

Chapter 22

Introduction:

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curses but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.”

Most commentators feel that these beautiful verses – Revelation 22: 1-5 – are continuing John’s description of what the angel showed him in the New Jerusalem of the previous chapter. After seeing the walls, gates and foundation, John says *“he showed me a pure river of water of life.”*

Of course the river is crystal clear and pure; it flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Christ)! We aren’t told where the river ends, but we know most empty into the ocean. Spence says of this one: *“Eternity is the ocean in which this river is lost.”*

Back in chapter 7, speaking of the saved souls, John says *“For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”* (Rev. 7:17) *“Living Water”* implies a flowing, clear, fresh stream, or possibly spring water gushing out of the ground like a fountain. This phrase *“living water”* occurs only three times in the entire Bible. Two of those are in John’s account of the conversation Jesus had with the Samaritan woman at the well in chapter 4. The other was Jesus’ statement recorded in John 7: *“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, ‘Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’”* (Perhaps a reference to Exodus 17:6) Is this *“water of life”* the same as the *“living water”*? It certainly sounds like it.

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“Water of Life” implies the same life-giving quality as *“Tree of Life”* found in Genesis and here in our text. Any tree that sprouts fruit or nuts can help sustain life, but the *“Tree of life”* found in the Garden was more than that. It was meant to provide all the nourishment man needed to sustain him for an eternity, if he ate of it daily. *“Water of Life”* would have that same ability to refresh, restore and maintain.

So, John moves on to describe this *“Tree of Life”* he sees: *“In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”* Are there two trees of life – one on each side of the river? Several commentators believe John saw a pathway formed by the trees much like Ezekiel describes in a vision he had in chapter 47 of his Old Testament book, but a careful look at verse 2 tells us the word “tree” is singular and therefore refers to just one. Perhaps the ISV has the best rendering: *“Between the city street and the river, the tree of life was visible from each side.”*

What about the fruit this tree produces, *“each tree yielding...every month”*? We can’t get caught up in a “fruit of the month” scenario because, as we know, time has ceased to exist in this eternal realm. So, let’s play the number game again. If you consider how the number “twelve” is used in Scripture, it will not surprise you to learn that it is considered to represent completeness. Ergo, the tree of life will provide enough fruit for the whole population of the city – an ever present supply sufficient for all.

The leaves are for *“the healing of the nations.”* The term “nations” takes on a new meaning in the hereafter: It no longer refers to the unfaithful as it did when the earth was in existence. Now it simply means *“multitude of the redeemed that were gathered out of every nation.”* (Spence) So, these two symbols: the *“Tree of Life”* and the *“Water of Life”* are meant to show us there are no worries in heaven. All of our needs will be provided for.

And then, *“there shall be no more curses.”* In the book of Joshua (7:12-13), God tells the people *“Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you”* (In this particular case, it was Achan’s sin). God does not dwell in the presence of sin, but

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here in His holy city, He will reside with His faithful because the curse of sin has been removed forever!

All the faithful saints *“shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.”*

John 3:2 had already promised us this would be so: *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God... We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”* In Revelation 7:3 the angels sent to destroy the earth were told to hold off *“...till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.”* In other words, God takes care of His own! And so He did. In chapter 14, the 144,000 were *“singing a new song.”* And now, here in chapter 22 *“they shall see His face.”* It’s finally happening! The promise was real and here it’s realized.

“And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.” We read similar words in chapter 21, but the image is so beautiful it’s worth seeing again. It is the culmination of the promise: **we are home!**

Time has ended. Eternity has taken its place. Once more we are assured of the veracity of the visions John has shared with us and the accuracy with which he has recorded them: *“Then he said to me, “These words are faithful and true. And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place...And I John heard these things...”* The next segment contains the reminders — admonitions really — that this angel gave to John.

- a) This book is to be faithfully conveyed to others without additions or subtractions.
- b) Its content should not be kept secret.
- c) God is eternal.
- d) God is the author of the book.
- e) Even though we don’t know when the end of time will come...we can rest assured it will come.
- f) Many will not heed the words of the prophecy; but for those who do, there awaits a crown.

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- g) Just as a reward for the faithful is promised, so is an eternal punishment for the wicked.

This Bible that the “*Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last*” (22:13) has given us is the only thing ever written that can explain how this earth began, how it will end, and how we are to conduct ourselves in between. I hope your understanding of this final book of the Holy Scriptures has been enhanced by our study, and that your resolve to “keep the faith” has been bolstered by having spent so much time in its pages. I urge you, however, not to rely on me as your “expert in residence” because I am human and make mistakes. Continue to study the Word of God on your own — daily and prayerfully — with this verse from our final chapter ever in the forefront of your mind: “*Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*” (Rev 22:7).

As I close this study, I echo the words of John as he closed his writing of Revelation. “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*”