

The River is Rising  
February 7, 2010

Let's look at **John 7:37-39**. "On the last day, that great day of the feast." There are three great feasts in Judaism where men had to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and this was one of them.

These feasts lasted about 8 days, and every day the priest would go down to the pool of Shalom, take a golden pitcher, scoop up water, bring it back to the temple, and pour it on the altar. As the priest was pouring the water on the altar, the people would shout out, "With joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation." They were celebrating the fact that the Lord provided water for them in the desert, in the wilderness.

The last day of the great feast was a day of silence and somberness. "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.'" Jesus is talking about spiritual water. Verse 38: "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said (as it previously had been prophesied)." The prophecy has now been fulfilled, because Jesus is standing there.

"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart." The King James Version says, "out of the belly." The New International Version says, "out of the innermost being." "As the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Verse 39: "But this Jesus spoke concerning the Holy Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given (not yet poured out), because Jesus was not yet glorified." When was He glorified? After He was crucified. After He died. After He was buried. After He was resurrected. After He was seen by at least 500 at one time. After He ascended. Then He was seated.

His coronation day was the day He was seated at His proper position at the right hand of the Father. Jesus was glorified when He was seated in Heaven at the right hand of His Heavenly Father where He would intercede for us; and when He got in that position, the Holy Spirit was poured out. That was the Day of Pentecost.

When I look at these three brief verses of Scripture, I see **an invitation being given**. In **John 7:37**, Jesus offers us the privilege of quenching our thirst. God promised in **Isaiah 44:3**, "For I will pour water on him who is thirsty." God can't do anything for

anybody that is not thirsty.

God's requirement in the Scriptures for anyone to be filled is that they must have an appetite. The Bible says, "He (or she) that hungers and thirsts after righteousness shall be filled." **The proof is in the pursuit.** If you're hungry for something, you will go after it. If you're thirsty for something, you will pursue it; and he or she who is hungry and thirsty for righteousness will be filled. Isaiah tells us that God will pour water on anybody who is thirsty.

In one of the great revivals, a man was called to close the service. When he stood to pray, he said, "Lord, I can't speak for the pastor, the deacons, or those that are gathered in this house today. I can only speak for me." Then he said, "Lord, as for me, I'm thirsty!" The report was that God literally shook that house, and revival broke loose; and it broke loose because there was a thirsty soul in the house.

One of the misnomers that has been preached in pulpits is that all you have to do is go to an altar, get saved, and then you get everything you need. No, no, no. Others teach that you need more, but their "more" stops when they receive a gift of the Spirit, or speak in tongues, or run and jump.

Listen, this river we're talking about is not just for us to gather in here in the sanctuary, to have a certain feeling, and then to go out in the marketplace. **The key is that you must be thirsty, and thirst creates desire.**

**Our bodies are made up of 90% water**, and most will tell you that a human being can go maybe 4-5 days without water before dying. Yet, in Haiti, people were found alive who had been trapped for 2 weeks, and the first thing they were given was water. Why? It's because **water is God's thirst-quencher!**

Our society in America has raised a whole generation of people who think the thirst quencher is Pepsi or Coke, coffee or tea. No, no. It's water, but if you are having a party and all you offer is water, people are shocked. We are offering you the very thing that keeps you alive, which is water! You can't survive without water.

So, what we have done in our society is we have taken that which sustains physical life in the human body and polluted it with something else, and we have done the same thing spiritually because Jesus is the living water. So, we're not thirsty for the true, for the real; because, **if you're thirsty, God invites you to come.**

Look at **Isaiah 55:1**. **"Come all you who are thirsty."** I've preached for 40 years, poured my heart out, given all I could give, but I have often wondered why people won't come [to Christ]. It's because they are not thirsty. **Revelation 22:17** says, **"Let Him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."**

Last Wednesday night, I preached on Heaven. We sang about Heaven. We painted Heaven as pretty, but hell is awful. I can show you in the Scriptures where it says that there is eternal torment and you can never escape it, but people aren't thirsty for Heaven. Why? It's because people have filled the void of spiritual thirst with everything under the sun.

**People foolishly try to quench their spiritual thirst with riches.** I believe in being blessed, but if we are not careful the only gospel we are preaching is a rich gospel. Riches will not fill the void that only Jesus can fill.

**People think they can quench their spiritual thirst with relationships.** Women think they have to have a man. Yes, you do, and His name is Jesus! We go from relationship to relationship trying to fill a thirst inside. It will not work, and every time you get in one and mess it up, you want to bail out! Stay in the relationship you're in and make the best you can out of it, because the real thirst-quencher is Jesus.

**Another way people try and quench their spiritual thirst is through recreation.** I work out five times a week, but people think their body is going to last forever. No, it isn't! People spend thousands of dollars on sports events and other recreational events, but I'm here to tell you it will not quench your spiritual thirst.

Another is **recognition**. People get fame and fortune, and the programs on television today publicize what all these highly-recognized and famous people are doing, but many of them are in sin and are messing up their lives. We see it week after week where people mess up their lives, and young and old begin to follow them. You can be recognized by everybody on this planet but inside still be thirsty.

People become **religious trying to quench their spiritual thirst**. They become religious and wear certain religious jewelry, but religion is empty. Religion will not fulfill the void inside your soul. Only Jesus can fulfill that need! This world is going everywhere trying to quench their spiritual thirst, and everyone of them are singing, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction!"

**In Psalm 42:2, the Psalmist David said, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."**

It doesn't thirst for an idol or a man-made religion. We have taken away our thirst for water and have done the same thing regarding Jesus. We have polluted our souls with everything but that which quenches the spiritual thirst. God invites anybody to come that is thirsty. You may be saved, but are you thirsty? I want more.

**In John 7:38, I see a promise.** My God is a promise-keeping God! You may make a promise and not keep it, but when God makes a promise, it's a promise. In **Verse 38** when He says, "**He who believes in Me,**" something is going to happen. Jesus said, "**If you believe in Me, if you come and drink from Me, there is a promise behind it; and the promise is that out of your belly will flow, spring forth, gush forth rivers of life.**"

Look at **Psalm 78:15-16**. The Old Testament reveals to us that there were supernatural rivers that flowed out of the rocks in the desert when Moses was leading the children of Israel, and I told you these great feasts were celebrating these rivers. **Verse 15** says, "**He [God] split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink in abundance like the depths [of the sea].**"

**Verse 16:** "**He [God] also brought streams out of the rock.**" Can you imagine the Kanawha River flowing out of a rock? Three million people didn't go up to a rock, put their cups under it, and fill them up. Can you imagine how long it would have taken for 3,000,000 people to line up every day just to get a cup of water? It wasn't just a little stream of water that flowed out of the rocks. It was a river that flowed out of those rocks! It says, "**He also brought streams out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.**"

I want you to think for a moment. I'm mystified that He says, "Out of your innermost being will flow rivers of living water." I don't know what it does to you, but that stirs me. Being able to drink water is easy for most people. Getting saved is so easy that a fool will not error therein. I'm giving you Bible.

I don't know if you know this or not, but getting saved is easy. It really is. If you repent and really mean it, if you confess, renounce your sin, turn to Christ, and accept His death, burial, and resurrection by faith, He will save you. It's one thing to drink, but to find the purpose from behind the rivers that result from the drink is another thing.

In **Ezekiel 47**, the prophet Ezekiel sees a vision of the temple mount. It currently has a Muslim mosque on it, but it is going to leave there soon. God had the temple built. It had the outer court, the holy place, and Ezekiel has a vision and sees a river coming out

of this temple. There was no water upon the temple mount. The pool of Shalom is the only fresh water in all of Jerusalem, and it is down in the city of David.

Ezekiel sees a vision of water flowing out of the temple like a river. He said someone could walk ankle-deep if they wanted to, knee-deep if they wanted to, waist-deep if they wanted to, or they could go all the way in.

Now, the lowest point on the earth is the Dead Sea. So, when Ezekiel sees this river flowing out of the temple, he sees it flowing automatically down to the Dead Sea. Look at **Verse 9**. This is a supernatural vision of a supernatural river that has spiritual significance to it. **"And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish."**

Jesus said, "If you follow Me, I will make you fishers of men." Everywhere that river flowed, there would be fish. **"There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes."** There is a purpose to the flow of the river of the Spirit.

It is a **privilege to drink**, but to find the purpose of the river is something else. **It takes commitment to find the purpose of the river flowing through your life**. It takes **discipline**, but we don't like that word discipline. It takes **sacrifice**. When you talk about sacrifice, the saints will begin to flee! **If we are going to become a conduit, a channel, for the river to flow in our lives, we are going to have to have commitment.**

In the church world, it's the preacher or the pastor that is supposed to be committed. I've not come here today to bless you. This river flowing in you is not so you can feel good. There is a purpose behind this river beyond feelings. The Bible doesn't say that apostles or prophets will have rivers flowing out of them. The Bible says, "whoever believes." If you are a believer, there ought to be a river flowing out of you.

**When we allow ourselves to be channels (no matter how old or how young) through whom the life-giving waters of the Holy Spirit flow**, when we leave this house and go into the marketplace folk are going to get **blessed**. Wherever the river flows, life is given.

When you as a Christian get around people and there are rivers flowing out of your life, people ought to be **blessed**. We should bring **encouragement**. We should **lift people up**. Have you noticed that when certain people get around you, they just lift your spirit?

Maude Dishner has written me a letter every month for years and years, and in those letters, she always encourages me. There is a river flowing out of this lady. It's a river of life, and when you have this river flowing out of you, everyone you come in contact with will be lifted, encouraged, blessed, helped, and healed.

Again, we are projecting the wrong image. We are projecting a mass meeting, where the preacher comes out in a white outfit. The choir sings and gets into a certain atmosphere, which is wonderful, and we think that is where we should get healed. No! The river should flow forth from every member of the body of Christ!

I believe in the gifts of the Spirit. I believe in the gift of healing and that certain people operate in that gift, but the Bible says that "the believers can lay hands on the sick and they will recover."

I know that people get weird, and I know that things happen we can't explain; but some people get weird, and it turns people off. We can all pray for people that are sick without filling our hands with oil and slapping it on them.

Jesus always prayed with compassion. The Bible says that He looked upon the masses and had compassion for them; and when He touched them, He didn't snap their necks back. He wasn't trying to impress anybody. That's a pride issue.

Jesus was gentle, and WE ought to be able to minister anywhere in the marketplace with gentleness. Wherever you are this week, you ought to be a conduit, a channel, for the Lord to flow through in order to touch people. The marketplace is wherever God puts you, and let's start letting the river flow through us.

Let's look at the **promise** God made Abraham in **Genesis 12:2**. **God says to Abraham, "I will make you a great nation, I will bless you,"** but that was not the end of the promise. God also tells Abraham, **"and you shall be a blessing."**

Church, the promise of the river flowing through my life is a promise that I will be a blessing to people. I will be a help and an encouragement to people. Can you imagine the magnitude of the impact of this church if we all would become a channel for the Holy Ghost? Some of you are so disconnected to the Holy Ghost. Listen to me. It's life!

Jesus wasn't weird. Why do you think little children ran to Him? Children can sense love, not kookiness! Christ said, "By this one sign shall all men know that you are My disciples if you love one another." What flows out of this river of your innermost being

is the love of God, the love for hurting people. Do you know why this church is growing? It's because we are trying to help hurting people, but it takes the entire body of Christ.

God gives an invitation. If you are thirsty, come. Then He gives a promise of what will happen if you drink. He will start flowing through and in your life; not so much as to be blessed but to be a blessing. We have too many people in the church that want to be blessed, but they don't want to be a blessing. Abraham was blessed so that he could be a blessing.

**In John 7:39, I see an explanation.** This river, everywhere it goes, is the Holy Spirit. Look at the last phrase in **2 Corinthians 3:6**. It says, "**but the Spirit gives life.**" It isn't the song or the sermon. It's the Holy Spirit!

Let me tell you why people are afraid of the Holy Spirit. People become uncomfortable when someone talks about the Holy Spirit. It's because other people have prejudiced them. They have made them fearful. **The Holy Spirit is here to give life.**

Some of you are afraid of the gift of tongues, but it is a gift of God, and God doesn't give anything to anyone that doesn't fit them. It's a gift, and don't let anybody force you to do anything. When God flows through us, He flows naturally. The gifts flow naturally. The gifts of the Spirit God gives us always fit us.

Church, when this river of the Holy Spirit rises, it is supernatural, and you won't be able to explain everything God does. Sometimes it is spectacular when God begins to move, but when this river rises, He wants to flow out of you. He wants to flow out of you so you can be a blessing. **This river is the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit which we desperately need.**

**The river is rising. When the river begins to rise, when the Holy Spirit begins to move in our individual lives, God restores life back into His church.** I like life. I like movement. I like to see flags waving and people running. Where there is life, there is excitement. The river begins to rise, and when the river begins to rise, the Holy Spirit begins to give life back into His church. We need some life!

**When the river begins to rise, God restores gifts back into His church.** Gifts that will fit the need of the hour.

**When the river begins to rise, God begins to rekindle the fire (the passion) back into**

**His church. He begins to renew our burden for lost souls.** It's not about me. I'm burdened because souls are dying and going to hell. We're a dry-eyed church in a hell-bound world.

**When the river begins to rise, God begins to revive the church, stirring up the saints.** When people say they are stirred and don't know what they are stirred about, it means the river is rising; and when the church gets stirred in a holy way, guess what happens? **Sinners start getting saved!**

There is only one problem. **Are you thirsty? Then come!** Don't level off. Don't plateau. Don't think you have all you need. There is more. Get anything out of your life that is causing a blockade, a dam. There is such energy when that river rises.