

JOHN WHO LIKED THE TASTE OF LIVING WATER
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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 (Rev. 22:17).

The river Jordan was always a lifeline for the people of Palestine. Throughout the long history of the Hebrew people water was a priceless commodity. Long ago herdsman fought for the possession of wells, and during recent hostilities when Syria planned to divert its waters, the Israeli Air Force promptly bombed the factories where the necessary machinery was being prepared. The nation could not exist without water, which is mainly derived from rainfall and resultant wells, springs, and underground supplies. The city of Jericho is supplied by the spring of Elisha, but in other areas drought is a constant menace. The modern state of Israel has performed miracles in transforming deserts into gardens, but even its ingenuity has been challenged by the ever-increasing need for moisture. Today drinking water is being made by desalination plants, but in other parts of the country this is not possible. The production of many kinds of fruit depends upon irrigation and is one of the nation's most important exports.

It was to be expected that ancient prophets would take advantage of the national need and in their writings use the country's water as an illustration of spiritual truth. Furthermore, the fact that water came from rain suggested that only Jehovah could supply what Israel needed. David had military might and wealth. Solomon, for a time at least, had wisdom, but without water the royal household would have perished. When the prayer of Elijah closed the heavens for a period of three and a half years, the entire nation faced insurmountable obstacles. It was only the reappearance of Elijah that saved the people from disaster. The apostle John was aware of the situation, and it is extremely interesting to discover that he repeatedly referred to man's need for living water.

Salvation Offered ... How Simple

And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely
(Rev. 22:17).

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When John wrote the book of Revelation, he was careful to quote the words of the Savior. "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches" (Rev. 22:16). The messengers of heaven were instructed to urge all nations to come to Christ for spiritual refreshment. Yet each person was requested to take the water of life freely. There was no need to seek supplies. They had already been provided. There were no restrictions. Every person from every land was welcome to share in the provision. Whosoever included everybody. Yet certain things were evident. First, people had to recognize their need—they were thirsty. Secondly, they were required to respond and come. Thirdly, they had to take what was being offered.

The Savior emphasized similar truths when He spoke about the marriage of the king's son. He described a man who was found without a wedding garment. Monarchs prepared such apparel so that the celebrations would be exceptionally beautiful. The guests who had been brought from the streets could not be embarrassed, for their ragged clothing was hidden beneath the king's garment. Unfortunately, one man was conspicuous among the guests, for his appearance contrasted with that of the other

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people. Since the gifts were offered at the door, it was evident this man was satisfied with what he had. He was expelled from the banquet and lived to regret his folly (see Matt. 22:8-14).

Water can be expensive in drought-ravaged countries. It is never free. During one of my visits to Egypt I flew from Cairo to Luxor, and as the plane followed the course of the Nile, adjacent areas seemed to be as a green canal going through a desert. The Egyptian government, with the aid of foreign investments, built the Aswan Dam so that water could be stored and later released to irrigate the lowlands. Yet even the impoverished farmers, in one way or another, are required to pay for this service. When the Savior announced that people could take of the water of life freely. He was endorsing what Paul said to the Christians in Rome. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things" (Rom. 8:32).

Satisfaction Overwhelming. .. How Sufficient

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever shall drink of the

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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).

The woman who met the Lord at Sychar's well was fascinated, surprised, and confused. To meet anyone at midday was completely unexpected. For at that hour citizens were preparing for their siesta. That a Jew should ask a Samaritan for anything was, to say the least, amazing. Ordinary men would prefer to remain thirsty than to fraternize with despised outsiders. This Man was an enigma: He spoke of drawing water from a well when He had no container nor rope necessary to complete the task. He spoke of religion as though He was a qualified rabbi who disdained the criticism of other Jews. The Stranger was aware of the temples on Mount Gerazim and in Jerusalem, and yet in some mysterious manner He seemed unconcerned. He said that God should be worshiped in spirit and truth and suggested that human temples superseded all others. This man was surely a prophet, for He knew the secrets of her life. His claim to be able to supply living water was intriguing. It has often been said this woman came with her water pot to draw water from the well, but after speaking with Christ, she ran away with the well!

The conversation bequeathed to later generations spiritual treasure. It is refreshing to discover water in a wilderness, but even more wonderful to discover an active spring which is a guarantee of a continuing supply. The Savior did not differentiate between the well and the spring, for they belonged to each other. If the one ceased to exist, the well would become empty, and people would only be helped for a limited time. The provision of God never runs dry, but rubbish can hinder the flow of water.

It is probably one of the greatest tragedies within the modern church that revival has ceased to exist. The rubbish of this world has choked and filled the well. Isaac recognized a similar fact when he ordered his servants to reopen the well which had been dug by his father, Abraham (see Gen. 26:18-19). Christians need continuing supplies of spiritual refreshment. Men dying of thirst can hardly find comfort in memories of water enjoyed many years earlier. God desires His children to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is a glorious experience to discover living water, but unless the spring fills the soul, the purposes of the Savior are

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thwarted. God gives what is necessary, but men are required to draw from His wells. The prophet Isaiah said, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isa. 12:3).

Service Outreaching... How Splendid

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. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given: because that Jesus was not yet glorified) (John 7:37-39).

It is not necessary to pump water from a well when springs are continually active. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is the natural sequence of being regenerated. There is never need to persuade dedicated Christians to serve the Savior. Automatically, instinctively, living energy flows from their souls to enrich impoverished people.

The tragedy within the modern church is that Christians do not enjoy the benefit of a full and overflowing soul. True Christians radiate benedictions even when they are unaware of the fact.

The great evangelist D. L. Moody often explained how his life was revolutionized. He said he had done his best to extend the kingdom of Christ but knew something was lacking in his ministry. Then came the experience when his entire being was flooded with a new sense of the Divine Presence. He preached old sermons, and miracles began to happen. He said, "One day in New York; what a day! I cannot describe it; I seldom talk about it. It is almost too sacred to name. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me. I had such an experience of love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were no different. I did not present any new truth. Yet hundreds were converted. I would not be back where I was before that blessed experience."

The outpouring of the power of the Holy Spirit was made possible by the coronation of the Lord, and that fact has remained unchanged. It is only when the Savior becomes the supreme Lord of the Christian's life that God can open the floodgates of

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heaven to release the power that turns ordinary people into mighty servants of the Most High. Education is of immense value to a minister, but even academic honors cannot be an effective substitute for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The Savior was correct when He said, "But ye shall receive power. after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem. and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The followers of Christ should be aware of three facts. (1) Unless a man is born of the Spirit, he remains dead. (2) If a man is not filled with the Spirit, he will always be defeated. (3) If living water does not flow from a man's soul, he will always be disappointing and useless in extending the kingdom of Christ.

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