

## **The River of God by Dutch Sheets**

### **Chapter 1 - Experiencing the River**

Dutch Sheets Vision - See pages 23 - 29

he found himself in God's river - frolicking with Jesus

it was purifying him of uncleanness

he could breathe under the water - "it was indeed the river of life" –

Rev. 22:1

waist-deep water - as opposed to progressively deeper water (Ezekiel 47:2-5)

Jesus response - it was for "cleansing, refreshing and renewal"

experience of water geyser - tiny village of thatched huts - Chernobyl

Point: "This book and my vision are about much more than a river, however. They are about a Person. The River flows from God. It is His life flowing forth." (p. 29)

To be in the river is to be in God.

To drink from the river is to drink from God.

To release the river is to release God.

We have no need for more Martha's who let service get in the way of relationship.

We want no more Jonah's who have service, but no relationship.

We must guard against the deception of the Ephesians who let service take the place of relationship.

We dare not make the mistake of Saul who mistook religious activity and sacrifice for relationship.

Point: "All these men and women experienced the river, but allowed it to become polluted by misplaced priorities through the deception of the enemy."

Go to Jesus and drink - not to a meeting, a revival or a minister - but to Him.

## Chapter 2 - The Cross: Where the River Begins

God speaks of rivers: (see p. 34)

water - well, fountain, stream, river and rain

peaceful water, rivers of delight, well of fresh water, his Word as water.

The river of God in Scripture represents His life and power. At times the water flows from Christ; at other times the flow is attributed to the Holy Spirit. It is safe to say Christ is the source of the water of life, and the Holy Spirit causes it to flow, or distributes it..... the river represents spirit life and power - God's life.

Water flows from Christ and was released at the Cross. He is the source.

Rev. 22:1,2 - And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb....."

"From his side flowed blood and water" (John 19:34)

David poured his drink offering from the well in Bethlehem onto the ground (1 Chron. 11:15) God's well of salvation - born in Bethlehem

## Chapter 3 - The Harvest River

John 1:18 - Jesus came to "explain" God. Jesus "exegeted" God for us.

Characteristic by characteristic, heartbeat by heartbeat, miracle by miracle, teaching by teaching, Christ revealed God.

John 7:37-39 - Jesus showed us the face of God. "If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water'".

Six important truths:

1. The cross became to us the fountain of life
2. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
3. Seasons of great spiritual harvest
4. We, the Body of Christ, becoming the temple of the Holy Spirit.
5. The Holy Spirit flowing from us like a river
6. Our need to continually drink of him --- to experience continual flow.

## The Feast of the Tabernacles

Israel's three major feasts picture:

the Cross

the outpouring of the Holy Spirit

great seasons of spiritual harvest

Joel 2:23, 24 - a time when the God is going to combine these seasons into a period of great spiritual harvest

Amos 9:13 - "the plowman will overtake the reaper" -

I believe we are coming into this double harvest

## The River Flows from His Temple, and we are His Temple

Solomon's Temple - "was filled with the glory of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:2, 11)

Haggai's prophecy - greater glory coming to the Temple (Hag. 2:1)

these events picture the same thing - the river of God's Spirit coming to take up His abode in us as we drink of the fountain of life. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 3:16)

There is no difference between the river of life one day flowing out of the Lamb, bringing healing and wholeness to the whole earth, and the rivers of living water that should now be flowing from the Church.

We are the womb of God from which the river is supposed to flow. We are the "birthers" of the Spirit of God on the earth.

See Isaiah 37:3 - "Children have come to birth, and there was no strength to deliver".

Matt. 9:37 - "The harvest is plenteous, but the laborers (have been) few.

Isaiah 66:9 - "Shall I bring to the point of birth, and not give delivery, says the Lord".

We will give birth to this harvest - this feast of ingathering.

## Preparing for the Harvest

Why is the present renewal (in some places, revival) being referred to as "the river"?

....The river of life is about to flow from the Church in unprecedented ways; the harvest coming is indeed a great harvest. The feast of ingathering is taking place.

If we are wise, we will prepare.

We must drink continuously. Keep coming to me and keep drinking!

Ephes. 5:18 - "be filled with the Spirit" ( be continually filled)

John 1:16 - "for of his fullness we have all received". - stay filled

Summary: keep coming - keep drinking - keep being filled

## **Chapter 4 - Everything Will Live Where the River Goes**

Ezekiel 47:1-12 - the most complete scriptural passage of the river of God

links the river of God to the harvest - and makes clear our participation

Ezekiel's points:

1. the river initiates from the Temple
2. it initiates from the Lamb on the throne, Jesus Christ.
3. it also flows from us.

We are collaborators with Christ

1 Cor. 3:16 - "we are temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells within"

We are God's plan - we are his releasers

\*We are not just the source - but the Source is in us, and He allows us the privilege of being his co-laborers.

John 4:14 - the well that Christ places in us - is a fountain which either springs up or flows - we are not simply a storage tank or a cistern for the living water - but the very source of life is in us - "springing up to eternal life"

Ezekiel 47:3-5 - mentions five water levels of increasing depth: trickle, ankles, knees, waist, total submersion

Stages of river could representing stages of spiritual maturity  
 babes in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1)  
 children (1 John 2:18)  
 older children (John 13:33)  
 fully matured son (2 Cor. 6:18)  
 father (1 John 2:13)

Stages of river could represent different stages of revival (or  
 outpouring of H. Spirit)

Point: Many people find it too difficult to stand in the river of God,  
 even where the water comes up only to their ankles - knocked off  
 their feet by the blessings or gifts released -  
 Without character and wisdom sufficient to sustain them, they fall  
 into extremes, presumption, pride or other sins.

Direction of Ezekiel's river - great significance (47:8)  
 Abdah - the desert wilderness - describes the lifeless condition of  
 the world  
 Sea - the Dead Sea - symbolizes "dead sea" of fallen humankind -  
 nothing lives there - lowest elevation point of any land surface -  
 symbolism unmistakable

Point: These living waters are released from the temple of God and  
 through us are to flow into the dead sea of humanity bringing life -  
 "the waters of the sea become fresh".

God is taking a world that Satan turned into a wilderness - sterile,  
 lifeless, empty - and is causing His river to flow to it. Birth pangs  
 are everywhere!

The source of the life of God on the earth is through the Body of  
 Christ.

If it flows to the nations, it will be through the Church.  
 If it flows to our nation, it will be from the Church.  
 If it flows to our neighbours, our city, it will flow from us,  
 the temple.

If the river is to flow from us to the world around us in the way the  
 Lord wants it to, we must awaken to our destiny. It was said of  
 King David that he "served the purpose of God in his own  
 generation (Acts. 13:36)

Now is the time for vision! The state of affairs cries out for some passion.

### **Chapter 5 - Heaping or Level?**

These concepts are all involved in the release of the river:  
repentance, cleansing, shaking, disciple, purging and process

The process of revival begins with the process of repentance - personal and corporate. The corporate cleansing is often necessary to adjust some of the problems created by a prior season of revival. See pages 90 - 97 for discussion on past revivals and false revivals.

True Revival has these characteristics:

1. renewal of the church - conversion of sinners
2. church growth and social reform
3. the presence of God and social upheaval

Therefore, America is not experiencing true revival - the flow of the river is not very deep - but we can experience it if we are obedient to the Holy Spirit.

### **Chapter 6 - I Wish I Knew What I Was Looking For**

Process of repentance involves:  
revelation, repentance, turning in a new direction

Point: Man needs an unveiling (revelation) to bring him a new understanding from God's perspective (repentance) so that he can turn and go God's way (turning).

Human-centred repentance makes humankind and its pain or loss the measuring point; true repentance is God-centred.

Eg. David. He found true repentance when he saw his condition from God's perspective and confessed his sin.

Anytime He adjusts us to his way of thinking through a revelation of the Holy Spirit, which should happen regularly, this is repentance. We can then turn and go His way. My entire lifestyle should be one of repentance as I continually learn His ways. This

is why we can live a life of repentance without begin plagued by condemnation or a guilt complex.

## **Chapter 7 - Not Really Lost and Chapter 8 - Pouring a Slab and Throwing a Party**

Unfortunately the charismatic movement, as positive as it was, gave us a gift mentality: Run on the strength of your gift. This led to a performance mentality.

Vision must never be our starting place. Vision born of God's heart must be where we begin.

Five Failures of the charismatic and Jesus movements of the 60s and 70s

.. of which I am a product of these.

### 1. Haste Without Heart

Scripture Reference - 2 Sam. 18:19-33 - Ahimaaz didn't identify with the king's heart.

God's pattern of service is always in this order:

1. He matures us into His character.
2. He entrusts us with His heart.
3. He directs us with His vision.
4. He enables us with His anointing and provision.
5. He releases us to minister our gifts to accomplish and fulfil.

Starting with the heart of God concerning a particular need - and allowing that to become the motivating reason for ministry - releases the river in a pure form, keeping it free of the debris of pride and selfish motivation. Our failure to do this has resulted in a generation of believers who believer gifting qualifies a person for ministry.

### 2. Speed Without Seasoned Skill

Scripture Reference: 2 Samuel 2:18-23 -  
this weakness speaks of our maturity levels:

training, preparation, wisdom, and understanding

In running the spiritual race of life, zeal alone is not enough. Zeal often generates, but seldom sustains. A great vision, talent, gifts, abilities, speed - none are sufficient for producing the kind of fruit God wants.

The Need for Maturity -

Because of emphasis on speed without seasoned skill, we have been building without character, without much depth, with a lot of debt and without sufficient foundations to support our structures. Let us press on to maturity as we prepare for this great river outpouring.

### 3. Sensationalism Without Substance

Scripture Reference: Rev. 3:1,2 - Church at Sardis - "You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Wake up and strengthen the things that remain".

This problem speaks of our methods. It represents building, not on the anointing of the Holy Spirit, but on formulas, hype, sensationalism, big names, miracles, the gifts of the spirit, innovation - anything that breeds excitement.

### 4. Rejoicing Without Reflecting; Merriment Without Mourning

Scripture Reference: Ezra 3:10 - 13 - rebuilding of the temple - some shouted with joy, others wept.

This has to do with our perspective - We need a balanced approach to life and ministry. We need tears and laughter, fun and work, joy and mourning

too little rejoicing - dull - results in oppression, legalism, destruction of zeal and vision and the sapping of strength and vigor

too much rejoicing - lose sight of the essentials i.e. the cause and condition of the world

Point: "Consider your ways"! (Hag. 1:4-6)

It is time to stop doing our own thing, building our own kingdoms and seeking our own gain. It is time to build the Lord's house. It IS the opportune time. My prayer is that the age of apathy towards God's agenda comes to a screeching halt - that God pulls the legs out from under our easy chairs.

We must be able to enjoy the goodness of our God and the joy of our salvation without it anesthetizing us to the pain around us and the fact that billions still haven't heard the good news. Hebrews 12:2 - Jesus... for the JOY set before Him, ENDURED the cross, despising the SHAME

Merriment without mourning created a lot of trouble in the charismatic movement. We didn't know how to mourn, to weep.

The verdict is in. We produced growth, not disciples. We prospered greatly, and focused it all inward.

## 5. Elishas Without Elijahs

Elishas without Elijahs - sons without fathers - ministers without mentors - speaks of the need we all have for spiritual fathers in our lives (relation aspect ...not the particular gender).

### The Fruits of Spirit Fatherhood

spiritual fathers teach and produce in us:

humility, dependence on each other, patience, the principles of God's word, accountability, the prevention of the next generation being spiritual illegitimate, they remove the curse from the land (Mal. 4:6), they prevent haste without heart, speed without seasoned skill, sensationalism without substance and rejoicing without reflecting thereby preserving the flow of the river.

Summary: The process of repentance has begun the process of revival. The river can and will flow in increasingly deeper levels if we cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

## Chapter 9 - Epoch-Making Revival

God's cleansing is to prepare us for greater fruitfulness - examples on pages 153-4

Point: ...the river (water) is consistently spoke of in Scripture in the context of cleansing. the cleansing then paves the way for the flow of the river to bless us.

Then - "seize the moment" - N.T. says "redeem the time" (Eph. 5:15, Co. 4:5 KJV)

Opportunities must be bought. They cost something - time, energy, abilities, money, our very lives. If we don't spend what is necessary and buy them, opportunities can also be lost.

Allow God to birth vision in you now - vision that will motivate you to faith and action. Vision is a life-change - a rearrange. Its hunger can be insatiable, a motivating force creating energy and energizing creativity.

Vision moves us from mere mental assent to physical exertion. It separates the hearer from the doer, the convert from the disciple

and mediocrity from excellence. It is also what separates a ripe harvest from a reaped harvest (see Matt. 9:37).

## **Chapter 10 - Divine Disorder - The Paradox of Revival**

Receiving the flow of the river is not optional if we want the fresh life of the Spirit. "Everything will live where the river goes" (Ezek. 47:9)

The literal wineskins in Christ's day, as metaphors for our spiritual lives, needed to be renewed. The wineskins were soaked in water for several days, which for us symbolizes the Word of God (Ephesians 5:26). Then they were rubbed with oil, which of course symbolizes the Holy Spirit. If we will allow Him, the Lord will soften us with the Word and His Spirit until we can again receive new wine.

"Many a blessing has been lost by Christians not believing it to be a blessing, because it did not come in the particular shape which they had conceived to be proper and right". Quoted from *Catch the Fire* by Guy Chevreau.

Many of us want signs and wonders, but not wonders which make us wonder. We want controllable wonders. Logical wonders. Wonders which fit the shape of our skin.

We want a supernatural God, but we don't want Him to do anything "unnatural". We want the supernatural naturally. We want wonders that don't violate our intellect. So we bring an omniscient, omnipotent God down to our natural level.

The river of God is often paradox, contrary to acceptable opinion. It doesn't usually flow in denominational and/or traditional channels.

Scripture Reference: Acts 10 - God brought a paradox to Peter.

Four reasons why people reject a new flow of the river of God when it comes accompanied by unusual manifestations.

1. a logical, reasoning motivation
2. a fear of losing control
3. preconceived ideas and methods
4. overreacting to extremes

## **Chapter 11 - Are We as Balanced as We Think**

### Seasons of Imbalanced Emphasis

...the Holy Spirit restores most truths to the Church with extreme emphasis. While He never comes with imbalanced truth or doctrine, He will restore truths with an imbalanced emphasis.

Balance is rooted in a personal relationship with Christ. The more radically committed we are to Him, the more balanced we are.

Love Him passionately and allow Him to determine what is right for you. ...We are not to seek manifestations, nor are we to fear or avoid them.

Manifestations grab our attention, but they are not the truths we build on. They arrest the attention of the church and the world, so God can then do other things. The "other things" are the goal -- saving people, transforming lives and give hope to the hopeless....

## **Chapter 12 - Devotion Finds a Way**

What is that causes the river to dry up on an individual basis?

1. Success can be the breeding ground for pride, burnout, complacency etc.
2. Failure to drink from the well of salvation within us.

Antidote:

Place greater importance on spending time with the Lord than to ministering for Him.

Prioritizing relationship over service, worship overwork.

"Court" God -

John Stott stated, "Our greatest claim to nobility is our created capacity to know God, to be in personal relationship with him, to love him and to worship him. Indeed, we are most truly human when we are on our knees before our Creator".

word "acknowledge" implies intimacy - even in a physical way

Proverbs 3:6 - In all your ways, court God; seek intimacy with Him.