

The River of God

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"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God" (Rev. 22:1a).

"Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar" (Ezek. 47:1).

There is a River that flows freely from the throne of God—an amazing river of living water. This living water is actually the supernatural water of the Holy Spirit, which runs not only through the Temple in Jerusalem, but also flows through us. (See 1 Cor. 3:16.) This water is the person of the Holy Spirit, available to all who will come and drink from the waters that will never run dry.

Scripture says this River flows from His Temple and also refers to us as His Temple, His very own dwelling place. And in the same way that Solomon's Temple was "filled with the glory of the Lord" (**1 Kings 8:2, 11**), you and I can be filled up to overflowing as we rest in the secret place where we are filled with and empowered by the manifest glory of God. In **Haggai 2:1** Haggai prophesied about greater glory coming to the Temple, and God intends for that same glory to flow through us.

Just think of it! This same water that brings refreshment and healing to the whole earth should now be flowing through us--His church, His ministers on earth! Even now the Holy Spirit flows through His willing servants, to minister to the hurting, poured out on the parched, dry landscape of desperate hearts. His living water fills the thirsty and the spiritually destitute. Will you drink deeply in that resting place so He may use you to minister, living out your destiny—your intended purpose for living?

Needy souls come through our church doors every week desperate for more than just "church as usual." They want proof that God is alive and cares about their deeply personal struggles. They need us to care and show concern for their needs, interceding for answers. God longs to touch those needs, using you and I as living water, like Jesus with skin on to those who are lost around us. He longs for those living waters to flow from the altar and penetrate every heart and life and transform them, comforting them and ministering to every need. Often we substitute programs, form, religion, entertainment and activities for the supernatural River of God, while we ignore the

wounds around us and refuse to let the power of God move in our services, outside of our control. As a result the Holy Spirit stands outside the church door as an unwelcome guest, and His hands are tied. The time is now to turn this situation around and begin to move as though this our last greatest day, our best opportunity to allow the Holy Spirit to heal and restore us personally, and then to use us to minister in the flow of the Spirit of God. Scripture says that in these last days that River will flow from heaven to the church altars and in the process fill needy souls who desperately need to drink.

How do you know if the River of God is flowing in our church services? Here are some signs.

- You become physically fit during the praise and worship time
- You think of the floor as an old friend
- Your pastor has a difficult time finishing his message
- The one-hour church service that used to be boring is now three hours long and seems too short
- Church services don't start until everyone has crawled out of the prayer room and into the sanctuary
- When people get up off the floor they are changed from the inside out; they love more, have integrity, and are humble. The fruit of the Spirit operates in their lives.
- You have a great desire to take the River to the streets so that everyone can drink from the well that never runs dry.
- Your Bible is well-worn
- The people of God are more spirit-sensitive than man-sensitive
- Tears flow freely from the pastor to the backslider.
- Humility, holiness, repentance, and intimacy are now the focus instead of ego, self-promotion, or mere material blessings.

As believers we are already in the River but we must ask ourselves—how deep are we in? How far will we allow the Holy Spirit to flood our lives?

Are we merely standing at a safe **ankle-depth** in the River? Have you noticed that children love splashing and playing in wading pools where the water is only ankle deep? Our early salvation experience is often like that—we got in up to our ankles and splashed around, suddenly exposed to the amazing things God could do. But maybe we're still in that place, satisfied with surface things when God is calling us to maturity and a deeper commitment to move in the Spirit, to risk losing control and looking foolish when He

commands us to. Are we willing to go deeper, resting in the manifest presence of God, mining the depths of His will for us—living out our destinies to move in signs, wonders, miracles and healings, touching people where they are?

Are we **knee deep** in the River? As we begin to seek God and pray, letting go of our own agendas in exchange for His, we go deeper, ready to stretch ourselves, trusting that He knows what He's doing in us. And while this is a very good thing He wants even more for us.

Are we **waist deep** in the River? As the water reaches our waistlines we find that movement is far more difficult. At this place the Holy Spirit wants to change us, urging us to make Him Lord, exposing pride, selfishness or unforgiveness that we've locked deep inside and kept out of His reach. At this point many saints will return to ankle-deep water because it is far more fun and they have much more freedom to do their own thing. But doing that would be tragic, because God wants so much more for us, and if we don't do it, who will?

Are we **neck deep** in the River? It is at this level that many Christians turn back, because moving is hindered by the deep water. It is at this place where the Holy Spirit begins to ask for more sacrifice and we begin to surrender our future by faith, trusting that He is in control and knows the way we take. And while it feels as if you can't go any deeper, I promise you my friend there is much more!

Are we in **over our heads**? As we go deeper still we must let go of the firm footing beneath our feet learning that we must swim in order to stay afloat. Think of it this way. Every river has a strong current that can sweep us away, and it is here that the threat of drowning is very real. In the River of God we must let go of our security and allow the Spirit to take us where He wants us to go. And while we all like to feel as if we're in control of our lives, are we ever really in control? Ultimately it is the Holy Spirit who has control, and once we know and trust God we can let go of control and abandon ourselves to His tender care and mercy. And while it feels very risky, it is actually the ultimate place of safety for a believer.

Where are you in the River of God today? Ankle-deep? Knee-deep? Waist-deep? Neck-deep? Or way over your head? Ezekiel tells us of this supernatural river, but it's up to us to determine where we stand. In the end saturating ourselves in this river brings healing, peace, joy, power, and most of all ushers us into the inner sanctum of the Most High God! The River originates in the heart of God and urges us to go ever deeper. It is up to us how deep we go, depending on how far we are willing to trust that the Holy Spirit knows best for us.

individually and corporately God is calling his church to receive the River of God, to push aside preconceived ideas, man-made agendas, and man-pleasing activities and entertainment. Will we let Him?

Often we place the Holy Spirit in a box and limit His involvement. And though we may not realize it we are refusing the very answers we and others are so desperate for. If as we say we want to see souls saved and wounds healed, people delivered and miracles happen we must welcome the Holy Spirit to flow at every opportunity! We are called to release the River of God everywhere we go and let the River flow through us when the Spirit moves.

In his song, "The River is here" Andy Parks sings, "Down the mountain the River flows, and brings refreshing wherever it goes through the valleys and over the fields the River is rushing in the River is here. The River of God sets our feet a-dancing. The River of God fills our heart with cheer--The River of God fills our mouths with laughter, and we rejoice for the River is here!"

Dear friend, I am thirsty for the real thing--not hype and not a counterfeit but a genuine River of God breaking up the fallow ground and releasing a River that comes straight from His throne.

There is a special Invitation to the Thirsty found in Isaiah 55

¹ "Is anyone thirsty?
Come and drink—
even if you have no money!
Come, take your choice of wine or milk—
it's all free!