

**The  
River  
Of  
Life**

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This short booklet is taken from a sermon preached on rivers in the Holy Bible. Believers in Christ cannot underestimate the significance of rivers in the Holy Bible. The Holy Scripture actually begins with rivers in the first book and ends with a river in the last chapter of the last book of the Holy Bible. As water is a source of life on earth, Bible students seeking to unravel mysteries in the Holy Bible cannot overlook the life giving property in rivers. Surely it will be a profitable undertaking to seek out winding rivers through the pages of the Holy Scriptures. With the flow of the redemptive streams of rivers from the first failure of man in the Garden of Eden to the final complete restoration in the eternal paradise of the New Jerusalem, rivers do tell their stories and testify of God's great mercy towards unworthy undeserving sinful men. So rivers undoubtedly have a rather important role in the redemption story of man in the Holy Bible. They bear testimony to the history of men and flow with the gracious act of God's mercy towards fallen men. May Bible believers learn from even nature like rivers to appreciate God's plan for mankind in the ultimate eventual eternal state of all those who love the Lord and accept His plan for them through the Son of the living God.

**And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. (Genesis 2:10-14)**

The Holy Bible has many interesting topics. One such topic is rivers in the Bible. It is quite fascinating if we really study about rivers in the Bible. We do not study rivers in the geographical point of view. Neither are we interested in the chemical properties of waters in rivers on earth. We study how rivers in the Bible are associated with life and also death. The very first mention of river in the Bible is connected with Eden. We know that Eden was the paradise here on earth before the fall. This was the kingdom of heaven on earth where a river is part of its setting.

This setup with a river flowing out of Eden was before the fall of man and before sin entered into the world. The tree of life was in the Garden and a river flows out from this paradise Eden to water the garden. From Eden, we are told this river flows out and parted to become four heads. Perhaps, these four heads have some connections with the presentation of the gospel by four different writers.

However, these four rivers are literal rivers with names given by God. The more commonly known river today is the river Euphrates passing through Iraq where the former Babylon lies. The first river Pison is mentioned only one time in the Bible and it is hard to trace exactly where it flows. However, Havilah was the land where this river compassed was a land of gold and precious stones. There was an account recorded where king Saul was mentioned to have connection with this land Havilah in 1 Samuel 15:7: **And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt.** It will not be unreasonable to deduce that this river flows through Israel. If you are a treasure hunter, it may be of interest to you as we are told in verse 12: **And the gold of that land is good.** The second river is Gihon. Gihon was the place where Solomon was anointed King. Moreover, Hezekiah was also mentioned to have stopped the water of Gihon in times of war in 2 Chronicles 32:30: **This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight**

**down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.** The third river is **Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria.** Daniel was there to receive revelation from the Lord in book of Daniel chapter 10.

These are rivers mentioned with specific names before the flood. After the flood, these names of places and rivers are still there but the actual locations could have changed as the land became divided into continents according to Genesis 10:25: **And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided; and his brother's name was Joktan.**

So the river of life first began in Eden before the flood and it became the river of sorrows for the children of Israel many years later after the flood. This was when an organized genocidal program was first decreed where all the male children of Israel were to be cast into the river as recorded in Exodus 1:22: **And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.** This river in Egypt no doubt bore testimony of those cruel years where the water from this sweeping river swallowed up many male babies of the children of Israel and brought them to their watery graves.

Ironically, it was also in this river that Moses was fetched to become the daughter of Pharaoh and the deliverer of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Moses was a type of Christ who was fetched from the river. The Lord Jesus Christ was also baptized in water when he came out from the river to fulfill all righteousness before His earthly ministry.

The more notable river in the Old Testament is the river Jordan. Joshua led the children of Israel across this river to their promised land. This began their conquest of the land of Canaan. The river Jordan could not stand in the way of the new inhabitants destined to inherit the promises given to their fathers. The crossing of this river Jordan was just as miraculous and spectacular as Moses led the children of Israel across the Red Sea some forty years back for this river dried up for the children of Israel to march across on dry ground. This river became the historical divide of the nation of Israel into the East and West.

The river Jordan ends in the Dead Sea which is 420m below sea level and its shores are the lowest point on the surface of the earth on dry land. The Dead Sea is 330m deep. So the river Jordan signifies death where its water flow ends in a pit below sea level.

When Joshua led the children of Israel across Jordan, it was a picture of crossing over to newness of life, in fact life abundant in the promised land, as compared with the deadness of the wilderness journey where all those rebels died. It was like a resurrection of sort to the nation of Israel.

This river Jordan is significant in the fact that two famous prophets crossed over it together. Before Elijah was taken up into heaven, he had to cross Jordan and Elisha followed him to receive a double portion of his spirit. Crossing Jordan is a picture of death and the resurrection following. The old timers used to sing:

**I am just a poor wayfaring stranger,  
While traveling through this world of woe.  
Yet there's no sickness, toil nor danger  
In that bright world to which I go.  
I'm going there to see my Father;  
I'm going there no more to roam.  
I'm only going over Jordan,  
I'm only going over home.**

This river Jordan signifies the departure from one world to another; from the old world of sin to the new world of life. Just like a great divide between the old world of wondering to the new world of life in the promised land, this river Jordan is a divide between life and death, between a world on

earth to the new world in heaven. Fanny Crosby also wrote about parting at the river.

**Oh, the dear ones in glory, how they beckon me to come,  
And our parting at the river I recall,  
To the sweet vales of Eden they will sing my welcome home;  
But I long to meet my Saviour first of all.**

So Elisha and Elijah parted company at the river; one went up to heaven and the other left to labour on for Jehovah God on earth. Another significant incident of the river Jordan was the healing of Naaman the leper. While this river represents death, it is also in death that there is life. Naaman was given a new lease of life when he went down into Jordan. His leprous flesh died when he went into the water and on the seventh time when he came up, he was given a new coat of flesh of life.

There is certainly life after death in the resurrection for believers in Christ. By the time of the New Testament, we find John the Baptist baptizing converts in the river Jordan. He was preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sin. Those who went down into this river in baptism was a picture of death and burial and when they came out, it was a picture of their resurrection in the newness of life. So we have this picture of water baptism for those of us who profess to believe the gospel of Christ's death, burial and resurrection and we will also one day be resurrected to be with Christ.

As we learn that rivers originate from Eden and so rivers are for nourishment and sustenance of life. That is why we have the picture of a blessed man as written by the psalmist. **And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. (Psalm 1:3)**

This life-giving river is not only to sustain life; it is also to prosper those who live according to the laws of the Lord. The Lord has a penchant in watching over his creatures both great and small. The Lord is that husbandman who tended to His garden. **Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. (Psalm 65:9)** Rivers of water are at the disposal of the Lord God to nourish all that pleases Him. Hence, how can a man not prosper if he stays by the rivers of God's blessing and bountiful care?

Jeremiah also recorded the blessing of a blessed man like the psalmist. **Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. (Jeremiah 17:7&8)** Fruitfulness and prosperity shall follow all those who live by the rivers of God's provision and care. The life sustaining nature of God's river of life no doubt is the desire of all who seek to prosper and come under the blessings from above. As such, fruitfulness will be the unceasing result of all who hope and trust in the Lord.

How wonderful to be a blessed man in the Lord. Do you desire to be a blessed man? Do you understand what blessing it would be to be a blessed man? The psalmist gave another picture of the blessed man. **The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him. (Psalm 92:12-15)** There is no denying of the fruit bearing nature of a blessed man watered by the rivers of life. Wherever the river of life flows fruits will be the natural results of its life giving property.

If you wish to be a blessed man, then live a righteous life and let your testimony be blameless and be a blessing to all those around you. The true nature of the blessing of a blessed man is beyond the realm of imagination of the fallen mind of sinful man. In fact Israel is supposed to be this blessed nation here on earth, prospering and producing fruits. Unfortunately they turned away from the Lord and drink from the foul waters of sin and rebellion: **For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. (Jeremiah 2:13)** Who would not know that broken cisterns cannot hold water? How can there be life without water let alone fruitfulness? How foolish to forsake the fountain of living waters from the river of life! This was Israel's tragic history.

Nevertheless, Balaam also actually saw the final state of the redeemed nation of Israel. **How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. (Numbers 24:5&6)** This should be the portion of Israel. One day when this nation is converted unto the Lord, the whole earth will be full of the blessing of the Lord: **For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:14)**

It is no doubt very nice to live beside beautiful waterways. Years ago the government promised more good years for all and gracious living in Punggol. It did not materialize. Now they are reviving their plans to build private and public housings along both sides of some man-made rivers in Punggol. It would be wonderful for the residents of Punggol if everything is developed according to plans. It should be very nice and refreshing to live near some rivers.

There is also a river behind where I live which is more like a mini wildlife park. But I was told some residents whose apartments are facing this river have been moving out as they could not stand the smell from the stench of this river from time to time.

Unfortunately, living in this sin cursed world, our rivers are commonly polluted by sin and greed. Some rivers are so literally polluted and poisoned that we cannot even drink from them. So our government tries to give us new water. I do not think it is very appetizing though. Drinking recycled purified sewage water is here to stay when there are no other better options available. But the Lord does promise His healing of the rivers. One such event that will take place in the future during the Kingdom Age is recorded in Ezekiel 47.

**Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. (Ezekiel 47:1-9)**

This picture of the river of life reminiscent that of the river that proceeds from Eden in the past. Except this time, this river originates from the house of God which is a literal Temple here on earth during the Kingdom Age. In Eden, there was no Temple on earth but in the coming Kingdom, there will be a Temple. Notice the many trees mentioned in verse

7 on both sides of the riverbanks? The picture as described by the psalmist has become a reality during those days. These beautiful trees that line both sides of the river are certainly a sight to behold. What a joy it would be to live to see and enjoy the life giving nature of this river of life during those days.

How wonderful to live in that land that is fairer than day! Longevity and prosperity will be the mainstay for the inhabitants on earth during that time. Men will be living under a perfect divine government here on earth when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back with His saints to rule and reign for 1000 years. Of course, after the devastation we read about in the book of Revelation during the time of Jacob's trouble just prior to this blessed time of the Kingdom, the land on earth is indeed in need of divine healing. This river that proceeds from the Temple has the healing properties mentioned in verses 8 and 9.

**And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from En-ge-di even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. But the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine. Thus saith the Lord GOD; This shall be the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph shall have two portions. And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: concerning the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers: and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance. (Ezekiel 47:9-14)**

Not only the river is to heal the land, the leaves from these trees by the river are also meant for medicine to heal the sons of man. You will also find fishermen fishing along this restored river of life. If you like fishing, this

will no doubt be a wonderful place to fish. Verse 13 tells us the double portions of land grant promised to the tribes of Joseph.

If you read the last chapter of Ezekiel you will learn that the twelve tribes of Israel will receive their inheritance layer by layer from the top in Damascus all the way to the bottom ending at the border of Egypt. Judah will remain in the middle encompassing the Millennium Temple and the Holy City in Jerusalem. This time the division of the land is no longer based on casting of lots for the Lord determined their land boundaries by divine allocation.

The prophet Joel also saw what it would be in the Day of the Lord in the Kingdom Age. **And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim. (Joel 3:18)** If only someone could draw a true picture of this vision for believers to truly appreciate what the Lord will do for Israel in the latter day. Perhaps we should all get home sick when we read these great and precious promises in the Bible.

Eternal life in Christ has already begun here on earth for those of us who are saved. We have a foretaste of the greater things to come as we read the Bible through the lens of faith. What we read here is not the final ultimate blessing yet. It is just our appetizer to wet our appetite. Let us fast forward a bit and take a peek at eternity after the 1000 years Kingdom Age and see what our gracious God has prepared for them that love Him.

**And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. (Revelation 21:22) And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:1&2)**

We are now told of a pure river of life as clear as crystal proceeding from the throne of God. John tells us that he saw no Temple there in eternity just like there was no Temple in the Garden in the beginning. This time, the river proceeds from God's throne instead. We must not confuse this river with the river that flows from the Millennium Temple that Ezekiel saw.

This river is infinitely better than the first river that proceeds from Eden and the restored river of life that flows from the Millennium Temple. This river will run through the street of that celestial city of the redeemed of all ages. The tree of life first mentioned in the Garden Eden that disappeared has now made an entrance in that eternal world. This time, the tree of life is not just one tree that was found in the Garden of Eden. There in eternity, on both sides of the river will be the tree of life. The tree of life that was once denied to Adam and Eve after the fall is now freely available to those who are saved for all ages.

Will you be there in that Holy City where the streets are paved with gold? Over here people fight over small pieces of gold. Over there in that eternal world, we walk literally over streets paved with gold. How often do we get excited after reading the promises of God? The trouble is that we are often so bogged down by the cares of this life. How easily we get distracted and we no longer keep our focus on our Lord, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

So meanwhile we hold to the promise from our Lord Jesus Christ: **He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (John 7:38)** Do you have these rivers of living water flowing in you? If not, you are not saved. Or are your rivers all dried up because of sin and rebellion and there is no more joy in you? Have you become the proverbial broken cistern that can hold no water having forsaken the fountains of living waters? The Lord Jesus Christ is truly the only fountain of living water.

For now, we are content to have this miniature river, figuratively speaking, running in our belly. This internal spiritual river that flows within us satisfies us and this river is Christ in us. We are told this river will be able to quench all our thirst like the Lord told the woman at the well. **Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:13&14)**

No water on earth can satisfy the thirst of fallen men. Only the water given by the Lord can permanently satisfy the thirst of a thirsty soul. All the rivers in this world have been fouled by sin. Only this internal river of life in a believer in Christ is a foretaste of everlasting life. This invitation to drink from this eternal life giving water is given by the Lord while He was on earth. **In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. (John 7:37)**

Have you accepted the invitation to drink from the Lord? Have you tasted of this life-giving water from the Lord? Are you satisfied after having drunk of this water from the Lord? Do you know the Lord suffer thirst for us so that we will never suffer thirst again? **After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. (John 19:28)** The Lord while crucified on the cross uttered these words just before He cried out, "It is finished" and died on the cross for the sin of the whole world. Those who have tasted of this life-giving water can really testify of its efficacy like Frances Havergal wrote:

**Like a river glorious Is God's perfect peace,  
Over all victorious In its bright increase;  
Perfect, yet it floweth, Fuller everyday,  
Perfect, yet it groweth Deeper all the way**

**Stay Upon Jehovah, Hearts are fully blest;  
Finding as He promised, Perfect peace and rest.**

The first river from Eden, will eventually be replaced with the pure crystal flowing river from the throne of God in eternity. What a joy it would be to be there to partake of all the blessings in that eternal world of bliss and peace!

Are you happy and rejoicing in the Lord everyday? What are all your cares and burdens that beset you so much that you cannot rejoice in the salvation of our Lord? Lay your burden at the foot of Mount Calvary and rejoice once again in what our Lord has done for all of us.

The psalmist indeed saw what was coming: **There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. (Psalm 46:4)**

Do you long to be there? Can you visualize what the psalmist saw? If only we can catch a glimpse of that vision of the river flowing from the throne of the Lamb, whatever we have to suffer in this life is altogether nothing compare with the blessing revealed to us. The refreshing stream from the river of life during the Kingdom Age and in eternity is indeed something the saints can all look forward to living in this world polluted by sin and poisoned by greed where our rivers are so fouled that men often fall sick drinking from them. One day, the rivers on earth will all be healed and all the inhabitants on earth will live under the blessing from heaven. One day, all the rivers here will be a permanent refreshing joy to all man on earth.

Indeed the blessing and the glory in that eternal world of the redeemed of the Lord is beyond what our finite fallen mind can comprehend. May the Lord open our eyes and see beyond the things under this present sun. May the Lord fill our heart with the joy of the Lord everyday knowing our eternal home is full of joy unspeakable and full of glory. Will you be one of those inhabitants there? If not, here is an invitation for you from the Lord.

**And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely**

**I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. (Revelation 22:17-21)**

**If you have been blessed with the reading of this book and you wish to contact the author, you may write to him at [charles@kiv-asia.com](mailto:charles@kiv-asia.com).**