

The River

When I was young, my dad, brother-in-law, and I would go fishing nearly every weekend. Much of the time was spent on Lake Mexia, where my uncle had a small cabin. But a great deal of the time, since it was so close, was spent on the Bosque River. We'd fish off the banks under the 19th Street bridge at Bosqueville. We'd set out trotlines and check them throughout the night using a small flat-bottomed aluminum boat. We slept on old army cots by the side of the river. The times we spent beside the flowing water of the river were some of the best memories of my childhood.

Also, when I was a bit older, some of my friends and I would go to the river at Patrick's Crossing on the Brazos River to tube and swim. Again, I loved every minute of it. As an adult, fishing for white bass at Smith's Bend of the Brazos River above Lake Whitney was also extremely enjoyable. There's something very peaceful about a river. All of my adult life, I've longed for a home on a river.

In **Numbers 3**, we read of the children of Israel crossing the Jordan River in order to take hold of the land that God had promised them. They had been through many hardships in the years since they left Egypt, but the wandering was over. The priests carried the Ark of the Covenant (the very presence of God) into the river and the waters piled up upstream and remained that way until all of Israel had crossed over. The crossing of the Jordan signified the end of their old life and the beginning of a new life. Based upon the number of times the Jordan was mentioned, it is obvious just how important it was to God's people. It symbolized separation, and strength, and life, and inheritance.

In **Revelation 22**, John describes in frail human terms what Heaven will be like. One of the main things mentioned he mentions is a river:

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever." (Revelation 22:1-5)

John's river of Revelation also symbolizes separation, and strength, and life, and inheritance. We are separated from our earthly life to live eternally with God. We've used the strength of God to endure, and now we are allowed to take hold of our inheritance, living in a city that is split by the river that waters the tree of life. David describes it in **Psalm 46:4**: ***"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells."***

One of my Dad's favorite songs went this way:

"There's a land beyond the river,
That we call the sweet forever
And we only reach that shore by faith's decree
One by one we'll gain the portals,
There to dwell with the immortals
When they ring the golden bells for you and me."

"Don't you hear the bells now ringing
Don't you hear the angels singing
'Tis the glory hallelujah jubilee
In that far off sweet forever
Just beyond the shining river
When they ring the golden bells for you and me"

Personally, I look forward to that land with great anticipation. Finally, a home with a river
view.

---Johnny

Stephens