

## The River of Life and The Tree of Life

Rev. 22

### Introduction:

1. “The Book of Revelation, it’s just not understandable!” some may say. “Why is it called ‘Revelation’ anyway? There’s really not a lot of revelation to me.”
2. Given the nature of the Book of Revelation each of us can appreciate the difficulty that one has in understanding it. One cannot understand it without understanding something of what God has revealed in the O.T. prophets and through Jesus and the apostles. It is within these that the language and images begin to speak to us.
3. Our unfamiliarity with prophecies like those of Ezekiel and Daniel inhibit our understanding. But familiarity with these provides us with the background that is helpful to our understanding.
4. But many of the images come from more familiar texts than Ezekiel and Daniel. Such is the case in chapter 22’s vision of the “river of the water of life” and “the tree of life.”

### Discussion:

I. Students of the N.T. cannot read this text without thinking of the teaching of Jesus about the water of life (Jn. 4:7-14).

- A. In the gospel account the water is described as “living.” One might ask, “Is the water living or does it give life?”
- B. It is described as a well of water “spring up to eternal life.”
- C. One of the emphases in the gospel is that the source of the water is God. He is the one who gives this gift (4:10).
- D. In Rev. 22 the water comes from the throne of God and of the Lamb (1).
  1. Already in Revelation the imagery of water has been introduced. 7:17 says that the Lamb will be the shepherd of those who come out of the great tribulation. He will guide them to springs of the water of life.
  2. In Rev. 21:6 the Alpha and the Omega says, “I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.”
  3. In 22:17 an invitation is extended to the one who is thirsty to come and take of the water of life without cost.
- E. Ezekiel 47:1-12 contains a similar image. Cf. also Joel 3:18; Zech. 14:8.
  1. Here the water flowed from the house (the temple of God).
  2. It too was the source of life—trees, swarms of living creatures, fish.
  3. Verse 12 gives attention to trees on either side of the river producing fruit for food and leaves for healing.

II. This brings us to the second major image of Rev. 22—the tree of life growing on each side of the river (2).

- A. Students of Genesis are familiar with the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (9).
  1. It stood in contrast to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which produced

death.

2. It is interesting to note that even in that context a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden (10-14).
  3. In the first book of the bible we are introduced to the tree of life. In Gen. 3 man is separated from the tree of life lest he live forever in sin (22), and now in the last book of the Bible man is brought back into the presence of the tree of life. Interesting, isn't it, how the Bible completes the picture?
- B. Hailey (p. 422) remarks, "Man must now find his eternal life in a different tree, the one on which the Savior was hanged (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24).

III. Springing from these two images John describes the conditions associated with the water of life and the tree of life (3-5).

- A. No more curse (3).
1. Cursing is associated throughout Scripture as the penalty for rejected the terms of God's covenant relationship with men (Gen. 3:14ff; 12:3; 27:29; Deut. 27:15-26; 28:15-68; Gal. 3:13).
  2. But in Zion there shall be no more curse (Zech. 14:11).
- B. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in it (3).
1. It is interesting to me that the throne is one throne, not two.
  2. The rule of God and the Lamb are one rule, not two.
- C. Intimacy with God will characterize it.
- D. No night, for God will illumine them.
- E. They will reign forever and ever.
1. "Is this referring to God and the Lamb or to those illumined?"
  2. "Yes."

IV. In the closing verses beginning with verse 6 the angel speaks, Jesus speaks and John speaks.

- A. The angel (6).
- B. Jesus (7).
- C. John (8).
- D. The angel (9-11).
- E. Jesus (12-16). Who is speaking in verse 17? Is Jesus speaking in verse 17-20a?
- F. John (20b-21).

V. Summary of the closing verses (6-21).

- A. A significant emphasis on the surety of the revelation (6-8).
1. From the angel.
  2. From Jesus.
  3. From John.
- B. An emphasis on revealing rather than sealing up the words of the prophecy, but also a recognition of different responses (10-11).

- C. The Lord will judge and those who have washed their robes will have the right to the tree of life, but those who do not will be outside (14-15).
- D. The authoritative declaration and identification of Jesus (16).
- E. The powerful invitation (17).
- F. A curse upon those who would mar the message (18-19).
- G. The immediacy of the situation (20).
- H. A call for grace (21).

Conclusion:

1. What a magnificent invitation!
2. The water of life is available without cost to us, but it is not cheap. It cost the life of the Lamb.
3. All of heaven bids you come!!