

**International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
November 20, 2016**

**Lesson Text: Revelation 22:1-7
Lesson Title: Living Waters**

Introduction

Revelation 22 is a continuation of what we might call our tour of the holy city, New Jerusalem. It is also the last chapter of God's Word. The Bible opens with God on the scene (Genesis 1:1) and it concludes with God on the scene. Revelation 21 describes the significance of the holy city (Revelation 21:1-8), the foundations of the city (Revelation 21:14), the worship in the city (Revelation 21:22), and the citizenship of the city (Revelation 21:23-27).

Revelation 22 opens with a continuing description of the New Jerusalem. Part of the description is the living waters flowing from the throne of God and the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life first appears in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:9 and before the gates of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 22. Its exciting presence bookends the entire story of salvation and God's blessing upon man.

Trees in Scripture symbolize Israel (Matthew 24:32), the Messiah (Isaiah 53:2), the church and the believer (Psalm 1:3). All the life-giving qualities associated with trees in Scripture are present in this final image of the Tree of Life, but in heightened ways. Its roots are in the "water of life" flowing from God's throne (Revelation 22:1). It is continually fruitful, not just once a year. Its leaves are medicinal, not just for one people, but "for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2). This tree pictures the abundance of life God offers to all who come into His kingdom (Revelation 22:14).

The River of the Water of Life (Revelation 22:1)

Verse 1

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

The "river" God shows John is not a river like we know because none of our rivers are "clear." The river is "clear as crystal" in order that the glory of God can shine through it. The "pure river" is not to be confused with the river issuing from the sanctuary during the millennial found in Ezekiel 47:1, 12, nor with the living waters going forth from Jerusalem in Zechariah 14:8. All we can conclude from this text without spiritualizing it is the crystal clear river is flowing down like a waterfall from the throne of God. It reminds us of the Garden of Eden and the beautiful river with four branches (Genesis 2:10).

Those four branches watered paradise. So, the heavenly paradise has its river, too. It is a beautiful crystal clear celestial river of eternal life that bathes the holy city as it flows down from the throne of God.

“Water” symbolizes salvation (Psalm 46:4; John 7:37). As John saw this “pure river of water of life” he likely thought about the pure uncontaminated source of eternal life found only in Jesus Christ. Could this be a constant reminder of the purity of our salvation? The “throne” from which the river flows are “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” This confirms Christ is still on the throne in the eternal state and God’s throne represents more than judgment. The “throne of God and of the Lamb” is in this case connected with service and blessing rather than judgment. It is mentioned again in verse 3.

The Tree of Life (Revelation 22:2)

Verse 2

“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

“It” is a reference to the city in Revelation 21:23. John is saying, “In the middle of the street of the holy city, and on either side of the pure river is the tree of life.” Verse 2 declares the tree of life is in the midst of the street of the holy city and at the same time on either side of the river. The visual picture is the “river of life” flows down through the middle of the city, and the “tree of life” is large enough to cover both sides of the pure river. Some commentators believe the “pure river” is not broad, but a narrow stream which would help us understand what John saw. If that be the case, the “river of life” is in the middle of the street, and the “tree of life” appears to be on both sides of the river because of its size and purpose. The “fruit” of the “tree of life” would be accessible from both sides of the river.

John sees the “tree of life, which bore twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month...” A tree that bares “twelve manner of fruits” and “yields her fruit every month” speaks of variety and quantity. Our eternal state and eternal home will not be boring! God’s children will have access to different fruit to eat in heaven.

Are we going to eat in our glorified bodies? The text does not say we will but we know from Scripture Christ ate broiled fish and honey in His resurrected body (Luke 24:42). The Bible says we will be like Him (1 John 3:2). Whether we eat or not, the “fruit” will be there!

If heaven is eternal, why does John mention “month?” Time has no part of eternity but the word “month” reminds us there are cycles. It is one of many

biblical expressions which say something to us in language we can understand. There will be a regular cycle of joyous provision, filled with variety, changing all the time.

“...And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” means the leaves of the tree promotes the enjoyment of life in the New Jerusalem, and are not for the removal of physical ills. There is no sickness in heaven (Revelation 21:4). The Greek word for “healing” is *therapeian*, from which the English word therapeutic is taken. The thought is the “leaves of the tree of life” are health-giving rather than healing from a disease or sickness. The “leaves” enrich the life we have as God’s children in His heaven and holy city. One writer suggested the leaves are like supernatural vitamins! That is a good way to look at it from this side! Again, we may or may not eat the “leaves.” It is possible they could be applied by rubbing them on our glorified bodies. God’s children do not need to eat or need healing, yet the Lord provides both for our enjoyment of life in the New Jerusalem.

“Nations” refer to Gentiles as in Revelation 21:24 and 21:26, which would basically mean “people.” The inference in this word is all God provides in the new heaven and the holy city is for His people!

The Throne of God (Revelation 22:3)

Verse 3

“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:”

“And there shall be no more curse...” emphasizes the blessedness of the new heaven and the holy city. In the millennial kingdom, there is a lifting of the curse upon the earth, but not a total deliverance from the curse brought in by sin. In the millennial (thousand-year reign of Christ), it is still possible for a “sinner” to be “accursed” (Isaiah 65:20) with resulting death. There will be “no curse” and no death in the new heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21:4). Commenting on this phrase, Doctor Warren Wiersbe writes, “No more curse takes us back to Genesis 3:14-19 where the curse began. Interestingly, even the Old Testament closes with the statement, ‘Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse’ (Malachi 4:6). But the New Testament announces, ‘And there shall be no more curse!’ Satan will be consigned to hell; all of creation will be made new; and the curse of sin will be gone forever.” (*Bible Exposition Commentary, BE Series - New Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – New Testament, Volume 2.*)

The statement “no more curse” is justified by the fact that “the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in the New Jerusalem.” God’s throne and Jesus Christ the Lamb of God could not dwell where the curse of sin existed. There is

no temple in the New Jerusalem and holy city (Revelation 21:22) but there is God's "throne." His "throne" is described in Revelation 4. God sits upon His throne with the "Lamb" with Him. This is a picture of perfect, total and beautiful sovereignty. "...And his servants shall serve him" means the saved of all ages will do whatever God wants us to do. That is a contradiction to the lives of many professing Christians today who call Him Lord and never do what He asks (Luke 6:46). "Servants" is the Greek word *doulous*, meaning "bond-servant." Have you ever thought about the aspect of being in God's presence for eternity? "Doing" whatever He asks! That will be part of the great joy of being with the Lord. Do you obey Him now? If not, why not is that part of the joy of being saved?

The Fellowship of God (Revelation 22:4-5)

Verse 4

"And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads."

"They" refers to the servants of verse 3, or those in heaven. "Shall see his face" are words reminding us of the immediate and constant access to the presence and glory of God we shall have in heaven. Remember, Exodus 33:20 says, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live." But now, praise the Lord, those who are saved by grace can look upon His face and not worry about dying! Why? Because we are covered by His holiness (Matthew 5:8; John 1:18). "His name shall be in their foreheads" indicates the saved belong to Him and Him alone. This is personal and eternal security. This says is we belong to God and to His city of which we are eternal citizens and we also belong to the Lamb all of which is verified by "his name" written on our "foreheads."

Verse 5

"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."

Once again, John repeats the fact there will be no night in heaven and no need of man-made light such as a "candle." There is no need of the "sun" for God is the light of the city. God's presence will be the light of that city.

"And they shall reign for ever and ever" means we will not only serve the Lord but we shall also "reign" with Him. Adam was given dominion over the old creation on this earth (Genesis 1:26) but sin marred his ability to reign and control it. Those of us who are saved by grace will not only reign upon this earth during the millennial kingdom, but we "shall reign for ever and ever." Christ continues for all eternity as King of kings and Lord of lords and we will

share in that glorious reign. There is no contradiction in calling us “servants” and at the same time declaring that we will “reign” with Him.

The Certainty of John’s Vision (Revelation 22:6-7)

Verse 6

“And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.”

“And he said unto me...” seems to indicate an angel is now speaking to John. “These sayings are faithful and true” is a reminder to John what God has said is trustworthy and authoritative. What John has written and recorded in the Book of Revelation is not a fairy tale or fictitious collection of words.

“And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.” The descriptive phrase “must shortly be done” can be literally translated “what is necessary to do quickly.” The thought seems to be when “the things” God will do such as His coming again, it will be sudden. “His servants” in this verse refers to believers saved by grace.

Verse 7

“Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”

“Behold, I come quickly...” are the words of Christ which seem to interrupt the angel’s words to John. “I” is Jesus speaking to John telling him of his imminent return for His church. “Behold, I come quickly” seems to be a reference to Christ’s coming for the church rather than His second coming to the earth, though both are in the larger context. “Quickly” is the Greek word *tachu* from which we get our English word tachometer. As with the word “shortly” in verse 6, the thought is speed, not time on a calendar.

“Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” is a special promise repeated from Revelation 1:3. God not only wants His children to know what is going to happen in the Book of Revelation, He wants us to “keep” or “obey” His words. “Keepeth” means “to attend carefully.” The truths of this book are for those saved by grace. The purpose is that we might get a grip on what is going to happen and obey without hesitation. The Christian life is about obedience from the moment of salvation and continues when we are in the presence of the Lord forever. “Keeping the sayings of the prophecy of this book” is our responsibility as God’s children considering His word and His imminent return.

Conclusion

Jesus Christ is our “tree of life.” He brought us salvation through the river of His grace, mercy and love. He gives us everything we need to sustain life and make life meaningful and full of joy. Because of that and much more, He alone is worthy of our worship. Tell your lost friends about the river of life that is now available through Jesus Christ. Obey God’s Word in your personal walk. Guard the sayings of God’s Word. And “worship God!”

Amen.