

Ten Radio Home Service – Sunday 23rd August 2020

The Four Rivers of Eden

Reading: Genesis 2:4-14

When we first moved to Wivey three years ago, having studied Geography at University, I knew that living in the West Country was going to be wetter than other parts of England that we had lived in previously. It seemed to rain constantly for the first 6 months that we were here and the rain of this past week has made me think of many of the analogies to water and rivers that we read of in Scripture.

I wonder how many of you have ever considered the meanings of the names of the four rivers that flowed out of Eden that we heard about in our reading today?

In the beginning there was one river that flowed through Eden. In Eden, that river was nameless but as the river flowed out and became four each were given a name:

The Pishon, The Gihon, The Tigris or Hiddekel, The Euphrates

Do these rivers flowing out of God's garden of Eden have a message for us today?

The name of the first river was the Pishon which means 'increase' or 'full-flowing'.

God is not a God of scarcity in other words insufficiency or lack, BUT a God of abundance.

Paul prayed in Ephesians 3 v 19 that "*believers would be filled with all the fullness of God.*"

This first river flowing out of the garden was full-flowing and God wants us to experience the full-flow of His Presence and power in our lives. He does not want us to be drained, depleted or deficient.

We are also told that The Pishon river flowed through a land full of gold. We know that it is not usual for gold to be on the surface. It is only as the river cut its way through the land that the gold would be revealed. So, it is with us. The Lord has promised His abundant provision for us, but often it is only as we walk through the valleys that we discover it.

The second river flowing out of Eden was the Gihon, meaning 'bursting forth' or 'gushing'.

If there had only been one river coming out of the garden (full-flowing) we might think that all God was concerned about was us experiencing fullness on a personal level. However, if we move beyond 'fulness' and are 'bursting forth', then the nature and character of God coming out of us is bound to influence and impact others.

John 4 v 14 in the Message version says: *“Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst—not ever. The water I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life.”*

In other words, water from a spring that flows under pressure without pumping.

It seems that the message of Gihon (bursting forth or gushing) is that God does not want us merely living lives of survival or success, but to move beyond that and live lives of significance – not just focusing on what we need or want for ourselves, but on what we can contribute to others.

The Lord designed His body, the Church, to thrive on giving and receiving. In doing so, we build each other up and we also enter into a deeper fellowship with Him.

The third river, the Tigris or Hiddekel, means rapid or darting and is actually a word picture of a swift arrow in flight.

It is not a picture of an arrow in a quiver or lying on the ground but one that is flying through the ground aimed at a target.

There is a goal in sight.

We, likewise, are designed to have goals, aims and objectives and like a swift arrow in flight we are to move toward fulfilling these goals with God’s help. We are not to be aimless and ambiguous in our lives.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 v 26 said that *“he ran with purpose in every step.”*

The Holy Spirit wants to help us be people who are deliberate and intentional in our lives, in our ministries and in our praying.

The New Testament is clear that we are to be specific when we pray.

Mark 11 v 24 says *“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours”.*

Once a man who was praying very fervently at a prayer meeting was asked what he was praying about. He looked up, paused a second, and then said, “Nothing in particular”. My question to you is: “If you are praying for “nothing in particular” and God answers your prayer, what exactly is it that you end up with?”

The fourth river was the Euphrates which means fruitfulness.

So, if we have the first three rivers flowing in our lives –

Pishon - fullness Gihon - overflow Tigris - purpose

Then the result will be fruitfulness.

Jesus tells us that He is the vine and we are the branches.

The sap that flows from the vine into every branch can be seen as the Holy Spirit. As long as we remain in Christ, this life-giving sap flows through us, and fruit will come.

While we are on earth, we have a purpose: fruitfulness; making disciples.

However, we are not left to do this alone. The river is in us – The Holy Spirit.

Our fruitfulness does not depend on plans, skills, or talents, but on relationship. A relationship with Christ.

To remain in Christ, we must walk in the Spirit.

As we read God's Word and pray, the Spirit will prompt us into action.

Jesus urges us to let His words remain in us, and to put them into practice. As we do this, we can ask whatever we wish, and believe it will be done.

This is the way to fruitfulness that will bring God glory.

In John Chapter 7 verse 38 Jesus promises that: *"Whoever believes in me..... rivers of living water will flow from within them"*.

Not just a trickle of life, but **rivers of life**, flowing from God through us by the work of the Holy Spirit.

May you be richly blessed as you let the rivers flow.