

FPFWC Christian Development



The Great Hope of the Saints

August 2022

Summer Quarter

August 20, 2022

Lesson #3 – The River of Life

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Revelation 22:1-9

ICE BREAKERS-

1. *Why do you think it is difficult to imagine how wonderful heaven will be?*
2. *How should we “mark” ourselves as believers?*

Key Verse: “He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb”.—Revelation 22:1

LESSON BACKGROUND –

A feature of the New Jerusalem drawn from the Old Testament is the tree of life. This mysterious tree is referred to in three books in the Bible. It first appears as an important part of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9; see above).

A tree of life is also mentioned four times in the book of Proverbs as a metaphor for divine wisdom (Proverbs 3:18), the fruit of righteousness (11:30), desire fulfilled (13:12), and a properly used tongue (15:4). We should note that this is a tree of life, not *the* tree of life.

The tree of life mentioned in Revelation is a primary feature of “the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7). Some have referred to this paradise as Eden restored, as people eat the fruit of the tree with God’s blessing.

Water is closely associated with this tree in today’s lesson. The image of water is used in both physical and spiritual senses in the Bible. In a physical sense, fresh (sweet) water has as its opposite water that is brackish (bitter). Fresh water sustains life (Judges 15:18–19; Job 38:25–27); brackish water—or lack of water altogether—yields the opposite (Deuteronomy 8:15; 2 Kings 2:19–22). The ultra-salty Dead Sea is aptly named!

The prophets Ezekiel and Zechariah had visions that bear similarities to John’s vision of the New Jerusalem. A feature of the city foreseen by Ezekiel and Zechariah was a river flowing out of it. The water of this river is so refreshing that it not only nourishes life; it changes the ultra-salty Dead Sea into a freshwater lake (Ezekiel 47:8; Zechariah 14:8; compare Joel 3:18).

In Revelation, the concept of spiritual water includes the property of eternal life. Such water is seen as a divine gift, an ever-flowing fountain that provides life to those who drink from it (Revelation 7:17; 22:17).

LESSON COMMENTARY

22:1–5. Water is sometimes used figuratively for God, who brings peace from chaos (Is 8:6; 33:21–24), but that is not likely here. More to the point is a continuing parallel with Eden (Gn 2:10–17; 3:22–24). Paradise will be regained. It may be that

the river will flow under a dual throne that straddles it. The presence of a **healing** tree (v. 2) has led some to place this paragraph back in the millennium, but this would ruin the clear sequence of the text. Better is the view that it symbolizes God's work in maintaining the invulnerable state of the redeemed. Verses 3–5 reveal some of heaven's wonderful blessings: absence of death through the removal of the Edenic curse (v. 3; see Gn 3:1–24), opportunity to **serve** God, and the privilege of ruling as had been intended originally (v. 5; see Gn 1:28). Believers in the new Jerusalem would be servant-kings, ever praising and serving God, yet reigning themselves for eternity.

K. The Concluding Message (22:6–21)

22:6–9. The referent of the words in v. 6 is not immediately clear. It could be that the phrase **these words are faithful and true** are spoken by the angel and what follows by John. Or the whole verse could be spoken by the angel. The former is more likely based on its parallel with 1:1. The words translated **soon** (v. 6) and **quickly** (v. 7) suggest imminence. The rapture of the Church would come suddenly and without preceding signs. Those who heeded **the prophecy of this book** (vv. 7, 10) would receive one of the seven blessings offered in the book (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14). The angel rebuked the apostle's inappropriate worship, identifying himself as a **fellow servant** (v. 9), and recognizing John's own prophetic function (19:10). Believers should go beyond being curious about this book and obey its teachings. They should also reserve awe for God alone.

LESSON NUGGET – There will be no need for the sun in heaven or for other sources of light because God is the light of heaven. The whole place will be illuminated by Him. And we will see His face. What an experience it will be to see the face of God! Moses wanted to see God's face, but God told him it would kill him. God passed by and let Moses just get a glimpse of His afterglow. But in heaven we will look God in the face and live and rule and reign in the light of His presence.

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*