

4. The Water of Life (2Q 2010—Health and Healing)

Biblical material: Gen. 2:10; Isa. 40:31; Matt. 9:2-7, John 4:1-26; 9:1-11; Rom. 6:1-6.

Quotes

- The best six doctors anywhere/ And no one can deny it
Are sunshine, water, rest, and air/ Exercise and diet.
These six will gladly you attend/ If only you are willing
Your mind they'll ease/ Your will they'll mend/ And charge you not a shilling.
Nursery rhyme
- Water, air, and cleanliness are the chief articles in my pharmacopoeia. *Napoleon I*
- High quality water is more than the dream of the conservationists, more than a political slogan; high quality water, in the right quantity at the right place at the right time, is essential to health, recreation, and economic growth. *Richard Bangs and Christian Kallen*
- Be praised, My Lord, through Sister Water; she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure. *Francis of Assisi*

Questions

Why should we spend time discussing the importance of water? How does this relate to our spiritual life? Why does the Bible use so much imagery related to water, and what does this tell us about God? How does the use of water help our understanding of what God wishes for us? How is this practically relevant?

Bible discussion

Genesis describes the Garden of Eden as being full of streams and rivers (Gen. 2:10), while Isaiah speaks of our strength being renewed so we do not grow weak (40:31), Jesus demonstrates the connection between physical and spiritual healing in Matt. 9:2-7. In the story of the woman at the well (John 4) Jesus uses water to create interest, and then identifies God's life-giving water that quenches thirst forever! In John 9 Jesus points to water as a symbol of cleansing and healing when he cures the man born blind. In baptism we see water as the great symbol of the inner change worked in us by the Spirit (Romans 6:1-6).

Comment 1

“As God's creatures, we need water in order to survive. In fact, every body cell, tissue, and organ needs water to function. Water helps to regulate body temperature, transports nutrients and oxygen to the cells, removes waste, prevents constipation, moistens tissues, cushions joints, and keeps blood flowing throughout the body.” (Tuesday's lesson).

This is why the Bible has so much to say about water—as vital to life, as refreshing the spirit, as cleansing us... Jesus used the imagery of living water, and applied it to himself.

Water is an incredible substance that seems to be specially designed for life. It has many characteristics that scientists call “anomalous”—it's physical characteristics of high

melting point and boiling point relative to other similar compounds, the fact that it is at its most dense at 4 degrees Centigrade etc. It's down to hydrogen bonding!

“Water, for example, is one of the strangest substances known to science. Its specific heat, surface tension, and most of its other physical properties have anomalous values higher or lower than any other known material. The fact that its solid phase is less dense than its liquid phase, so that ice floats, is virtually a unique property in nature. Its melting point, boiling point, and vaporization point are all anomalously higher than those of other substances. For example, when calculated by atomic weight and number, the boiling point of water would be expected to be -100°C rather than +100°C. The disparity is due to its strong hydrogen bonds, which are difficult to break. Furthermore, because the H-O-H angle in water is so close to the ideal tetrahedral structure, water can form such a structure with very little strain on the bonds. As a result, it tends to polymerize into an open structure, so that ice is less dense than water. This property of water is essential to life, for were ice more dense than water, it would sink to the bottom of bodies of water, where it would remain in the deepest parts until eventually all lakes and oceans would be solidly frozen. Instead, ice forms a protective skin on the surface of reservoirs of water.

“Water also has a higher specific heat than almost any organic compound. This property allows water to be a store of heat and so stabilize the environment. The thermal conductivity of water is also higher than that of most liquids, which again permits water to act as a temperature stabilizer on the environment. Water has, moreover, a higher heat of vaporization than any known substance. This makes water the best possible coolant by evaporation, and living creatures make extensive use of it in temperature control. Water's high surface tension, exceeded by very few substances, serves to make biochemical reactions more rapid; and the way water bonds shapes organic molecules such as enzymes and nucleic acids into their biologically active forms and permits the formation of cell walls and membranes.” *William Lane Craig*

However beyond all this is the imagery that helps us understand the spiritual. Take just one example: baptism. Through the baptism of water we demonstrate the baptism of the Spirit that makes us completely new creatures in Christ. We are literally born again. Accepting Jesus means that our lives are to be so different that we cannot describe them except by saying we have passed through another birth experience.

And if we do have that change, then we understand that we take part in the death and resurrection of Jesus. We are buried with him in baptism, and raised with him into newness of life. And that newness of life is to walk with God, to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit, and to be clothed with Christ himself, the re-birth that is the Spirit of God's transforming presence in your life...

I sit languidly beside a cool-flowing river under summer's warm-embracing sun. Idly I toss a pebble into a pellucid pool, shadowed dark and deep under a spreading oak. Ripples, slivering silver, mirror out in circles, wider, ever wider in sparkling life. But as I watch, they fade, slipping away downstream, disappearing into grassy banks. I look away, unwilling to admit their passing.

My eyes are caught by flitting butterflies, dancing and reflecting over the tranquil waters. Majestic dragonflies cruise the caressing breeze. But closest by flutter two dazzling damsel flies, shimmering vivid green. In their aerial dance together they are self-absorbed, unconcerned, delighting in the beauty of summer's moment.

But like a chill north wind blows the recognition: comes the winter. Frost and ice and snow will end their dance, gossamer wings frozen and broken. For all of us, however long we wish to dance: comes the winter.

The afternoon sun slides down the sky into evening, and the coming dark. I reluctantly stand to leave, my eyes absorbing the last of the scene that will never be the same again. Now in the evening I sit in a church full of weeping. The funeral of a lovely girl of just seventeen, taken long before her time. Comes the winter, cold, harsh, relentless.

But in the sad silence comes the words of promise—in the twinkling of an eye, we shall all be changed, and be raised...

Newness of eternal life, in a time and place where winter never comes. A time of constancy, where the beauty never fades, and hours never need to be counted. A time when the ‘change and decay all around I see’ becomes an eternity of permanence in the presence of my God. A time when death is destroyed, swallowed up in victory; when sorrow and sighing have all fled away; and when all share together in a universe of God’s everlasting summer.

Comment 2

Water, the Hub of Life. Water is its mater and matrix, mother and medium. Water is the most extraordinary substance! Practically all its properties are anomalous, which enabled life to use it as building material for its machinery. Life is water dancing to the tune of solids. *Albert Szent-Gyorgyi*

Ellen White Comments

Like John the Baptist, we are to point men and women to Jesus, saying, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” In the message we bear, the character of God, as revealed in Christ, is to be manifested to the world. The call is to be sounded by human lips and exemplified in human lives. By word and by action we are to repeat the divine call, “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.” {RH, July 22, 1909}

The voice of Jesus pleads with men, saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, and the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” No creature that God has created is looked upon with indifference. God has an intense desire to relieve the woes of mankind and apply his balsam to their wounds. His love is ever exercised for the needy and oppressed. His heart is full of joy when the sinner breaks with Satan, and looks up to God as to a merciful, sympathizing, loving Father. Jesus declared, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” The Lord is ever active in exercising his mercy; he would have every soul become acquainted with the paternal character of God. When men obtain a correct view of the unceasing mercy of God, they will be attracted, and by beholding will become changed into the same image. {ST, September 12, 1895}