



STREAMS OF PENTECOST

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The Garden of Eden is where the first man and woman, our forefathers, lived and worked and worshipped.

Genesis 2:8 The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁵ Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. ¹⁶ The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Eden had everything that humans might need—it was a wondrous place, providing sustenance and comfort, freedom and fellowship, where God and humans dwelt together. Eden is, in fact, not only a picture of what was, but also of what will be, for the word *paradisos*, or paradise, means Eden. We find it at the beginning of God's story, and again at the end.

Luke 23:42 And [the thief on the cross] was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" ⁴³ And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

I love the book of Genesis. I used to hate it. I thought the Bible, like any other book, was meant to be read from cover to cover, from the first page to the last. I can't tell you how many times I started to read the Bible from Genesis 1 and failed to complete even that first book, because I didn't know how to apply what I read into my life today.

Four things have helped me to love Genesis: (1) seeing how often the New Testament referred back to Genesis created a context for its stories, and (2) powering through Genesis several times generated more familiarity with its content, (3) the Holy Spirit, our Teacher when it

comes to all things scriptural, connected the dots for me, and (4) The Bible Project videos presented me with a concise 30,000-foot view of the Bible, illuminating the thread that ties all of Scripture together in a unified story.

Before Eden *“a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground”* (Genesis 2:6), but there God released the first river on the earth.

Genesis 2:10 *Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.*

The word translated “divided” may also mean “lost,” as in lost from sight, indicating that the one river disappeared underground and re-emerged elsewhere as four separate streams.

The rivers’ names were *Pishon, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Perat*. The last two we know as the Tigris and Euphrates, which flow from Assyria through what was once the Babylonian Empire. The first two are unknown by name, but the location given in the text may suggest the Nile River (which plays a prominent part in the Bible’s story) and the Blue Nile, which flows from Ethiopia to join the Nile.

How does this geographic mystery apply to Pentecost and the work of the Holy Spirit? Just this...

What fascinates me for this Pentecost message is the meaning of the four names and what they suggests about the Spirit’s work among us.

But first, another brief history lesson...

The Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths, is the final annual feast that the Lord commanded Israel to observe. It is mentioned many times in Scripture. It usually occurs in late September to mid-October, five days after the Day of Atonement, and upon the completion of the fall harvest. It celebrates God’s continued provision for Israel during their 40 years in the wilderness, while they were cut off from the Promised Land, just as He now protects us and provides for us during our wilderness wandering through this world.

Most scholars would agree that the Feast of Tabernacles is symbolic of Christ’s Second Coming when He will establish His earthly kingdom. Some also believe that it was likely during the Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus was born. This was a much more likely time for shepherds to keep their flocks in the fields at night than late December, when we traditionally celebrate His birth.

Additionally, when John referred to Jesus’ first advent, he wrote, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,

full of grace and truth.” The word John chose to speak of Jesus “dwelling” among us is a word that means *tabernacled*, or “dwelt in a tent.”

It was during this Feast, *“on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ ” 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”* (John 7:37-39).

“Out of your innermost being will flow rivers of life-giving water...”

Now, back to those four rivers from Eden and the meaning of their names:

- *Pishon* = overflowing
- *Gihon* = laboring to bring forth
- *Hiddekel* = (unknown, but possibly) thorny
- *Perat* = fruitful

I suggest to you today that the names of the four rivers that sprung from Eden to water the whole garden picture the Holy Spirit’s four avenues of work in the world to prepare for Christ’s coming Kingdom.

The first stream of the Spirit’s work... the spread of the message about Jesus.

Overflowing – With You

John 14:16 “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

The Holy Spirit is conducting His own worldwide campaign of enlightenment, drawing near to and working with every human on the planet to awaken our conscience with a new thought: God exists. And then to stir our thinking with a question: Who is Jesus?

The Spirit was working in this way with the disciples, even after they first decided to follow Jesus. As the Spirit would work among them, they would ask about Jesus repeatedly, “Who is this Man?”

He is doing the same thing today with people everywhere. Perhaps secretly, without telling a soul, people are wondering, “Who is Jesus really?”

If the Holy Spirit weren't overflowing all man-made borders in this way, the Gospel would fall on deaf ears and hard hearts. But, as Jesus reminded us, He has "many people in this city," who are hungry and thirsty and looking for truth.

So, the Holy Spirit, like a plow, is breaking up hard ground and preparing hearts to receive the good seed of the Gospel message. Confident of this, we must work with Him, recognize where He has been preparing the soil, and sow the message about Jesus there.

John 15:26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, ²⁷ and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

It's a partnership—working together to enlarge Christ's Kingdom.

Perhaps the Spirit has been enlightening your heart, stirring wonder about Jesus Christ. If that's you today, I have good news for you: "God exists and He wants to reveal Himself to you through the person of Jesus Christ, who expressed God's fervent love for you by dying in your place, so that you could live with Him forever. Receive God's love today. Put your trust in Jesus Christ. Invite the Holy Spirit to live in you."

The second stream of the Spirit's work... the beginning of the life of Jesus in you.

Laboring to Bring Forth – In You

John 14:17 ...the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive..., but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

From "with" to "within" describes the result of faith in Jesus: a new birth in which the Spirit connects you to Christ, who connects you to God as your Heavenly Father.

It marks the beginning of a forever relationship with the One who made you and designed you with purpose. He alone is able to fulfill your destiny, and He does it by planting within you the seed of every good thing He has for you, and then tending that garden to form and reform you in the likeness of Jesus. He makes you a brand new person inside.

The Spirit pours God's love into your heart, so that you may learn to Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. This is so much more powerful than just knowing about God or thinking about God.

You can have a conversant relationship with God by the help of the Holy Spirit, once He takes up residence within you. The Holy Spirit makes the invisible God known to you, teaches you the ways of God, and shapes you, from the inside, to be a godly person.

Have you invited the Holy Spirit to live inside of you? When you put your trust in Jesus Christ as your Forgiver and Leader, the Holy Spirit becomes your link to Jesus. Jesus is enthroned in Heaven, but the Spirit can be enthroned in your heart.

You'll have to vacate that throne first, before the Spirit of God can be seated there. This is what Jesus meant when He said, *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me"* (Luke 9:23).

Have you done that? Have you stepped down from being the lord of your own life?

Does that mean we should just passively wait for the Holy Spirit to do everything that needs to be done? No. It means you change roles; you make Jesus the Lord of your life and, instead of lord, you become His steward—you faithfully manage the life He gives you for His honor.

If you've not done this before, I urge you to do it today. Jesus is Lord of Heaven and Earth; make Him Lord of your life.

The third stream of the Spirit's work... working out your new identity with power from Jesus.

Thorny – Upon You

Acts 1:6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; ⁸ but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Let me identify several significant words in this passage.

In verse 7, two words are used to describe time as we know it: *chronos* and *kairos*.

Chronos means seasons (general periods of time), while *kairos* means opportune moments (specific divine appointments).

Two other words here are also significant:

Dunamis means dynamic or explosive power.

Martus means a committed witness, ultimately, a martyr.

The Holy Spirit works into you a new identity that is bigger than your former identity. Whatever your heritage, your environment, your experience, your education, your abilities have

been, once the Holy Spirit comes inside, you become a new person—a Christian, a child of God, with an eternal destiny.

Taking on a new identity is something like starting a new job. There's a lot to learn. Some things seem sort of familiar, but their context is new and they must grow into that new context (new Boss, new friends, new adversaries, new challenges, new opportunities).

Life with Christ can take you through thorny patches of ground. It can mess with your mind (your *old* ways of thinking and reasoning) and it can injure your body and soul (wounds and hardships through which the Spirit forms you, and from which He heals you). But these are necessary paths to tear away your old ways of living and give you confidence in Christ's way.

To help you fully adopt this new identity in Christ, the Holy Spirit gives you power from Jesus to adapt, to change, to achieve, to overcome. This is the power of the Holy Spirit *upon* you. This is what the baptism with the Holy Spirit is all about—power for your spiritual transformation and service to Christ.

Have you asked Jesus to baptize you with the Holy Spirit? Some Christians go for a long time without this power, wrestling with life as they try to live for Jesus in their own strength, but you can have it now. It's the promise of the Father—it's a gift—and the gift is for you, even as many as the Lord our God calls to Himself.

If you need this power, ask Him and receive it today. He'd love to share it with you.

The fourth stream of the Spirit's work... the gifts of God that work through you for the sake of others.

Fruitful – *Out of You*

This brings us full-circle, tying both ends of this story together. Speaking to His disciples of the purpose for which the Holy Spirit has come to us, Jesus said:

John 7:38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'Out from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

Acts 1:8 "You shall be My witnesses... even to the remotest part of the earth."

The Holy Spirit has come to give you new purpose, new direction, and new potential for your life with Jesus. He is the distributor of gifts from God that are necessary for your own spiritual formation, and for the growth and unity of the body of Christ, the Church.

Acts 1:8 "You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

He will work through you, into the surrounding world, to make Jesus known and to bring in His Kingdom.

Ephesians 4:13 *Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*

This work still continues today, and tomorrow, until we all are mature in the faith of Jesus.

Ephesians 4:15 *Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

Last Sunday, Pastor Scott mentioned John the Apostle in his later years, reminding the church frequently, when they asked him for a word of encouragement: “Little children, love one another.”

And as he wrote to us all: “*Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth*” (1 John 3:18).

Are you following the Holy Spirit’s lead, as you are going along in the byways of life, to render Christian love to others—not just family and friends, but also strangers, and especially, as Jesus taught us, to those who make themselves our enemies?

You must not contain or restrain the grace and power of the Holy Spirit! Let Him out!

Go where He leads you, and do what He tells you, to make Jesus known.