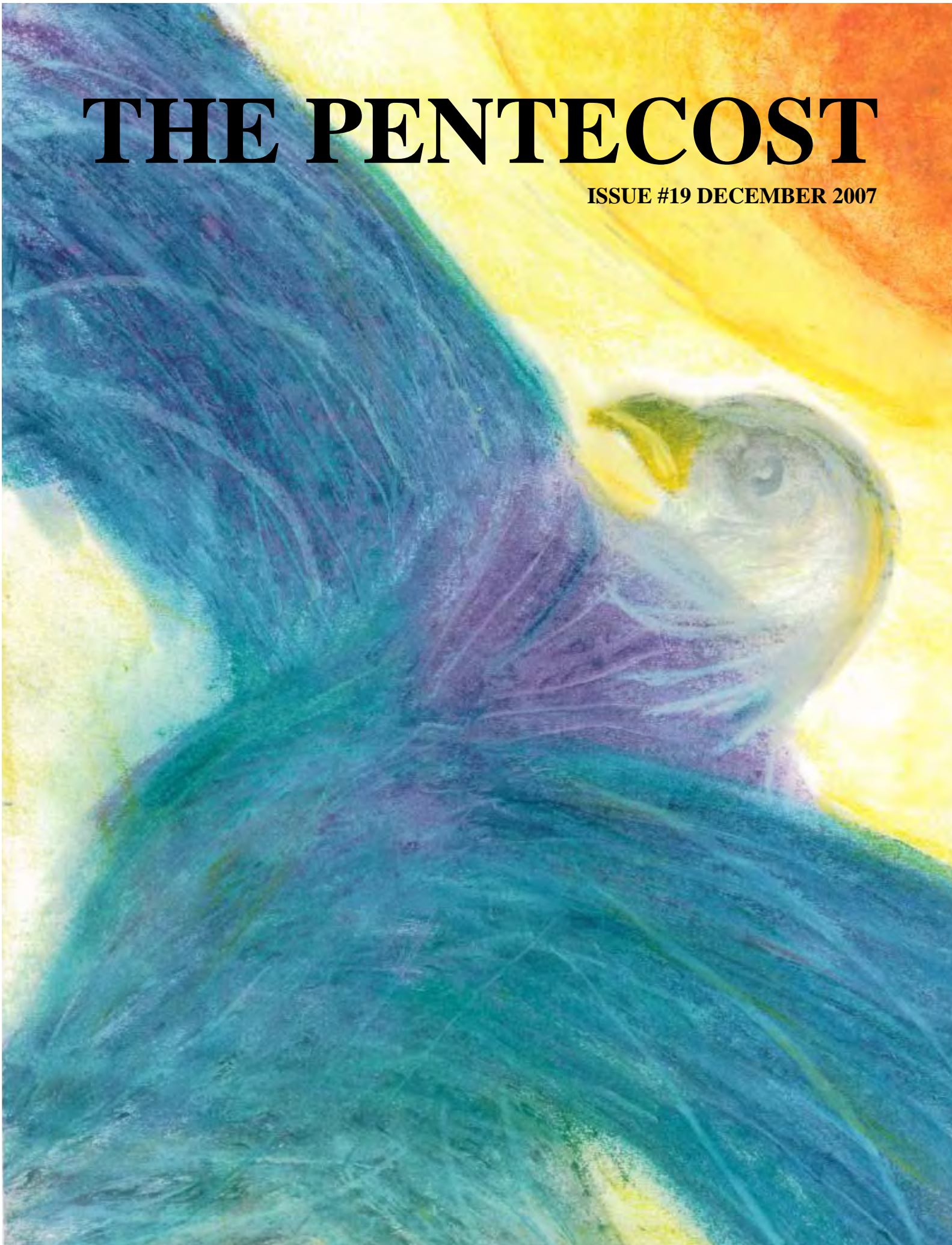


THE PENTECOST

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THE PENTECOST



THE PENTECOST ISSUE 19

Hello! It is December and there is nothing better than to warm up the season with the fires of revival. In this issue we resume our series on spiritual thirst and the rivers of living water. We will see more about revival from the Great Awakening and we will learn from the Old Testament post-captivity revival under Nehemiah. God bless you.

Shawn Stevens

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THIRSTING, COMING TO, DRINKING OF JESUS AND THE RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

- Part 3 -

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)

In previous issues we have looked at this verse and discussed thirsting for and coming to Jesus. The soul who does thirst for and comes to Jesus must then drink of Jesus. What does this mean? It means to partake of the Holy Spirit and be in fellowship with Jesus. It also means to be in a relationship with Jesus whereby we worship Him. When we are in that kind of relationship, there is a service to Him and a refreshing of our own spirit which is brought about by Him.

The Lord has purposed that his children drink from His river. He says in Isaiah 43:19-21:

*Behold, I will do a new thing,
Now it shall spring forth;
Shall you not know it?
I will even make a road in the wilderness
And rivers in the desert.
The beast of the field will honor Me,
The jackals and the ostriches,
Because I give waters in the wilderness
And rivers in the desert,
To give drink to My people, My chosen.
This people I have formed for Myself;
They shall declare My praise.*

God's river is in the desert, where it is needed most. It is there for His people to drink from. Drinking from this river has to do with relationship, being for Himself and fellowshiping with Him. The desert is dry ground and serves as a contrast to the life-giving river. God says further:

*For I will pour water on him who is thirsty,
And floods on the dry ground;
I will pour My Spirit on your descendants,
And My blessing on your offspring;*
(Isaiah 44:3)

The picture of God pouring out His water on dry ground, creating a river for the thirsty to drink from, is again a good image for us to have when we read the words of Jesus in John 7: 37-39. Let us read those words again:

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said,

out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)

Jesus is saying these words at the Feast of Tabernacles. Water is a great theme within the Feast Of Tabernacles. Priests would lead a procession carrying water from the pool of Siloam and walk around the alter seven times and then pour the water into the funnels of the alter, from where it would flow downward. The pouring of water symbolized the anticipation of a prosperous year of harvest brought about by a good rainfall. In fact, on each day of the Feast of Tabernacles there was a water ritual. Perhaps Jesus was watching a water ritual when He made His declaration about the rivers of living water which flow from the heart.¹

The "rivers of living water" that Jesus is talking about is a spiritual river. It is a metaphor for the Holy Spirit. The river of living waters rushes and flows and gives life to everything that is brought into its current. The Prophet Ezekiel was allowed to see a vision of the river of the Lord. He says in these words:

Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar. He brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gateway that faces east; and there was water, running out on the right side.

And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water came up to my ankles. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; the water came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; the water came up to my waist. Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed. He said to me, 'Son of man, have you seen this?' Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river.

When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other. Then he said to me: 'This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes. It shall be that fishermen will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be places for spreading their nets. Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceedingly many. But its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given over to salt. Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary.

¹ French L. Arrington & Roger Stronstad, ed. *Full Life Bible Commentary To The New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 45.

POST-CAPTIVITY REVIVAL IN THE DAYS OF NEHEMIAH

A revival can happen in any place, in any era and among any group of believers. Revivals often start with God moving on a man or woman, or on a small group of men or women, and then mushrooming from there into a great work. Such is the case for the post-captivity revival in the days of Nehemiah. This occurred around 446 B.C., at a time when the Persian Empire was strong and the Greek Empire was developing rapidly. The Jewish people had been taken into captivity in Babylon, where they had served for seventy years, but at this stage in history those Jews who were still there had quite a lot of freedom within the kingdom of Persia, Babylon's successor. Persia was strong enough that it did not consider the Jews within its borders to be a threat to them. King Cyrus even allowed and decreed (539 B.C.) for a number of Jews to return to the ruins of the city of Jerusalem and live there again. These ones made the trip under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua around 536 B.C. Meanwhile, back in Persia many Jews lived prosperously and at least one Jew even rose high within the king's court. This man was Nehemiah.

Nehemiah was the son of a man named Hachaliah. We read also that he was the king's cupbearer. Certain Jews came to him and spoke to him about the Jews living in the ruins of Jerusalem. Nehemiah was told how these ones in Jerusalem were a reproach. He was told how the walls were broken down and the city gates had been burned. When Nehemiah heard this he wept, mourned, fasted and prayed. His prayer was one of national repentance and pleading for God's mercy. He prayed:

...I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; but if you return to Me, and keep My

commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.' Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man....

(Nehemiah 1:5-11)

Nehemiah's prayer was one of repentance and mourning, but it was also one of holding God's promises before Him. Nehemiah was praying with faith and holding before the LORD His promise that if the people returned to Him, He would gather them again. This is what Nehemiah longed to see. Days of fasting, prayer, and mourning were not too great a sacrifice for him to make. Really, it was not a sacrifice as much as it was an expression of his heart and his faith.

Nehemiah's mourning caught the attention of the king and Nehemiah was asked why he was sad. He told the king his reason and the king told him to make a request of him. Nehemiah requested that the king send him to Judea to rebuild Jerusalem. The king granted this request and even supplied materials.

After Nehemiah had received permission, and materials, he set about his task. He went there and surveyed the scene. This was a great project and he could not do it alone. He shared his dream with the Jews who were there and requested their help. They were very willing and in no time the work, beginning with the restoration of the city walls, was underway.

Although the work of restoration was underway and the project moving forward, it was not without opposition. A Horonite named Sanballat, and certain others with him, mocked the workers and tried to discourage them. There was even fear that he would attack them. Jews worked zealously and watched over each other carefully during this time and it was not long before the walls were finished.

What was going on in the hearts of God's people throughout this time of reconstruction and restoration? Their faith in God was rising up stronger than before. They were sensing God's love for them and seeing the fulfillment of God's promise to restore the repentant. These were the ones who had not remained in Persia but had come, believing that God would restore their home to them again. They endured discomfort and scorn for

years while waiting for the fulfillment, for the breakthrough. Now God had restored a secure place for them. Thanksgiving was welling up within them and their hearts were fixed on God.

God had been moving among them, but He still had a deeper work to do in them. All of the people were gathered together in an open square and Ezra stood up and read to them the sacred Scriptures, the Book of the Law. Ezra blessed the Lord and the people shouted, "Amen." Then we read of how God began to move on the assembly. The people bowed their heads and their faces to the ground and began worshiping God. They had broken out into weeping after they had heard the Law read to them and now there was this mixture of weeping and worship. Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites delivered a gracious message to the people telling them not to mourn. They assured them that "...the joy of the LORD is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10). The Levites then told the people to be still. In the stillness God continued to move and we read that the people "...understood the words that were declared to them." (Nehemiah 8:12) and they went away to "...rejoice greatly..." (vs 12).

God was moving among them and this awakening could not be contained in a single meeting. We read that on the twenty-fourth day of the month, the children of Israel were gathered together. They had been fasting and humbling themselves by wearing sackcloth and by putting dust on their faces. God was moving among them and there was a spirit of repentance. The people stood up and began confessing their sins and the sins of their fathers. They also began reading from the Scriptures, the Book of the Law. The leaders just let this meeting run on and half the day was spent confessing sins, reading the Scriptures and worshiping God. Next, certain men stood on the stairs and began loudly crying out praises and thanksgiving to God. A long section of Nehemiah, Chapter 9, records their words. Their hearts kept burning. Next, the people made a covenant with the LORD and the covenant was sealed. The people separated themselves to the LORD and "these joined with their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes:" (Nehemiah 10:29).

This was the fruit of the revival in Nehemiah's day: attention given to God's word, confession of sin, repentance, mourning over sin, worship, thanksgiving,

rejoicing and committing to follow the ways of the LORD.

Friend, it sometimes seems like we have been living in Persia, so to speak. I don't mean literally. Through constant drifting and willful disobedience we have been taken away from God's city and placed into captivity. However, what once was shocking captivity or prison is to some beginning to feel like a more comfortable situation which they don't want to leave. It is still prison. The good news is that the door to leave is wide open. There is nothing holding us here. Jesus has made a way for us to go free. He has paid the price for our sins and is calling us out. There is nothing holding us inside of spiritual Persia, but leaving will take faith, faith like that of the Jews who left with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, faith to live for a time among hostile neighbors like Sanballat until we can get the walls up. Spiritual Jerusalem is the Church and she has walls to construct also, these walls are love, holiness, obedience and faith. As we grow in these things, the walls go up.

Friend, will you, will I, build the walls of the Church? The road to doing so is the same one that Nehemiah walked: prayer, confession of sins to God, mourning over sin, repentance and holding God's promises before Him in faith. If we return to God, He will send revival. We read; "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, You are the awesome God who has faithfully kept us. You have been faithful to us when we have not been faithful to You. Lord, again let Your ears and eyes be open to our prayer of confession. We have sinned grievously, selfishly, and even when Your word and Your grace has been there to aid us. We have acted corruptly. Now we turn to You and repent and ask again for You to forgive us, for You to heal us, for You to restore us. Lord, remember Your gracious promise, made in love, that if we would humble ourselves and pray and seek Your face and turn from our wicked ways that You would hear us, forgive us, and heal our land. Oh Lord, hear. Oh Lord, forgive. Oh Lord, heal. Help us build the walls of love, obedience, holiness and faith. May your people be gathered once again for Your glory and Your service. May we be gathered once again for a great work in the earth which would bring honor to Your name. Let Your joy be our strength. Amen.

Shawn Stevens

THE FIRST GREAT AWAKENING

In previous issues we have read accounts of revival from the First Great Awakening. Also taken from the First Great Awakening is the following account from Rev. William Shurtleff of the revival in Portsmouth N.H., 1743.

Mr. Whitefield's coming among us, and also Mr. Tennent's, was, I am persuaded, blessed of God; and their preaching made instrumental of putting a great many upon shaking off their heavy slumbers; and how reproachfully soever any may speak of them and their itinerancy, I must needs look upon their traveling this way as a favorable providence, and that for which we owe abundant thanksgiving to the God of all grace. As there had been for some time a growing concern among us, as to things of a religious nature, and a remarkable work of God's grace going on in many parts of the land; the ministers of this and some other of the neighboring towns agreed upon observing a monthly fast, in our respective congregations, to seek for the like blessing. When the solemnity was attended in this town, which was on Wednesday, November 25, 1741, as soon as the afternoon service was ended, one cried out in a transport of joy, and others discovered a great deal of distress. The people did not care to disperse, insomuch that there was another sermon in the evening; and a great number of them, and some of the ministers with them, stayed till it was late, in the place of public worship. The next day a sermon was again preached in public, and had an unusual efficacy upon the hearers. The day after, we had two or three exercises, and the congregation, a great part of it, continued together till late at night. This Friday was the most remarkable day that was ever known among us. The whole congregation seemed deeply affected; and there was such a general outcry, in some from a distressing sight of their sins, and in others from a joyful sense of the love of Christ, that could not but put a great many in mind of the appearing of the Son of Man, and of the different exclamations that shall be heard from the inhabitants of the world, when they shall see Him coming in the clouds of heaven, in power and great glory.

The meeting was continued in the evening; and near its close, an event, which in other circumstances would have been trivial, greatly

deepened the impression. The chimney of a neighboring house took fire, and burnt with uncommon brilliancy. This was not seen by the worshipers, but the uncommon light, flashing at once upon the windows of the meetinghouse, without any known cause, startled some, whose consciences told them that they deserved to be arraigned and condemned immediately. It seemed to them, that the Lord Jesus was actually 'revealed from heaven in flaming fire,' to 'take vengeance on them that know not God, neither obey the gospel.' A cry was raised, that Christ was coming in judgment. Many, who knew that if he came then, they must be condemned, and that they deserved no respite, at once admitted the belief, and numbers, who before had not been greatly moved, were now filled with consternation and deep distress. The explanation of this mistake, a few minutes afterwards, instead of dispelling their fears, only showed them new reason to be afraid. If they were so evidently unprepared for judgment, as to be thrown into consternation by the light of a burning chimney, their condition was certainly full of danger, and demanded their serious and immediate attention. Mr. Shurtleff proceeds:-

As I was called abroad the day next ensuing what I last mentioned, it was surprising to observe the seriousness that appeared in the face of almost everyone I occasionally met with. It seemed as if there was hardly any such thing as entering into a house in which there was not some poor wounded and distressed soul, and where there was not a greater or less degree of concern in all belonging to it, as to their spiritual and eternal state. It was very affecting to be called into one family after another, as I was going along the street, and entreated not to leave them till prayer had been solemnly offered up to God on their behalf. A divine power was then so plainly to be seen in what had come to pass among us, that there was hardly any that durst openly and expressly deny it. ...

There was now a demand for preaching every day, and several neighboring ministers lent their assistance. Among others, Mr. Cooper of Boston was invited. He remained nearly three weeks, preaching almost ever evening, with remarkable success. So things continued through the winter. Assemblies for worship and instruction were thronged, and the number of communicants was much increased.²

² William Shurtleff, quoted in, Joseph Tracy, *The Great Awakening* (Carlisle: The Banner Of Truth Trust, First published 1842, 1997), 179-181.

The Rev. Daniel Putnam wrote these words on June 30, 1743, about a revival in Reading,

Sometime in the beginning of March, 1742, under a sense of the great decay of religion among us, we kept a day of fasting and prayer, to seek to God for the pouring out of His Spirit upon us; and God was pleased, out of his abundant grace, to give us speedy answers of prayer. For the space of five or six weeks, more or less of my people, younger and elder, came to my house every day in the week except Sabbaths; and manifestly under a work of conviction, deeply concerned for the state of their souls, and many of them expressing themselves in these words: 'O, Sirs, what shall I do, what shall I do, to get rid of my sins?' complaining of the load of guilt on their consciences, and of the power of sin in their souls; of the hardness of their hearts, and of the sense of God's wrath due to them; and some signifying to me, that they even now felt, what they only before knew as by hearsay, that the heart is so desperately wicked, and by nature so unfit for heaven. Some, when they heard mention made of Christ and of the mercy of God, I cannot relate the greatness of the distress it put them into, to consider that their sins were against such mercy, such love!

But I will not enlarge. I know this was the work of the Spirit of God, as a spirit of bondage and fear, thus convincing and humbling them. And the most of these, we have grounds to hope, have been since as fully convinced of righteousness and of judgment, of the all-sufficiency of Christ as priest and king, as they were convinced of their sins and misery before; and we charitably hope, have experienced by faith in him, through the merits of his righteousness and the power of his grace, that rest that he gives to such weary souls, that receive him with their whole heart. And there have been large additions to the church, considering the number of the people. And not only has this been the happy case of some that were without the visible church, but even several of the members have been very deeply concerned about the state of their own souls, and I hope it has been for their everlasting good.³

³ Daniel Putnam, quoted in, Joseph Tracy, *The Great Awakening* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, First published 1842, 1997), 186.

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Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine." (Ezekiel 47:1-12)

Here, we see how great God's river is and how it brings life and healing wherever it goes. The picture of a river communicates that there is plenty of water to provide for our spiritual thirst.

Is there more to God's river than we have discussed so far? Another dimension of God's great river is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The disciples would experience this on the Day of Pentecost, recorded in the Book of Acts. What was this baptism in the Holy Spirit? After His resurrection, Jesus had these words of instruction for His disciples:

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.' Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.' (Acts 1:4-8)

Jesus was talking here about a spiritual experience in which disciples would be immersed in the Holy Spirit. This experience, or baptism, would also endue them with power for service. Should believers seek this experience today? Yes, we should thirst for it and then come to Jesus and then drink. The experience is entered by faith. Let us pray with faith and come and drink from God's river now.

Lord Jesus, let us partake of the full measure of Your Spirit. Let us drink anew. We have seen in Your Word that You have made a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Lord, You give drink to Your people, whom You have formed for Yourself and for Your praise. Lord, we are standing on desert ground. Pour water on us who are thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. Lord, Your river is Your Holy Spirit. All of the feasts and festivals and ceremonies were simply a type and a shadow of the real thing, Your Spirit, which You have made accessible at this time and under this covenant. Lord, we want You to fill us with Your Spirit. Baptise us with the Holy Spirit. We want to jump into Your river. We want for the height of its water to rise above our ankles, then above our knees, then above our waist and then we swim. May your river run all over our land, bringing life and healing wherever it goes. Start with us, Oh Lord. Amen.

Shawn Stevens

THERE IS A FOUNTAIN FILLED WITH BLOOD

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood, loose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;
And there may I, Though vile as he, wash all my sins away.

E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die, Amen.

(William Cowper, William Gardiner)

JESUS, I WILL TRUST THEE

Jesus, I will trust Thee, Trust Thee with my soul,
Guilty, lost and helpless, Thou canst make me whole:
There is none in heaven or on earth like Thee
Thou hast died for sinners, therefore, Lord for me.

Jesus I must trust Thee, pondering Thy ways,
Full of love and mercy, all thine earthly days:
Sinners gathered round Thee, lepers sought Thy face
None too vile or loathsome for a Savior's grace.

Jesus I do trust Thee, trust without a doubt;
Whosoever cometh, Thou will not cast out:
Faithful is Thy promise, precious is Thy blood:
These my soul's salvation, Thou my Savior God!

(Mary J. Walker / Franz Joseph Haydn)

