

## **The Kingdom of God and Eternal Life (11)**

### **Rivers of Living Water**

#### **Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan**

We have studied eternal life in the kingdom of God, yet we can also have a foretaste of eternal life in the present age, which is a life of righteousness, peace, joy, freedom, and knowing the Only True God Yahweh and the Lord Jesus Christ. Today we are going to study another aspect of the foretaste of eternal life.

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 4:14** but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

(Joh 4:14 NAS)

Here the Lord Jesus says he is going to give us water to drink; whoever drinks of this water shall never thirst, because this water shall become in that person a well of water springing up to eternal life.

#### **The water that the Lord Jesus gives to us is the Holy Spirit of God**

How is it possible for water to become a well of water springing up to eternal life? What kind of water is that? In order to understand this, we have to look at another Bible passage:

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 7:37 - 39** Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup> He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" <sup>39</sup> But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (Joh 7:37-39 NAS)

The feast that is mentioned in v.37 is the feast of Tabernacle. The Lord Jesus was calling people who were thirsty to come to him, and he will give them water to drink; he who believes in the Lord will have rivers of living water flowing from his inner being. In verse 39 the Lord says that this river of living water refers to the Spirit of God. But at that moment the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

#### **The Lord's death on the cross is his glorification**

Why does this statement suddenly go from the giving of the Spirit to the glorification of the Lord Jesus? What does John mean when he says that "Jesus was not yet glorified"?

<sup>NAS</sup> **John 12:23 – 24** And Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (Joh 12:23-24 NAS)

Here in verse 23 the Lord Jesus said that the time has come for the Son of man, that is himself, to be glorified, then immediately in verse 24 he said, “unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” Here the Lord is comparing his glorification with the death of a grain of wheat; a grain of wheat has to die before it can bear much fruit; if a grain of wheat doesn’t die, it can’t bear fruit. Similarly the Lord will die on the cross, but his death will bring forth countless fruits from generation to generation. That’s why his death is his glorification.

When John 7:39 says, “the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified,” it means after the Lord Jesus dies on the cross, only then afterwards will the Spirit of God be given to the disciples.

### **The giving of the Holy Spirit**

Exactly when was the Holy Spirit given to the disciples?

<sup>NAS</sup> **Acts 1:3-5** To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over *a period of forty days*, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup> And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” *He said*, “you heard of from Me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (Acts 1:3-5 NAS)

“His suffering” in verse 3 refers to the Lord’s crucifixion on the cross. Here it says that after the Lord Jesus was resurrected from death, he appeared to the disciples over a period of forty days. During that time he taught them about the kingdom of God, and he told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to stay there to wait for the giving of the Holy Spirit, because not many days from then, they will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, which means that the Holy Spirit will be poured down on them. (I also experienced the Holy Spirit being poured down on me when I started sharing my experience)

<sup>NIV</sup> **Acts 2:1 – 4** When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where

they were sitting.<sup>3</sup> They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.<sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Act 2:1 – 4 NIV)

Pentecost is the festival on the fiftieth day after the Passover. On Pentecost the disciples were together in one place, when suddenly a sound of the blowing of a violent wind filled the whole house, and tongues of fire came down to rest on each of them. Then they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.

### **We can share the living water with those who are in need**

Why did the Lord Jesus use the image of the river of flowing water to describe the Holy Spirit? Why didn't he simply say the Holy Spirit?

Because, first of all, the giving of the Holy Spirit was very powerful and distinct from our other experiences in our daily lives. Secondly the Lord wants to tell us that the Holy Spirit is like a river of flowing water, not only so that we ourselves will no longer thirst and despair, but that we can also share it with those who are in need. Remember whatever Yahweh God gives to us, it is not just for our own enjoyment or benefit, but also so that we can use it to serve other people.

### **Power and love are like a river of living water**

Let me tell you a true story of a Christian sister in Saigon. Forty-nine years ago (in the year 1975) the North Vietnamese army defeated the South Vietnamese army and took over South Vietnam. Many foreigners, as well as many South Vietnamese government officials and a lot of people all left South Vietnam before the North Vietnamese army came into Saigon. As a result, four Chinese churches in Saigon didn't have pastors or leaders, because they had all left. In one Chinese church there was a young sister whose name is Silver, she had been doing many things and serving diligently in different areas of the church. The brothers and sisters in the church asked her to lead the church even though she was not a pastor or a deaconess, because there were no pastors, no deacons, no elders, all of them had left the country. Out of love for the brothers and sisters, she accepted the task. She had to shoulder all the work by herself, it was a very heavy task. When the people in the other three churches heard that someone was leading this church, they also came to join this church. It ended up that this one sister had to take care of those people who came to join her church. Usually there would be one or two pastors plus some elders to take care of one church, but here is one sister who was taking care of all the people from four churches, this is beyond human comprehension. This one sister had been doing this task for many years, it seems she had unlimited strength and love. This is an example of a river of living water.

One day this sister felt sick and went to see a doctor. The doctor carried out an examination on her and found out that she had cancer. She asked God to heal her sickness. She prayed that she won't be afraid of death, but she was also concerned that if she died, there would be no one to take care of the brothers and sisters in the church. Then God told her to eat a fruit called durian, it was not a medicine, but that's what God told her to eat. So she obeyed and ate a lot of durian. After some time, she felt better and she went to see the doctor again. The doctor checked on her and found that the cancer had disappeared! How wonderful and amazing! Glory to the only true God for His power and loving kindness!

I am not worthy to be compared with this faithful servant of God, but I have also experienced many times Yahweh God granting me power and wisdom to serve Him. From year 2001 to 2008 (seven and half years) Pastor Bentley and I were serving in Gospel Radio Broadcasting in Palau, a Pacific island nation. In Palau I took care of the Vietnamese program broadcast and English program broadcast. For the Vietnamese program I had to preach a Vietnamese sermon every day, that's a very heavy workload. As for the English program we used Pastor Eric's old sermons recorded on cassette tapes; but the sound quality of those old cassette tapes was very bad, it cannot be used for radio broadcast. I had to transfer those sermons from the cassette tapes to a computer in digital format, then I would use software to improve the sound quality, that's purely technical work. The workload was very heavy, and there were times when I felt I had no more strength and wisdom to continue, but I didn't give up, I simply ignored my feelings. I didn't think much about that, and I would put my head down and keep on working.

The grace of Yahweh God is amazing. Many times I thought I couldn't go on any more, but somehow I always had the extra strength to do more. It was just as what Yahweh God said to apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Because of the work that I had put in during those seven and half years, millions of Vietnamese in Vietnam could hear the Gospel, and many came to know Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time, Pastor Eric's English sermons had been broadcasted all the way to India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Bali, Myanmar, Thailand and Europe. These are my reward! My reward is that more and more people would be saved through the broadcasting of the gospel!

### **How does it benefit us when we provide water for people?**

After you hear these stories, do you feel encouraged and excited? Or maybe you think that, "Why do I have to work so hard to provide water for other people to drink? I only want to live a peaceful life on earth, and prepare myself for the eternal life in the kingdom of God!" But the teaching of the Lord Jesus is entirely different from our mentality:

<sup>NAU</sup> **Acts 20:35** “In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” (Act 20:35 NAU)

Here it says that we have to work hard to help the weak. The disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ are not only concerned for their own lives, but also to help the weak. Not only that, the Lord Jesus even said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Why is it more blessed to give than to receive?

Because Yahweh God will bless those who are willing to give to others! The more you give, the more Yahweh God will bless you. Here I am not talking about money, I am talking about spiritual things. When I was working hard to broadcast the gospel in Vietnamese and English, Yahweh God granted me the power and wisdom to fulfill my task, therefore I know that His grace and power is true. It is not a fairy tale, for Yahweh God is true! In the end I was the one who benefited the most! That sister in Vietnam wholeheartedly took care of the brothers and sisters in four churches, so Yahweh God took care of her. When she had cancer, a fatal disease, Yahweh God performed a miracle to remove the cancer!

That’s why it is more blessed to give than to receive, because when you give to others, Yahweh God will give back to you. When you experience the giving from God, you know that God is true. The giving that I am talking about involves spiritual things, not money. The more you give to others, the more God will give back to you, and the more you will know that God is true.

The most important thing in the Christian life is that we are certain that God is true. If you are not sure whether God is true or not, you won’t have peace in your heart, and you won’t obey His teaching totally. But on the contrary, if you know that God is true, you will have peace in your heart, and you can obey His teaching totally. Every day you live with God and do His work, you are co-working with Him to save people, you are living the eternal life in the present age! That’s why it is more blessed to give than to receive. The more you give, the more blessed you are. Again I am not talking about money, I am talking about spiritual things.

When we give to others, Yahweh God will give back to us. We give love to others, and Yahweh God will love us back. When that sister in Vietnam gave the teaching of God to more and more people, our Father in heaven also gave her more and more power. The more you give to others, the more our Father will give to you, so that we can continue to give. It is like a river of living water that will never run dry.

## Rivers of Living Water

<sup>NAU</sup> **2 Corinthians 9:8** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;

May God grant that all grace abound to you. Ultimately it is not for you to enjoy, but so that you can have the grace for every good deed.

### **Conclusion**

Today we studied the passage in John 4:14, “but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.” Eternal life in the present age is like a river of living water that will provide water for many people. This river of living water will never run dry, because the more you give to others, the more Yahweh God will give to you so that you can give to more and more people.