reads:

A certain woman, who had an issue of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things by many physicians, and had spent all that she had,

and was no better, but rather grew worse, having heard the things concerning Jesus, came up behind him in the crowd, and touched his clothes. For she said, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be made well." Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. Immediately Jesus, perceiving in himself that the power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd, and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" His disciples said to him, "You see the multitude pressing against you, and you say, 'Who touched me?'" He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had been done to her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be cured of your disease."(Mark 5:25-34 WEB)

Out of Christ's innermost being flows rivers of healing power and if Christ is in you the same Spirit that raised Him from the dead is in you, giving you life. Virtue still flows from Him. He has not given us a method for "faith healing." He has given us Himself! How much lack in the family of God is due to our failure to apprehend the depth of what Jesus prayed, "... as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us"? Christ is in us and God is in Him.

Recently we were talking together about why there are so few genuine miracles and healings occurring among Father's children today. We believe that it is directly related to our general failure to comprehend and apprehend this great mystery. As it was with Ezekiel's River, waters flow out of the sanctuary, and the leaves of the trees growing upon the banks of this River are for the healing of the nations. "Its fruit shall be for food, and its leaf for medicine." These healing waters flow "out of our innermost being."

God in Christ in us is the source of all healing. We don't have to go to a healing meeting or get touched by some healing evangelist to be healed. The faith of a child can move mountains. Paul wrote of this in Romans 8:11.

But if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised up Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (World English Bible)

He Who is resident within us, gives life to our mortal bodies. Paul was stoned to death and in short order he rose up from under that pile of rocks and went right back into the city he was cast out of (See Acts 14:19-20)! According to tradition, John the apostle was boiled in oil and they could not kill him. How could these things be? Because life was in them. Jesus said, "No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18 KJ2000). This same Life is in we who believe. Do we dare believe it?

Peter and John were walking together into the temple. A certain lame man lay begging at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful. He asked Peter and John for alms. Peter said, "Look on us." He looked at them expecting a donation, but money is not what he got. Then Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." Peter took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength (see Acts 3:1-7).

Peter didn't pause and calmly pray that God, in His infinite mercy, would come down and "touch" this poor beggar. He didn't call the Jerusalem "prayer chain." He didn't even take him to the surgeon and pray that God would guide his hands as we often pray today. No. He said, "Such as I have I give you." What did Peter have? He had no money. What did he have then? Out from his innermost being flowed springs of living waters, bringing healing to the nations.

Let's not think too highly of Peter here. He was just an earthen conduit the healing-waters flowed from, and this same power is resident in everyone who believes into Christ. Just after this man was healed he went into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God. The people all came running together, because they knew he was the same lame man that they passed by every day. When Peter saw this crowd gathering, he said to them, "You men of Israel, why marvel you at this? Or why look you so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? ...And his [Jesus'] name through faith in his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know: yea, the faith which is by him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all" (Acts 3:12-16 KJ2000). The faith which was resident in Peter was by Jesus within him.

Peter ends a lengthy discourse by saying, “Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:26 KJ2000). Jesus not only has the power to cleanse us from our sins, but to heal us of all our infirmities from His life-stream within those who believe. When in the process of healing a person, He often said, “Your sins are forgiven you” as if healing and the forgiveness of sin go together. Religion has no mystical power to heal. Temples and holy shrines have no healing virtue in them. Neither can laws or precepts bring life. If we have eyes to look upstream to the headwaters of the river of God, we will see God Himself—God in the midst of us!

Isaiah prophesied, “Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break forth, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of jackals, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for others: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein” (Isaiah 35:6-8 KJ2000). God’s river of healing is for today. We put way too much faith in the medical profession in today’s churches. Jeremiah saw this lack of faith in the abiding Christ coming in the future and prophesied, “Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate, says the LORD. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed themselves out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:12-13 KJ2000). Forsaking Christ as our fountain of healing water and seeking healing from broken cisterns are equally evil and these actions seem to go together.

There is an important difference between what John saw in Revelation of the resurrected Christ in the City of God and what the Old Covenant prophet Ezekiel saw. The book of Revelation starts out with these words, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and revealed it by his angel unto his servant John” (Revelation 1:1 KJ2000). All too many scriptures are put off into the future, relegated the past or made to apply to some other people group by our Bible teachers. God is still the I Am, not the I Was or the I Will Be. He is outside of time as we know it and this is how we can be here on earth and yet dwell in heavenly

places in Christ Jesus as we abide in Him. We are to be as free to follow Jesus in His power as He is free to live and move in us. John went on to report:

For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.. (Revelation 7:17 KJ2000)

There is no Greek future tense in this passage! The Lamb of God, Jesus, has been feeding us, is feeding us and will feed us who are His flock. He has lead, will lead and is leading us. He also has wiped away our tears, is wiping away our tears and will wipe away our tears. He has healed us, is healing us and will heal us as we abide in the Fountain of Living Waters, Jesus Christ.

John continues to report what Jesus said. And he said unto me, “It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give (again present tense, not future in the Greek) unto him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely” (Revelation 21:6 KJ2000). Notice the timelessness of our Lord. He was here before God created man and He will remain throughout our eternity. This same Christ that we drink from today is the Rock that the children of Israel drank from in the wilderness. “And [they] were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual food; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:2-4 KJ2000). We have been robbed by teachers and translators who have put the workings of the time spanning Alpha and Omega either in the past or the future, but never in the now! By doing so they have unwittingly stripped the gospel of Christ of its power.

John continues

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bore twelve manner of fruit, and yielded its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.. (Revelation 22:1-2 KJ2000)

Again, the Greek does not say “were for the healing of the nations,” but “the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

So is this river flowing out of the temple of God like the one in Ezekiel's vision? Yes and no. If you are thinking according to the Old Testament idea of what the temple of God is, the answer is No. John reported, "And I saw no temple in it [the City of God]: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Revelation 21:22 KJ2000). Peter taught that we are God's temple made of living stones. Jesus is in us and we in Him. The temple is us and His body and the temple is Him. He is in the Father and the Father is in Him.

How can a tree be in the middle of the river and on both sides of the river at the same time without the river flowing from the tree itself? The Tree of Life is the source of the River just like Jesus said He would be as He abides in us. The Tree of Life is Jesus.

Yes, "the streams make glad the city of God," no tears, no hunger. All His people are in the flow that makes up the River of Life flowing out of Jesus and the Father. He has given us everything we need in His Son to bring us into the righteousness of our Father in the image of His Son. Paul wrote:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:28-32 KJ2000)

All things are ours in Christ. Paul wrote to the carnal Corinthian church that still had the infantile attitude that their Christianity was dependant on following an apostle instead of Jesus:

Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And you are Christ's; and Christ is God's. (1 Corinthians 3:21-23 KJ2000)

All things are ours as we abide into Jesus the Son of God. The River of Life does not flow out of a temple in His Father's kingdom because it flows out of the Tree of life who is the Temple of God. As we live and move and have our being in Him it also flows forth from us and its leaves are our leaves. The world will not believe that Jesus is that Tree until they see His healing flow come through those of us who are into Him. Out of our hearts (Jesus' bride) must flow that life giving water that heals the nations.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.(Revelation 22:17 KJ2000)

When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongues fail for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.”(Isaiah 41:17-18 KJ2000)