

**A REVELATION
OF.....
THE 3 RIVERS OF
GOD**

**ONE OF A SERIES OF REVELATIONS ON VARIOUS
ASPECTS OF SCRIPTURE, AS INSPIRED BY THE
HOLY SPIRIT.**

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A NOTE FROM DAVID.....

It's amazing how God works! Six years ago now, as I was reading the last chapter of the Bible, He showed me that the river flowing from the throne of God was symbolic of the End Time Church – the 'River Church'. But that is another story.

But it is only now, these many years later, that He is revealing the principles of the river. Revealing its source way back at the beginning of time in the Garden of Eden, flowing through Ezekiel's Temple and culminating with the final promise of God's Kingdom on earth contained in the last chapter of Revelation.

Once again, my faith is built up as I see yet another aspect of God's logical plan; a plan put in place from the very foundation of the world. And likely well before! Being a (usually logical) male, logic and reason, together with experiential love, work hand in hand as faith builders in my life.

The river I initially saw supernaturally flowed up towards the Throne of God as we fully entered His rest and were taken up to Him, rather than the more natural, gravity obedient one mentioned in Revelation 22:1. I still don't have the full revelation of that, but God hasn't finished with me yet. And wont, until I go to join Him.

So let's take a journey through time and see what surprises our God has in store for us.

His servant and yours

David Tait

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

3 A NOTE FROM DAVID.....

PART 1: THE BACKGROUND

4 DEFINITION OF TERMS
CONCISE OXFORD DICTIONARY
BIBLE DICTIONARIES

PART 2: A REVELATION OF..... ***THE 3 RIVERS OF GOD***

19 THE KEY IMPORTANCE OF WATER

21 THE RIVER OF PROMISE (In the Garden of Eden)
THE PROMISE OF SUSTENANCE
THE PROMISE OF PERFECTION
THE PROMISE OF JUDGEMENT

26 THE RIVER OF PROGRESS (Flowing from Ezekiel's Temple)
SUMMARY OF INTERPRETATIONS OF THE RIVER
COMPARISON WITH THE TABERNACLE OF MOSES

38 RIVER OF PROVEN PERFECTION (River of Life flowing from God's Throne)
WHO MAY ENTER IN?
THE ULTIMATE REWARD
THE INVITATION

NOTE: For further insight see: A REVELATION OF...THE RIVER (END TIME) CHURCH

PART 1

THE BACKGROUND

DEFINITION OF TERMS

THE CONCISE OXFORD DICTIONARY

RIVER: (Noun) Copious stream of water flowing in channel to sea or lake or marsh or another.

STREAM: (Noun) Body of water running in bed, river or brook.

WATER: (Noun) Colourless transparent tasteless scentless compound of oxygen and hydrogen in liquid state convertible by heat into steam and by cold into ice, kinds of liquid consisting chiefly of this seen in sea, lake, stream, spring, rain, tears, sweat, saliva, urine, serum, etc., body of water as sea or lake or river.

CLEANSE: (Verb) Make clean, purify.

PURIFY: (Verb) Make pure, cleanse (*of, from*, impurities, sin, etc.); make ceremonially clean; clear of foreign elements, whence purifier.

BIBLE DICTIONARIES

RIVER — (1.) Heb. ‘aphik, properly the channel or ravine that holds water (2 Sam. 22:16), translated “brook,” “river,” “stream,” but not necessarily a perennial stream (Ezek. 6:3; 31:12; 32:6; 34:13).

(2.) Heb. nahal, in winter a “torrent,” in summer a “wady” or valley (Gen. 32:23; Deut. 2:24; 3:16; Isa. 30:28; Lam. 2:18; Ezek. 47:9).

These winter torrents sometimes come down with great suddenness and with desolating force. A distinguished traveller thus describes his experience in this matter: “I was encamped in Wady Feiran, near the base of Jebel Serbal, when a tremendous thunderstorm burst upon us. After little

more than an hour's rain, the water rose so rapidly in the previously dry wady that I had to run for my life, and with great difficulty succeeded in saving my tent and goods; my boots, which I had not time to pick up, were washed away. In less than two hours a dry desert wady upwards of 300 yards broad was turned into a foaming torrent from 8 to 10 feet deep, roaring and tearing down and bearing everything upon it, tangled masses of tamarisks, hundreds of beautiful palmtrees, scores of sheep and goats, camels and donkeys, and even men, women, and children, for a whole encampment of Arabs was washed away a few miles above me. The storm commenced at five in the evening; at half-past nine the waters were rapidly subsiding, and it was evident that the flood had spent its force." (Comp. Matt. 7:27; Luke 6:49.)

(3.) Nahar, a "river" continuous and full, a perennial stream, as the Jordan, the Euphrates (Gen. 2:10; 15:18; Deut. 1:7; Ps. 66:6; Ezek. 10:15).

(4.) Tel'alah, a conduit, or water-course (1 Kings 18:32; 2 Kings 18:17; 20:20; Job 38:25; Ezek. 31:4).

(5.) Peleg, properly "waters divided", i.e., streams divided, throughout the land (Ps. 1:3); "the rivers [i.e., 'divisions'] of waters" (Job 20:17; 29:6; Prov. 5:16).

(6.) Ye'or, i.e., "great river", probably from an Egyptian word (Aur), commonly applied to the Nile (Gen. 41:1-3), but also to other rivers (Job 28:10; Isa. 33:21).

(7.) Yubhal, "a river" (Jer. 17:8), a full flowing stream.

(8.) 'Ubhal, "a river" (Dan. 8:2). 1

RIVER OF GOD — (Ps. 65:9), as opposed to earthly streams, denoting that the divine resources are inexhaustible, or the sum of all fertilizing streams that water the earth (Gen. 2:10). 1

WATER OF PURIFICATION — used in cases of ceremonial cleansings at the consecration of the Levites (Num. 8:7). It signified, figuratively, that purifying of the heart which must characterize the servants of God. 1

1Easton, M. G., M. A. D. D., *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1996.

WATER OF SEPARATION — used along with the ashes of a red heifer for the ceremonial cleansing of persons defiled by contact with a dead body (Num. 19). 1

CLEAN — The various forms of uncleanness according to the Mosaic law are enumerated in Lev. 11–15; Num. 19. The division of animals into clean and unclean was probably founded on the practice of sacrifice. It existed before the Flood (Gen. 7:2). The regulations regarding such animals are recorded in Lev. 11 and Deut. 14:1–21.

The Hebrews were prohibited from using as food certain animal substances, such as (1) blood; (2) the fat covering the intestines, termed the caul; (3) the fat on the intestines, called the mesentery; (4) the fat of the kidneys; and (5) the fat tail of certain sheep (Ex. 29:13, 22; Lev. 3:4–9; 9:19; 17:10; 19:26).

The chief design of these regulations seems to have been to establish a system of regimen which would distinguish the Jews from all other nations. Regarding the design and the abolition of these regulations the reader will find all the details in Lev. 20:24–26; Acts 10:9–16; 11:1–10; Heb. 9:9–14. 1

PURIFICATION — the process by which a person unclean, according to the Levitical law, and thereby cut off from the sanctuary and the festivals, was restored to the enjoyment of all these privileges.

The great annual purification of the people was on the Day of Atonement (q.v.).

But in the details of daily life there were special causes of ceremonial uncleanness which were severally provided for by ceremonial laws enacted for each separate case. For example, the case of the leper (Lev. 13, 14), and of the house defiled by leprosy (14:49–53; see also Matt. 8:2–4). Uncleanness from touching a dead body (Num. 19:11; Hos. 9:4; Hag. 2:13; Matt. 23:27; Luke 11:44). The case of the high priest and of the Nazarite (Lev. 21:1–4, 10, 11; Num. 6:6, 7; Ezek. 44:25). Purification was effected by bathing and washing the clothes (Lev. 14:8, 9); by washing the hands (Deut. 21:6; Matt. 27:24); washing the hands and feet (Ex. 30:18–21; Heb. 6:2, ‘baptisms’, R.V. marg., ‘washings;’ 9:10); sprinkling with blood and

water (Ex. 24:5–8; Heb. 9:19), etc. Allusions to this rite are found in Ps. 26:6; 51:7; Ezek. 36:25; Heb. 10:22. 1

FRUIT — a word as used in Scripture denoting produce in general, whether vegetable or animal. The Hebrews divided the fruits of the land into three classes;

(1.) The fruit of the field, “corn-fruit” (Heb. dagan; all kinds of grain and pulse.

(2.) The fruit of the vine, “vintage-fruit” (Heb. tirosh; grapes, whether moist or dried.

(3.) “Orchard-fruits” (Heb. yitshar, as dates, figs, citrons, etc.

Injunctions concerning offerings and tithes were expressed by these Hebrew terms alone (Num. 18:12; Deut. 14:23). This word “fruit” is also used of children or offspring (Gen. 30:2; Deut. 7:13; Luke 1:42; Ps. 21:10; 132:11); also of the progeny of beasts (Deut. 28:51; Isa. 14:29).

It is used metaphorically in a variety of forms (Ps. 104:13; Prov. 1:31; 11:30; 31:16; Isa. 3:10; 10:12; Matt. 3:8; 21:41; 26:29; Heb. 13:15; Rom. 7:4, 5; 15:28).

The fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23; Eph. 5:9; James 3:17, 18) are those gracious dispositions and habits which the Spirit produces in those in whom he dwells and works. 1

RIVER. Hebrew has a good many different words often rendered ‘river’, although this is not always an accurate translation of the original term.

The Heb. word *naḥal* is common, meaning a wadi or torrent-valley; in summer a dry river-bed or ravine, but a raging torrent in the rainy season. The Jabbok was such a wadi (Dt. 2:37), as were all the streams mentioned in the Elijah stories. Because these river-beds could suddenly become raging torrents, they often symbolize the pride of nations (Is. 66:12), the strength of the invader (Je. 47:2), and the power of the foe (Ps. 124:4). In his vision it was a *naḥal* that Ezekiel saw issuing from the Temple (47:5-12).

The second term, *nāḥār*, is the regular word for ‘river’ in Heb. It is used of particular rivers: *e.g.* the rivers of Eden (Gn. 2:10, 13-14), the Euphrates (Dt. 1:7), and the rivers of Ethiopia (Is. 18:1), Damascus (2 Ki. 5:12), *etc.*

In Ex. 7:19; Ps. 137:1, the word should almost certainly be rendered ‘canals’. The waters from the rock struck by Moses formed a nāhār (Ps. 105:41).

The word used most frequently of the Nile is y^o’ôr. The term is also found in Coptic, and was probably an Egypt. loan-word (*BDB*): see, e.g., Gn. 41:1; Ex. 1:22. It is used by Jeremiah (46:7f.) as a similitude of Egypt. invasion.

Other Heb. terms for ‘river’ are peleḡ, irrigating canals (Pss. 1:3; 65:9); ’āp̄îq, channel or river-bed (Ps. 42:1; Is. 8:7; and yûbāl or ’ûḇāl, a stream or watercourse (Is. 30:25; Dn. 8:2-3, 6). In the NT the word for ‘river’ is potamos. It is used of the Euphrates (Rev. 16:12) and the Jordan (Mk. 1:5); of the river issuing from God’s throne (Rev. 22:1f.); and of the Holy Spirit under the figure of living water (Jn. 7:38f.). 2

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN. The Heb. ṭum’â (‘uncleanness’) occurs 26 times, whereas the adjective ṭāmē’ (‘unclean’) is found 72 times. Other words appear less frequently. The Gk. akatharsia (‘uncleanness’) and akathartos (‘unclean’) occur 41 times. Other terms are found less often. The concept of cleanness is conveyed by the Heb. ṭāhōr, bārār and synonyms; the NT employs katharos almost exclusively. In the biblical words for ‘clean’, the physical, ritual and ethical usages overlap.

I. Cleanliness highly regarded

Bodily cleanliness was esteemed highly and practised in Bible lands. Herodotus (2. 27) stated that Egyptian priests bathed twice each day and twice each night. In Israel physical cleanness rendered a man ready to approach God, if his motive was proper. As early as the age of Noah the distinction between clean and unclean obtained. Gn. 7:2 records: ‘Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate.’ The early references in Genesis to clean and unclean *animals appear to have in mind the question of whether these animals were intended for sacrifice or not. Gn. 9:3 is explicit that ‘every moving thing that lives shall be food for

2The New Bible Dictionary, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1962.

you'. The regulations in Lv. 11 and Dt. 14 make the distinction as a basis for food laws. It is stated: 'This is the law pertaining to beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters, and every creature that swarms upon the earth: to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten' (Lv. 11:46-47).

II. In earliest times

In patriarchal times and in the era of the Monarchy in Israel the differentiation is found. Compare Gn. 31:35 (the case of Rachel with the household gods of her father, Laban) and 1 Sa. 20:26 (the incident of David's absence from the table of King Saul). Unfortunately, some writers have largely misunderstood the important distinctions here, because they have related all OT regulations of this character to alleged originally superstitious taboos. (*Cf.* A. S. Peake, *HDB*, 4, pp. 825ff.).

III. Under the prophets

The prophets, whose high ethical standards have been acclaimed on every hand, spoke of uncleanness also. Isaiah, envisioning the future age of righteousness, predicted that the way of holiness would not be traversed by the unclean (35:8); again, he called upon Jerusalem to gird on her strength, for the uncircumcised and the unclean would no longer trouble her in the hour of her glory (52:1). The plea is further made by the evangelical prophet for those in holy service to avoid any unclean thing, and to be clean in the handling of the sacred vessels of the Lord (52:11). Hosea, the prophet of the heart-broken love of God, warned his people that the N kingdom would not only return to Egypt, but would eat the unclean in Assyria (9:3). Amos, the unparalleled champion of the righteousness of God, in response to coercion which would muzzle his prophetic testimony, foretold that Amaziah of Bethel would experience the hand of God heavily upon him in his immediate family, and would himself die in an unclean land (7:17). The priestly Ezekiel expressed in various ways the loathing he felt for the pollution of his people, and his own abhorrence for the manner in which he was called upon to portray it dramatically before them (4:14).

IV. The Mosaic law

The law of Moses made clear distinctions between clean and unclean, the holy and unholy (Lv. 10:10). Uncleanness was primarily ceremonial defilement, not moral, unless done wilfully. It kept a man from the service of the sanctuary and from fellowship with his co-religionists. Ceremonial defilement was contracted in several ways, and provision was made for cleansing.

a. Contact with a dead body rendered the individual unclean (Nu. 19:11-22). The human corpse was the most defiling, according to OT regulations. In all probability it epitomized for the people of God the full gravity and ultimate consequences of sin.

b. Leprosy, whether in a person, clothing or a house, was polluting (Lv. 13-14).

c. Natural (those connected with the functions of reproduction) and unnatural issues were defiling to the observant Israelite (Lv. 12; 15).

d. Eating the flesh of an unclean bird, fish or animal made one unclean. Lv. 11 and Dt. 14 contain extended lists of the clean and unclean. Beasts of prey were considered unclean, because they consumed the blood and flesh of their victims. Unclean birds for the most part were birds of prey or those which fed on carrion. Fish without fins and scales were unclean. Some have thought that their serpent-like appearance accounts for the prohibition against them, but we now know that the prohibition of this group was wise on hygienic grounds. Both shellfish and crustaceans can easily cause food-poisoning and may also carry disease (G. S. Cansdale, *Animals of Bible Lands*, 1970, p. 213). Eating of flesh of animals torn to pieces or violently slain was a source of uncleanness (Ex. 22:31; Lv. 17:15; Acts 15:20, 29). Eating of blood was forbidden from earliest times (Gn. 9:4).

e. Physical impairments were considered like uncleanness in their power to exclude from approach to the altar. The regulations are given explicitly for the sons of Aaron, the ministering priests in the sanctuary (Lv. 21:16-24). Finally, unpunished murder (Dt. 21:1-9) and especially idolatry (Ho. 6:10) rendered the land unclean. The former struck at the image of God (Gn. 9:6), whereas the latter was a violation of the spiritual worship due to God (Ex. 20:4).

V. In post-exilic times

The scribes of post-exilic times and the Pharisees of the NT period enlarged artificially the distinction between clean and unclean (Mk. 7:2, 4). An elaborate and burdensome system developed therefrom. For example, a canonical book rendered the hands unclean; a non-canonical book did not. The largest of the six divisions of the Mishnah deals with the subject of purifications. The multiplied regulations give validity to the observation of our Lord: 'You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition!' (Mk. 7:9).

VI. The necessity and form of purification

Israel was to be holy (Lv. 11:44-45) and separate from all uncleanness. Ceremonial uncleanness spoke of sin. Bodily cleanliness was required in their society. Laws of cleanliness were followed by the observant in their approach to God. The clean person is the one who can approach God in worship. See Ex. 19:10f.; 30:18-21; Jos. 3:5. In religious usage the clean denoted that which did not defile ceremonially. The term was employed of beasts (Gn. 7:2), places (Lv. 4:12), objects (Is. 66:20) or persons who were not ceremonially (ritually) defiled (1 Sa. 20:26; Ezk. 36:25). Ethical cleanness or purity is in view in Pss. 19:9; 51:7, 10. A rare usage in the sense of 'blameless, or 'guiltless' is found in Acts 18:6.

The usual mode of purification was bathing of the body and washing of the clothes (Lv. 15:8, 10-11). Cleansing from an issue called for a special cleansing (Lv. 15:19), also childbirth (Lv. 12:2, 8; Lk. 2:24), leprosy (Lv. 14), contact with a corpse (Nu. 19; for a Nazirite, Nu. 6:9-12). Cleansing may be physical (Je. 4:11; Mt. 8:3); ritual, by a sin-offering (Ex. 29:36), to expiate sin (Nu. 35:33), to remove ceremonial defilement (Lv. 12:7; Mk. 1:44); ethical, either by man's removal of the uncleanness or sin (Ps. 119:9; Jas. 4:8), or by God's removal of the guilt (Ezk. 24:13; Jn. 15:2). Ritual cleansing was effected by water, fire or the ashes of a red heifer. Ps. 51:7 is a good example of the ceremonial as a figure of the ethical or spiritual. David prayed: 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'

VII. The New Testament view

In his teachings Christ emphasized moral, rather than ceremonial, purity (Mk. 7:1-23). His strongest denunciations were against those who elevated the ritual and external over the moral and ethical. What is important is not ceremonial, but moral, defilement. A careful reading of certain NT texts will give indications of the customs of the Jews regarding cleanness and defilement. Mk. 7:3-4 is a concise statement of the regulations concerning washing of hands, defilement contracted in the market-place and cleansing of utensils. Jn. 2:6 touches upon the method of purifying upon entering a household, and Jn. 3:25 indicates that the matter of cleansing was a ready subject for disputation. Strict regulations governed purification for the Feast of the Passover; these are alluded to in Jn. 11:55 and 18:28. The leper once cleansed was enjoined to offer for his cleansing what the law of Moses required (Mk. 1:44). In order to allay the opposition against him and procure for himself a readier acceptance in his message, Paul underwent the rite of purification in the Temple in Jerusalem (Acts 21:26). This puzzling behaviour must be evaluated in the light of his policy to be 'all things to all men'—*inter alia*, to live as a Jew when among Jews—'for the sake of the gospel' (1 Cor. 9:22f.). It does not detract from the truth that Christ repealed all the levitical regulations on unclean meats and practices (Mt. 15:1-20 and Mk. 7:6-23), in the light of which Peter was commanded to act (Acts 10:13ff.), and Paul promulgated his precepts for Christian conduct (Rom. 14:14, 20; 1 Cor. 6:13; Col. 2:16, 20-22; Tit. 1:15). It is emphasized in Heb. 9:13f. that the only pollution that matters *religiously* is that of the conscience, from which the sacrifice of Christ, offered in the spiritual realm, alone can cleanse.

As is to be expected, the Gospels have most to say of the distinction between clean and unclean. Purification is treated in the Gospels under several categories. It is seen in relation to leprosy (Mt. 8:2; Mk. 1:44; Lk. 5:14; 17:11-19). The word used in this connection is *katharizein*, but in Lk. 17:15 (the case of the ten lepers) *iasthai* ('to heal') is employed. The cleansing of the leper had two parts: (a) the ritual with the two birds (Lv. 14); and (b) the ceremony 8 days later. In regard to food there was the ritualistic washing of the hands (Mt. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:1-23; Jn. 2:6; 3:25). As already indicated, there was a purification in connection with the

Passover (Jn. 11:55; 18:28). There had to be a thoroughgoing removal of all leaven from the home (Ex. 12:15, 19-20; 13:7). Finally, following childbirth an offering was brought at the termination of the period of uncleanness, that is, 40 days for a male child and 80 for a girl (Lk. 2:22).

VIII. Conclusion

Some have supposed that the laws regulating clean and unclean not only had the effect of hindering social and religious intercourse with the heathen, especially in the matter of eating, but were originally given to accomplish this purpose. Moore feels there is neither internal nor external evidence to support this position (*Judaism*, 1, 1927, p. 21). He reasons thus: 'They were ancient customs, the origin and reason of which had long since been forgotten. Some of them are found among other Semites, or more widely; some were, so far as we know, peculiar to Israel; but as a whole, or we may say, as a system, they were the distinctive customs which the Jews had inherited from their ancestors with a religious sanction in the two categories of holy and polluted. Other peoples had their own, some of them for all classes, some, as among the Jews, specifically for the priests, and these systems also were distinctive' (*op.cit.*, pp. 21-22).

In the discussion of the far-reaching rules which differentiate between clean and unclean among animals, fowl and fish, various reasons have been given for these laws. The traditional and most obvious reason is the religious or spiritual: You shall be men consecrated to me' (Ex. 22:31). Another explanation is the hygienic. It was espoused by Maimonides, the great Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages in Spain, and other notable scholars. The argument, now supported by modern research, was that scaleless fish and the swine tend to produce diseases (Cansdale, *op.cit.*, p. 99). Still another interpretation was the psychological. The forbidden animals appeared either loathsome or begat a spirit of cruelty in those who ate them. A fourth reason is the dualistic. The Israelites, like the Persians, are said to have assigned all unclean animals to an evil power. Another explanation is the national, which holds that the Israelites were surrounded with such prohibitions in order to keep them separate from all other nations. Opponents of this view have pointed out that the animals forbidden in the law of Moses are practically the same as those proscribed in the Hindu, Babylonian and Egyptian religions.

The most popular theory in critical circles is that advanced by W. Robertson Smith (*The Religion of the Semites*, p. 270). Köhler states it succinctly, 'In view of the fact that almost every primitive tribe holds certain animals to be tabooed, the contention is that the forbidden or tabooed animal was originally regarded and worshipped as the totem of the clan; but the facts adduced do not sufficiently support the theory, especially in regard to the Semites, to allow it to be more than an ingenious conjecture. . . .' (*JewE*, 4, p. 599). If the scriptural data are allowed their normal force, the spiritual and hygienic explanations are the correct ones.

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PURITY. The original biblical significance was ceremonial. It was to be obtained by certain ablutions and purifications which were enjoined upon the worshipper in the performance of his religious duties. Purifications were common to many other religions, but there they were merely ceremonial and had no ethical significance. In the case of Israel most of the ceremonial purifications had both sanitary and ethical significance. Though Gn. 35:2 and Ex. 19:14 indicated that the general idea did not originate with the Mosaic law, it is clear that only with the giving of the ceremonial law under Moses were these regulations codified and detailed. In the teaching of the prophets the significance largely passed from the merely ceremonial to the ethical. In the NT the teaching of Christ and the descent of the Spirit lifted the meaning of purity into the moral and spiritual sphere.

In the general sense common to the NT, and to the devotional literature of the OT, purity indicates a state of heart where there is complete devotion to God. As unadulterated water is said to be pure, and gold without alloy is pure gold, so the pure heart is the undivided heart where there is no conflict

of loyalties, no cleavage of interests, no mixture of motives, no hypocrisy and no insecurity. It is whole-heartedness God-wards. This is probably the sense in which our Lord used it in the Beatitudes (Mt. 5:8). The reward of the undivided heart is the vision of God. No vision of God can come to the heart that is unclean because it is out of harmony with the nature and character of God. In the further teaching of Christ (see Mk. 7:14-28) he transfers the state of defilement, and so of purity, entirely from the outer to the inner man. Purity in this sense may be said to be a state of heart reserved completely for God and freed from all worldly distractions.

In the specialized sense purity came to mean freedom from sensual pollution, particularly in the sexual life, though the NT does not teach that sexual activity is polluting in itself and, indeed, makes it clear that rightly ordered sexual behaviour is not (*cf.* Heb. 13:4). Nevertheless, the NT teaches the sanctity of the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (*cf.* 1 Cor. 6:19f.) and inculcates the duty of self-restraint and self-denial even to the extent of personal loss. Purity is thus the spirit of renunciation and of the obedience which brings every thought and feeling and action into subjection to Christ. It begins within and extends outwards to the entire life, cleansing all the centres of living and controlling all the movements of body and spirit.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. H. Baltensweiler *et al.*, *NIDNTT* 3, pp. 100-108; F. Hauck, *TDNT* 1, pp. 122f.; R. Meyer, F. Hauck, *TDNT* 3, pp. 413-431. 2

FRUIT, FRUITS. The AV translation of the following Heb. and Gk. words, some of which are used interchangeably: Heb. 'ēḥ, 'budding' (Ct. 6:11; Dn. 4:12, 14, 21); y^ḥḥûl, 'increase' (Dt. 11:17; Hab. 3:17; Hg. 1:10); t^ḥnûḥâ, 'increase' (Jdg. 9:11. Is. 27:6; La. 4:9); yeled, 'child' (Ex. 21:22); leḥem 'bread, food' (Je. 11:19); nîḥ, 'utterance' (Is. 57:19; Mal. 1:12); ma^ḥkāl, 'eating' (Ne. 9:25); m^ḥlê'â, 'fullness' (Dt. 22:9; also 'ripe fruits' in Ex. 22:29); p^ḥî, 'fruit' (107 times); t^ḥḥû'â 'incoming' (13 times); kōaḥ, 'strength' (Jb. 31:39). Gk. gennēma, 'produce' (Mt. 26:29; Mk. 14:25; Lk. 12:18; 22:18; 2 Cor. 9:10); karpos, 'fruit' (64 times; akarpos, 'without fruit', in Jude 12); opōra, 'ripe or full fruits' (Rev. 18:14).

a. Literal use

Mosaic law decreed that fruit-bearing trees be regarded as unclean for 3 years after planting, as the Lord's in the fourth year, and to be eaten by the people only in the fifth year. This preserved the health of the tree against premature plucking, gave God his due place, perhaps commemorated the entrance of sin by forbidden fruit and certainly inculcated self-discipline. Fruit-trees were so highly valued that for many centuries thereafter, even during the bitterest wars, special efforts were made to protect them (*cf.* Dt. 20:19-20). See *AGRICULTURE, *FIG, *FOOD, *VINE, *TREES.

Children are sometimes spoken of as the fruit of the body or womb (Dt. 28:4; Ps. 127:3).

b. Metaphorical use

The term has inspired a large number of metaphorical uses, involving such phrases as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22); fruit for God (Rom. 7:4) and for death (Rom. 7:5; *cf.* Jas. 1:15); fruit of the lips (*i.e.* speaking, Is. 57:19; Heb. 13:15); fruit unto holiness and life (Rom. 6:22); fruit of the wicked (Mt. 7:16) and of self-centredness (Ho. 10:1; *cf.* Zc. 7:5-6); fruit in season (*i.e.* true prosperity, Ps. 1:3; Je. 17:8); fruits of the gospel (Rom. 1:13; Col. 1:6); of righteousness (Phil. 1:11; Jas. 3:18); fruits which demonstrate repentance (Mt. 3:8; *cf.* Am. 6:12). The unfruitful works of darkness are contrasted with the fruit of light (Eph. 5:9-11).

'The tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit' (Rev. 22:2) some regard as 'a sacrament of the covenant of works, and analogous to the bread and wine used by Melchizedek (Gn. 14:18) and to the Christian Eucharist (Mt. 26:29) in the covenant of grace' (*Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, 1960, p. 231). More probably it is a symbol of abundant life (Jn. 10:10).

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WATER OF JEALOUSY — a phrase employed (not, however, in Scripture) to denote the water used in the solemn ordeal prescribed by the law of Moses (Num. 5:11-31) in cases of 'jealousy.'

WATER OF PURIFICATION — used in cases of ceremonial cleansings at the consecration of the Levites (Num. 8:7). It signified, figuratively, that purifying of the heart which must characterize the servants of God.

WATER OF SEPARATION — used along with the ashes of a red heifer for the ceremonial cleansing of persons defiled by contact with a dead body (Num. 19). 1

WATER (Heb. *mayim*, Gk. *hydōr*). In a part of the world where water is in short supply, it naturally features significantly in the lives of the people of the Bible. Nothing is more serious to them than absence of water (1 Ki. 17:1ff.; Je. 14:3; Joel 1:20; Hg. 1:11), and conversely rainfall is a sign of God's favour and goodness. An equally serious menace to life is water that has been polluted or rendered undrinkable. This was one of the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 7:17ff.). The Israelites found the water at Marah bitter (Ex. 15:23), and the well at Jericho was unpleasant in Elisha's day (2 Ki. 2:19-22).

It was common practice in time of warfare for an invading army to cut on the water-supply of beleaguered cities, as did Jehoshaphat with the wells of Moab (2 Ki. 3:19, 25), and Holofernes at Bethulia (Judith 7:7ff.). Hezekiah averted this danger by the construction of the tunnel which exists to this day in Jerusalem, running from the Virgin's fountain (Gihon), outside the city walls of his day, to the Pool of *Siloam (2 Ch. 32:30). Under conditions when water had to be rationed (La. 5:4; Ezk. 4:11, 16), the phrase 'water of affliction' could fittingly be used (Is. 30:20), but the context usually suggests punishment (1 Ki. 22:27; 2 Ch. 18:26).

Frequently water is symbolical of God's blessing and of spiritual refreshment, as in Ps. 23:2; Is. 32:2; 35:6-7; 41:18, *etc.*, and the longing for it indicates spiritual need (Pss. 42:1; 63:1; Am. 8:11). In Ezekiel's vision of God's house (47:1-11) the waters that poured out from under the threshold represented the unrestricted flow of Yahweh's blessings upon his people (*cf.* Zc. 14:8). Jeremiah describes Yahweh as 'the fountain of living waters' (2:13; 17:13), a phrase that is echoed in Jn. 7:38 of the Holy Spirit. In the NT water is connected with eternal life as the supreme blessing that God gives (Jn. 4:14; Rev. 7:17; 21:6; 22:1, 17), but in Eph. 5:26; Heb.

10:22, the predominant idea is that of baptismal cleansing for forgiveness of sins.

The idea of cleansing comes next to that of refreshment. In the ceremonial system washing was a prominent feature. Priests were washed at their consecration (Ex. 29:4); Levites too were sprinkled with water (Nu. 8:7). Special ablutions were demanded of the chief priest on the Day of Atonement (Lv. 16:4, 24, 26), of the priest in the 'water of separation' ritual (Nu. 19:1-10), and of all men for the removal of ceremonial defilement (Lv. 11:40; 15:5ff.; 17:15; 22:6; Dt. 23:11). The laver before the *tabernacle was a constant reminder of the need for cleansing in the approach to God (Ex. 30:18-21). A developed form of this ritual ablution was practised by the Qumran sect and by a variety of Jewish baptist sects which flourished before and after the turn of the Christian era. These provide the background to John's baptism of repentance and to the Christian *baptism of cleansing, initiation and incorporation into Christ.

A third aspect is that of danger and death. The story of the Flood, the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and the general fear of the sea and deep waters expressed by the psalmist (18:16; 32:6; 46:3; 69:1ff., *etc.*) indicate that water could in Yahweh's hands be an instrument of judgment, although at the same time there was the thought of salvation through danger for the faithful people of God (*cf.* Is. 43:2; 59:19). It is hard to say to what extent these ideas were moulded by the Canaanite myths of the contest of Baal with the tyrannical waters of the sea, recounted in the Ras Shamra texts. Scandinavian scholars and Hooke's 'Myth and Ritual' school saw in these OT references, especially in the Psalms, a clue to the existence in Israel of an annual kingly festival at which the victory of Yahweh, personified by the king, was re-enacted. That Heb. thought and poetry echoed the language of Near Eastern mythology is clear (*cf.* the references to Rahab, Leviathan, the dragon, *etc.*), but to hold that the Canaanite rituals themselves or the doctrinal beliefs underlying them were taken over by the religion of Israel goes beyond the evidence. The views of Gunkel, Mowinckel and others are well discussed by A. R. Johnson in the chapter on 'The Psalms' in *OTMS*, 1951.

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PART 2

A REVELATION OF...

THE 3 RIVERS OF GOD

THE KEY IMPORTANCE OF WATER

Each one who has ever been thirsty, and that surely includes us all, knows the vital function water plays in life. Next to air, of which we need a constant supply, water is the second essential of life. While we can live without food for a considerable time – and that would be a good thing for most of us – 3 days is generally regarded as the normal survival time without water. Doctors tell us we do not drink enough. Water cleanses our system and is even supposed to help prevent putting on weight. I obviously don't drink enough!

Spiritually too, water has been used by most religions as a symbol of purification, and ritual cleansing with water is a significant feature of Old Covenant (Testament) law. For example, in the consecration of the priests:

⁵ The LORD said to Moses: ⁶ “Take the Levites from among the other Israelites and make them ceremonially clean. ⁷ To purify them, do this: Sprinkle the water of cleansing on them; then have them shave their whole bodies and wash their clothes, and so purify themselves. (Numbers 8:5-7)³

Finally, too much water is a sign of danger, death and judgement. As is too much of many things! In the Bible two events stand out in this regard. Noah's flood and the parting of the Red Sea by God for Moses. First, Noah

¹⁷ For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. ¹⁸ The waters rose and

³ Unless otherwise stated all scriptures are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. ¹⁹ They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. ²⁰ The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet. ²¹ Every living thing that moved on the earth perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. ²² Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. ²³ Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.

²⁴ The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

(Genesis 7:17-24)

And then Moses:

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, ²² and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

²³ The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. ²⁴ During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. ²⁵ He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt." ²⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." ²⁷ Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. ²⁸ The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. (Exodus

14:21-28)

So it is not surprising that God uses rivers, streams of water, in order to illustrate spiritual truth. Hence, the revelation of The Three Rivers of God.

THE RIVER OF PROMISE

(In the Garden of Eden)

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—⁵ and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground,⁶ but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground—⁷ the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

⁸ Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. (Genesis 2:4b-13)

In the original Garden of Eden it did not rain. For many of us, in winter, that would seem like paradise too!

⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—⁵ and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground,⁶ but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground—⁷ the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:4-7)

The first mention of rain is at the time of the Flood:

⁴ Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.”(Genesis 7:4)

So the Garden of Eden was watered by a single mighty river, which split into four, the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates, as it left the Garden.

THE PROMISE OF SUSTENANCE

The river enabled life to exist in the garden, for without it mankind, the animals and the plants would all have quickly perished. The river sustained life. It gave promise. It was the source of life and sustenance. Without it, there was no hope.

Both the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil were watered by it.

*⁸ Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters.
(Genesis 2:8-10)*

So the river first represented God’s promise of sustenance.

THE PROMISE OF PERFECTION

Secondly, the river represented purity. It was the source of life for the Tree of Life itself. The Tree of life represents perfection, sinlessness, and full relationship with the Father. It was the promise of an eternal presence in the Garden of Eden. A place of perfection, one where mankind could work without ageing or a sore back, without weeds, and without conflict amongst his own kind or with the animal kingdom. Far from today’s reality!

¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. (Genesis 2:19-20)

It was a vegetarian society, where fruit provided all the dietary requirements of man and beast.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; (Genesis 2:15-16)

Therefore, one of the biggest areas of conflict both we and the animals face today, the need to kill to survive, was not an issue in the Garden. It was a society in which all could get on with each other, the perfect place, provided God's rules were obeyed.

THE PROMISE OF JUDGEMENT

Of course, we all know that Adam and family did not remain in paradise. For the river not only fed the Tree of Life, but also watered the forbidden fruit found on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." (Genesis 2:17)

Our God did not create people to be robots, to love Him unconditionally, because they were programmed that way. A 'love relationship' with a computer is not fulfilling long term, although my wife Kathy, thinks I find it so sometimes! But somehow, even computers never quite seem to do as they are told either! At other times, they do exactly what they are told, which isn't what we want. Never satisfied!

However, Adam and Eve, while created perfect, had not had their perfection, their desire to remain in fellowship with God, tested and proven. For that to be proven, they had to have a choice, to follow God

unconditionally, or to or to place themselves first, before God. This choice is called freewill. And it was this freewill Both Adam and Eve exercised, when eating the forbidden fruit.

To be a real choice, there needed to be an alternative, evil spiritual presence to counterbalance God's perfection. God provided this in the form of the serpent, satan or the devil, as we now know him. While both God and satan are now invisible, that was not so in the perfect world of the Garden, where, through perfection, spiritual beings were visible.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:8)

God would manifest Himself in a form they could see, for their spiritual eyes were open at the time. And because they were perfect, they could live in God's presence.

So the serpent offered them his alternative. We don't know whether they succumbed to his advances the first or a subsequent time.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?' ² The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴ 'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" ⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. (Genesis 3:1-7)

Of course, they did die spiritually, that day. And instead of living forever, they eventually died physically too. Adam aged 930. We don't know Eve's lifespan. But we do know and experience the effects of their actions.

¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." ¹⁷ To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."(Genesis 3:16-19)

The choice was made, the one we all experience the consequences of today.

THE RIVER OF PROMISE FULFILLED

Most Christians do not understand that God's promises are always conditional. We like to think about the positives, but very rarely do we pay much attention to the requirements necessary to obtain the particular promise. We see God simply as being the God of love, which is understandable, as we live in the Age of Grace. However He has a balanced personality. So Adam and Eve could remain in paradise, only as long as they resisted the temptation of the forbidden fruit.

So both positive and negative promises flowed down the River of Promise. It sustained the Garden, the waters symbolizing purity and perfection but the waters too, also contained a promise of the consequences of disobedience to the will of God.

Adam and Eve failed the test. And so we today need to take a swim in the second river, the River of Progress as we move to restore the relationship with God lost in ancient times.

THE RIVER OF PROGRESS

(Flowing from Ezekiel's Temple)

In July of 586BC the Babylonians breached the walls of Jerusalem and on 14 August, the original Temple built by King Solomon, but which had suffered the ravages of time, was finally destroyed. The Jews had lost their holiest site, the focus of their faith, their monarchy and their city. The dream was ended. The hopes of the nation evaporated as they were deported to far-flung parts of the Babylonian Empire.

Over the 7 years before the exile, Ezekiel prophesied the impending doom of Jerusalem. And he was amongst the group exiled to Babylon. We know he was very happily married while in Jerusalem, but his beloved wife died, a prophetic symbol of what would happen to Jerusalem. In Babylon Ezekiel had a house and led a relatively free life, along with the other exiles.

While in Babylon the Lord confirmed his prophetic ministry, giving him seven judgements upon the surrounding nations along with a word of hope and encouragement for his own people. God revealed that the Jews would be restored with a glorious future as the redeemed and perfected kingdom of God in the world.

As the heart of Jewish spiritual life was the Temple, God gave the people hope by implanting the vision through Ezekiel of an amazing new temple in which the Jews could again worship their God.

Of course, this temple has not yet been built, and there is a lot of speculation as to whether or when it will be, but that is outside the scope of this study. Here we are looking at the River of God that flowed from it, and seeing its spiritual application for us in living our lives in Jesus today.

Ezekiel's description of the river follows.

The man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. ² He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was flowing from the south side.

³ As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. ⁴ He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. ⁵ He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross. ⁶ He asked me, ‘Son of man, do you see this?’ Then he led me back to the bank of the river. ⁷ When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. ⁸ He said to me, ‘This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Sea. When it empties into the Sea, the water there becomes fresh. ⁹ Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. ¹⁰ Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Great Sea. ¹¹ But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. ¹² Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.’”
(Ezekiel 47:1-13)

Amazingly, the river is a description of the pattern of the life we are to lead in order to be restored to the relationship with God that Adam and Eve enjoyed beside the river that watered the Garden of Eden.

Unsurprisingly, it also parallels the other great guide to godly living, the Tabernacle of Moses, the world’s first church and the general foundation

upon which the pattern of all the temples is based. I love it when God confirms His Word and principles!

SUMMARY OF INTERPRETATIONS OF THE RIVER

There are a number of interpretations, all containing spiritual truths, relating to the river and Ezekiel's progress through it. Some of these are:

1. Comparison of Fresh and Salt Water:

a. Fresh water speaks of life and salvation.

⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. (Psalms 46:4)

¹³ Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' (John 4:13-14)

b. Salt water is talking of unbelievers:

²⁰ But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. (Isaiah 57:20)

² Daniel said: 'In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. ³ Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. (Daniel 7:2-3)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. (Revelation 21:1)

2. Symbolism 1

ANKLES:	Walking
KNEES:	Standing
LOINS:	Sitting

*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.
(Psalms 1:1)*

3. Symbolism 2

ANKLES: God's acceptance as children
KNEES: Prayer
LOINS: Greater intimacy

4. Symbolism 3

ANKLES: Wet
KNEES: Wetter
LOINS Saturated
SWIMMING: Rooted Forever

5. Symbolic of Order of Worship

ANKLES: Thanksgiving

*⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name. (Psalms 100:4)*

KNEES: Praise

*⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a
people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him
who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
(1 Peter 2:9)*

LOINS: Adoration – Worship

*⁵ Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool;
he is holy. (Psalm 99:5)*

SWIMMING: Communion with Him, Lost in His Presence

³ And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— ⁴ was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. (2 Corinthians 12:1-4)

All these, in different ways, express different understandings that illustrate the unfathomable ‘depth’ (excuse the pun!) of God’s Word.

COMPARISON WITH THE TABERNACLE OF MOSES

The Lord showed me first that this river represents our ‘work in progress’, a not an altogether startling revelation, as is set out above.

However, the startling thing about it, as I discovered once I started writing, was that the river from Ezekiel’s temple parallels the pattern of Moses’ Tabernacle in terms of setting out the principles of Christian discipleship. That is, the way God desires His followers to live.

1. River in the Temple - The Outer Court

The river had its source in the Temple at the Altar:

The man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. ² He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was flowing from the south side. (Ezekiel 47:1-2)

The Outer Court of Moses’ Tabernacle surrounded the Tent in which the presence of the Lord dwelled. It contained two items of furniture.

a. THE BRAZEN ALTAR

They built the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood, three cubits high; it was square, five cubits long and five cubits wide. ² They made a horn at each of the four corners, so that the horns and the

altar were of one piece, and they overlaid the altar with bronze. ³ They made all its utensils of bronze—its pots, shovels, sprinkling bowls, meat forks and firepans. ⁴ They made a grating for the altar, a bronze network, to be under its ledge, halfway up the altar.
(Exodus 38:1-4)

Upon this Altar, the Priests made sacrifices.

b. THE WASHING BASIN

⁸ They made the bronze basin and its bronze stand from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.
(Exodus 38:8)

The Priests purified themselves by washing in the Basin before making the sacrifices.

It is obvious that the Altar's in both the Tabernacle and Temple represent the first step in our journey with Jesus. For we need to come to the Altar, which in the New Covenant (Testament) is the Cross of Jesus, as the first step in our Christian walk. There is no other way. The source of the river is the Altar in the Temple and the Altar is the first thing we come to when entering the Tabernacle gate. In spite of what many would like to believe, there is no way into Heaven other than through the cross of Jesus. Good works don't work!

The New Bible Dictionary quoted in the Introduction tells us that water signifies cleansing and relates water to the Laver (Washing Basin)

“The laver before the *tabernacle was a constant reminder of the need for cleansing in the approach to God (Ex. 30:18-21). A developed form of this ritual ablution was practised by the Qumran sect and by a variety of Jewish baptist sects which flourished before and after the turn of the Christian era. These provide the background to John's baptism of repentance and to the Christian *baptism of cleansing, initiation and incorporation into Christ.”²

Hence the water coming from the Altar parallels the cleansing of the Washing Basin in the Tabernacle. When we repent before the cross of Jesus we are called to baptism, as a public symbol of the commitment we have made and to wash ourselves clean with the Word of God, the Bible, by living the life it proclaims.

2. Ankles, Knees and Thighs – The Holy Place

Now we move out of the Temple and see how the river flows down its course.

³ As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. ⁴ He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. (Ezekiel 47:3-4)

Commentators commonly consider the river to represent Holy Spirit anointing. Likewise the same interpretation is put on entering the Holy Place in the Tabernacle.

In the river there are three steps to the process, getting wet to the ankles, knees and thighs. In the Tabernacle, there are 3 items of furniture in the Holy Place. The Table of Showbread, the Golden Candlestick, and the Altar of Incense are all found there.

Whether it is the river or the tent, we have to make the conscious decision to enter. We can stay on the bank or in the Outer Court, but if we do, we will miss out on so much of what God has for us. This entry point in both cases is known today under the New Covenant as the baptism (infilling) of the Holy Spirit. Many Christians are prepared to enter the Temple or Tabernacle to experience the Altar, and maybe the Washing Basin, but then decide to stay on the banks of the river, or remain in the Outer Court of the Tabernacle. To be believers, maybe even baptized believers, but stand on the riverbank, refusing to move on into the realms of the Spirit.

They are content with the baptism of repentance through Jesus, as revealed by John the Baptist.

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ² and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

³ So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?”

“John’s baptism,” they replied.

⁴ Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. (Acts 19:1-6)

While standing on the bank, the river looks cold (certainly is in New Zealand in the natural!) and the people entering appear to be out of control as the water gets deeper and deeper around them.

“I don’t want to drown! I must retain control of my life!”

The important thing to remember though is we retain freewill through the whole process. Nobody is going to force us to move deeper than we desire. But the Holy Spirit is waiting patiently to reveal greater truth to us as we enter, then go deeper into the river.

¹² “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. (John 16:12-15)

Yes, as we are prepared to trust Jesus more, moving deeper and deeper into the river, so we experience more of Him with the help of our teacher, friend and guide, the Holy Spirit.

3. Swimming – The Holy of Holies

The ultimate goal for each disciple is to swim in the river, without effort, resting under God's control, having fully submitted our life to Him.

⁵ He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross. (Ezekiel 47:5)

Once we are unable to cross the river in our own strength we have to rely upon Him! That is where our God desires us to be. Fully submitted, yes, 100% obedient to Him. But again, it is a matter of conscious choice, not compulsion. This is not something to be afraid of, but rather, to welcome.

This is a picture of the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle of Moses where the very presence of God dwelled between the wings of the two cherubim, above the Atonement Cover on the Ark of the Covenant.

Under the Old Covenant (Testament) the High priest was the only one who could approach God, and then only on the annual Day of Atonement, after first making atonement for his own sins by sacrificing a bull on the Brazen Altar.

On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work—whether native-born or an alien living among you — ³⁰ because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins. ³¹ It is a sabbath of rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance. ³² The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments ³³ and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, for the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and for the priests and all the people of the community.

³⁴ *“This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.” (Leviticus 16:29b-34)*

When Jesus died in a the ultimate selfless act of final atonement, the curtain to the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem was supernaturally torn in two from the top, to give us access into the very presence of God.

³⁷ *With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.* ³⁸ *The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.* ³⁹ *And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, ‘Surely this man was the Son of God!’ (Mark 15:37-39)*

In doing so, He opened the way for each one of us to enter the Most Holy Place.

¹¹ *When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.* ¹² *He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.* ¹³ *The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.* ¹⁴ *How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!* ¹⁵ *For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:11-15)*

But our obedience to His desires is required.

⁸ *Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered* ⁹ *and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:8)*

Yes, we need to swim out of our depth, to trust in Him 100%, to do His will, not our own, and in doing so enter His rest.

⁹ *There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;* ¹⁰ *for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.* ¹¹ *Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:9-11)*

This is confirmed in Paul's Letter to the Romans.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ² *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2)*

The flow of the river, the will of the Father, is to become our will.

¹⁷ *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.* ¹⁸ *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.* ¹⁹ *Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,* ²⁰ *always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:17-20)*

As shown us by the Holy Spirit.

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.* ²⁴ *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.* ²⁵ *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)*

And reflected in the life of Jesus.

⁶ *Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. (1 John 2:6)*

This is the call of the river. Let's enter and go over our heads, shall we?

RIVER OF PROVEN PERFECTION

(River of Life flowing from God's Throne)

Here the angel is giving us a glimpse of the restoration of that which was lost in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned. The river once again is feeding the garden, this time, of proven perfection.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

⁶ The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place." (Revelation 22:1-6)

We are able to pluck the fruit from the tree of eternal life as we swim in the river. We are washed clean. The curse has been removed. We will reflect the image of Jesus. Sin (darkness) will be gone and we will serve Jesus and reign with Him forever! What an amazing promise for each one prepared to go 'over their head', and give their all to God!

In our humanity this is hard to believe, so the angel confirmed 'it' (genderless) had been specifically sent by the Lord to convey this message through John the apostle whom Jesus loved, to us. Incredible, isn't it!

Even more incredible is that it was God's plan from the very beginning! King David celebrated it in a Psalm;

⁵ Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens,

your faithfulness to the skies.
⁶ *Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your justice like the great deep.
O LORD, you preserve both man and beast.*
⁷ *How priceless is your unfailing love!
Both high and low among men
find refuge in the shadow of your wings.*
⁸ *They feast on the abundance of your house;
you give them drink from your river of delights.*
⁹ *For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light. (Psalms 36:5-9)*

as did the Sons of Korah;

⁴ *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.*
⁵ *God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day. (Psalm 46:4-5)*

before being prophesied through Isaiah 2,700 years ago!

¹⁹ *The sun will no more be your light by day,
nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you,
for the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.*
²⁰ *Your sun will never set again,
and your moon will wane no more;
the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your days of sorrow will end.*
²¹ *Then will all your people be righteous
and they will possess the land forever.
They are the shoot I have planted,
the work of my hands,
for the display of my splendor.*
²² *The least of you will become a thousand,
the smallest a mighty nation.*

*I am the LORD;
in its time I will do this swiftly.” (Isaiah 60:19-22)*

and again, by the prophet, Zechariah:

A day of the LORD is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. ²I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. ³Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. ⁴On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. ⁵You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. ⁶On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. ⁷It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime—a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light. ⁸On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter.

⁹The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. (Zechariah 14:1-8)

Jesus too, confirmed He was the ‘living water’.

*⁷When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, **‘Will you give me a drink?’** ⁸(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)*

*⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’ (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, **‘If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.’** ¹¹‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹²Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and*

herds?” ¹³ Jesus answered, *‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’* ¹⁵ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.’
(John 4:7-15)

And that He is able to grant permission to eat from the tree of life.

⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. (Revelation 2:7)

WHO MAY ENTER IN?

The pure in heart.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:8)

But not the impure.

²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. (Revelation 21:22-27)

It is reserved for those who overcome.

⁶ He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. (Revelation 21:6-7)

And who are they?

² *This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. ³ This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, ⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. ⁶ This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. (1 John 5:2-7)*

finally confirmed again.

⁵ *He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’*

⁶ *He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son (Revelation 21:5-7)*

THE ULTIMATE REWARD

²¹ *To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²² He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*
(Revelation 3:21)

THE INVITATION

¹⁷ *The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. (Revelation 22:17)*

NOTE: For further insight see: A REVELATION OF... THE RIVER (END TIME)
CHURCH