

Water: so precious, so fragile, so symbolic



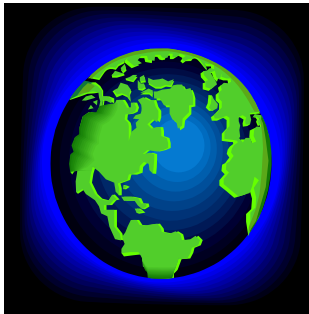
measures all help save water in the home.

Every week, news on our television sets and articles in our favourite newspapers advise us to turn our taps off while brushing our teeth, take a shower rather than a bath, put a brick in the lavatory cistern, stop using hose pipes to wash our cars, and sprinklers to water our lawns. True, these



But thanks to the impersonal nature of television and the short life span of a newspaper article, these stark realities somehow seem not to concern us. Until you drive into a filling station or walk into a corner shop and find that a litre of bottled water costs more than a litre of petrol!

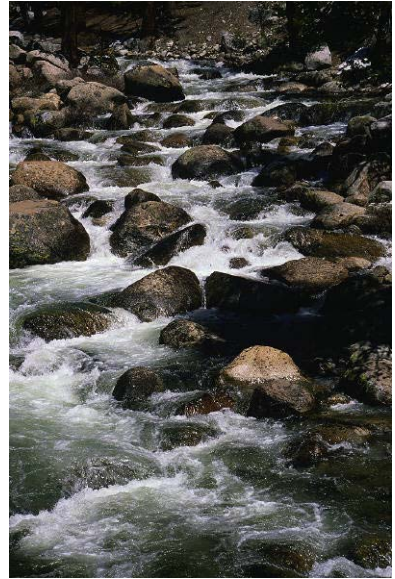
So, how precious is water?



A staggering 70 percent of the earth's surface is covered with water. There is so much of it the earth looks blue from space. So, why is so abundant a resource so precious? It is because 97 percent of all the water on earth is salt water, unfit for human use. And, of the 3 percent of the earth's water on which human life depends, two-thirds is locked in ice caps, glaciers and permanent snow cover. The available one percent – found in lakes, rivers, aquifers and rainfall runoff – somehow has to be shared out between the 6 billion of us.

So this, then, is how precious water is to us. But there is more.

Land and water are two natural resources that are intricately linked in an increasingly fragile relationship known as the hydrological cycle. Briefly, the hydrological cycle is the link between three spheres in nature: the atmosphere, the biosphere, and the lithosphere. These spheres form a fragile carapace at the interface of which life, as we know it, exists. Rain forms a crucial part of the hydrological cycle, the process through which water circulates from the atmosphere, through the biosphere and into the lithosphere and back, from a height of about 15 kilometres (9 miles) above the ground to a depth of about 5 kilometres (3 miles) beneath it.



Water that evaporates from the oceans, lakes, rivers, swamps, soils, plants, and animals rises into the atmosphere, creating a protective envelope around the planet. Condensation turns this water vapour into clouds, and when those clouds cool, rain is formed. Raindrops fall on the earth's surface and soak into the ground, where they become groundwater. This underground water, in turn, comes back to the earth's surface in the form of source-points for streams and rivers. Surface water and ocean water then evaporate into the atmosphere, starting the cycle anew.

It is this fragile relationship that provides the value and livelihood we attach to the pieces of the earth's crust we inhabit and call, in proprietary fashion, *our land*. It is our interaction with this fragile relationship that makes us responsible for its maintenance.

Here is where the bible comes in handy. Written in a part of the world where water is scarce, it is not surprising that water features significantly in the lives of the people so much so that drought was often seen as a result of the wrath of God, rainfall a sign of His favour and blessing.



From the first mention of water in the bible to the last we note that water, apart from its many uses, symbolises everlasting life. In Genesis 1:2 we note the role water plays in creation: “The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.” And in Genesis 1:20 we read of the first mention of life, and this life comes from water, Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.”



tree are for the healing of the nations.”

On and on throughout the bible, water symbolises everlasting life. Revelation 22:1-2 says: “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

We see, then, that God's Word revolves around water. And so to use water responsibly must be to obey and live by God's word. For as 2 Peter 3:5-6 says: "For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water."



By heeding God's word we save our selves and the world.

Michael