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*22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.*

## Introduction to Chapter 22

Revelation 22 – the final words of the Bible – the capstone of God’s gracious & precious revelation to the world...paradise gained over against paradise lost in Genesis 3. The first 5 verses describe a river of life, the throne of God and of the Lamb, the source of the river, a street that runs along the river, the tree of life and its fruit, and the healing power of its leaves. There is a reiteration that there is no more curse and that the servants of God will serve Him, and again, no more night – the light being supplied in abundance by the glory of God and the Lamb.

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Chapter 22 contains the last 2 of the 7 beatitudes found in Revelation, final instructions to John regarding what to record from what he’s being shown, and a promise and plea for Christ’s quick return. Finally, it contains a warning to anyone who would add or take away from this book. It is a fitting final chapter to the Revelation and to the Bible itself. Revelation has described the end of time for us and now we eagerly await our Saviour from Heaven to return for us so the eternal state of bliss and rest can begin. **Henry Morris** states, *“Finally we can begin to comprehend in some small measure the Lord’s “unspeakable gift” of eternal life ( 2 Corinthians 9:15 ) to sinners who had earned the wage of eternal death ( Romans 6:23 ). Having heard and believed the “word of life” ( Phil. 2:16 ), we have feasted on the “bread of life” ( John 6:35 ) and drunk deeply of the “water of life” ( Rev. 21:6 ), assured that our names are indelibly inscribed in the Lamb’s “book of life” ( Rev. 3:5 ). We no longer walk in darkness but have the “light of life” ( John 8:12 ), knowing that soon we shall receive the “crown of life” \* Rev. 2:10 ) and have access forever to the “tree of life” ( Rev. 22:14 )”.*

### I. The River of Life

v. 1-2a

The imagery of these 2 verses captures a scene reminiscent of a few other bible passages: **Psalm 1:1-3; 46:1-4; Ezek. 47:1; Zech. 14:8; John 4:10; 7:37-39**. Water on earth right now is life, but I’m pretty certain that water drinking will not be a

necessity for survival in heaven. No one will ever die there, of thirst or anything else, but the symbolism alone of the crystal clear river flowing from the throne of God speaks of life abundant.

There is another element visible in these 2 verses. We have a crystal clear river and we have the tree of life on either side of the river. So this river flows – pristine and crystal clear – through the middle of the street and this tree ( or trees? ) of life stands on either side of the river. This parallels something else, something historic from **Gen. 2:10; 2:9**.

Heaven is like Eden, multiplied, magnified and never-ending. The water will always flow and the tree of life will always be accessible.

## II. The Tree of Life v. 2b

The fact that men can now eat from the tree of life proves that the curse has been lifted forever. Note **Gen. 3: 22-24**. Adam and Eve were expelled as a result of God's grace from the garden before they could eat from the tree of life. Why had they not eaten the fruit of that tree before they sinned? We don't know. Perhaps they weren't in the garden long enough to sample from every tree, or perhaps the tree's fruit did not seem attractive to them. Or, somehow, God had protected them from eating that fruit, knowing they would soon fall in sin. Either way, they did not eat of it and that was in a real sense, a blessing.

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**James M. Boice** comments, *“If Adam & Eve had been allowed to live forever, they would have lived as sinners. They were to be set free from sin only by literal death and resurrection.”*<sup>ii</sup> Somehow, this Edenic tree of life bore fruit, which, if eaten would have provided some form of eternal life to Adam and Eve, but they were cast out of Eden and a Cherubim with a flaming sword was posted to guard the way to ( Note )...”the tree of life.” – **Gen. 3:24**. **James Hamilton** comments here, *“The actions of the human couple – hiding themselves from one another ( Gen. 3:7 ) and from God ( Gen. 3:8 ) – show the penalty is felt as soon as the deed is done. Adam, at the moment of his sin, brings death into the world. Death is alienation from the life of God. Death truly removes the couple from the freedom and innocence and lack of shame and fear that is found only in perfect obedience. The moment they sin, Adam & Eve are removed from that realm of life, and in the opening of their eyes ( Gen. 3:7 ), they find themselves in the realm of death. This spiritual reality is made a physical reality when they are banished from the garden of Eden ( 3:23-24 ). But even here there is mercy: they will not have access to the tree of life, whereby they might live forever in a fallen state. God gives the gift of physical death ( 3:22; 5:5 ).”*<sup>iii</sup>

Now, in heaven, John sees the tree of life and it is there for people to eat of its fruit and it is in season all the time. It has 12 types of fruit yielding that fruit each month. Now, if you are thinking as you read this, something should jump off the page here. “Each month”? But wait a minute, if there's no sun, and

therefore, no years, & if there's no moon how can there be months? Isn't heaven timeless? Isn't there no night ( 21:25 ) and thus, no days as we know them?

The best guess theologians have is that the new creation / heaven will have a different way to calculate time – probably time in a sense different from what we are used to. Is it possible that the new earth will still be orbiting some sun with a moon orbiting earth? Back in 21:23, technically the verse does not say there is no moon or sun, just that they are not necessary. Who knows?

Another interesting point here is that the fruit ( it is assumed ) is for sustenance of eternal life ( although not necessary – Christ is sufficient ), the leaves are said to be “for the healing of the nations”. What need is there for healing in heaven? The curse, which included illness, disease and suffering – all things that now require healing – was eradicated for good in Rev. 21:4, so what does this mean? It would make sense in the Millennium, but not in heaven. In fact, verse 3 here specifically excludes anything “accursed”.

Since this ‘healing’ cannot mean recovery from illness or disease, John MacArthur posits that *“it must somehow mean life-giving or therapeutic, more like super-vitamins than a prescription drug. Life in heaven will be fully energized, rich and exciting.”*<sup>iv</sup> John Walvoort concurs with this view, *“In other words, the leaves of the tree promote the enjoyment of life in the New Jerusalem, and are not for correcting ills which do not exist.”*<sup>v</sup>

Eric Sauer has a slightly different take on this, *“...just as the tears which they shed on account of earthly suffering will be wiped away in the eternal life, so the healing leaves of the tree of life serve for the healing of the sickness from which the nations had suffered during their earthly life, but shall never suffer again in the new earth.”*<sup>vi</sup>

Certainly, this is a bit of a mystery that cannot be easily understood until we enter the city ourselves and say, “Oh, now I get it.”

### III. Face to Face With Christ Our Saviour vv. 3-4

**Michael Brown** comments about this passage, *“The throne of God and of the Lamb [ meaning Jesus ] will be in that city, and His servants will serve Him [ not their servants will serve them ]. They will see His face [ not their faces ] and His name [ not their names ] will be on their foreheads ( Rev. 22:3-4, emphasis added by author ). One God, one throne, one face. The Son is not a separate deity or a competing God. He is the One through whom the Father revealed Himself, and as we see this glorious divine Son come into our fallen world and die for our sins, then and only then can we understand just how great God's love for us is.”*<sup>vii</sup>

There can be no doubt that this is paradise restored. There is no curse here at all because all elements of the curse have been eliminated by God Himself and God's throne and the Lamb's throne will be in this city. Divine rule will see to it that nothing of the curse will ever rise again. Finally, the Lord's Prayer will be answered. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" will occur because heaven and earth are now one.

The relationship between God and us will change everything but one thing still remains the same – His servants worship Him. Servants here is literally "slaves" in the Greek – *doulos*. This will be worship unhindered by the fall, human depravity, sin, doubt, lack of knowledge, lack of love, lack of fellowship, no denominational differences, doctrinally pure, radiantly joyous, filled with song, praise and being able to sit at the feet of Jesus to hear Him expound all the things John tells us in JN 21:25 that there were not enough books in the world to contain!

Think of the crowd of people about this throne in the New Jerusalem who will join with us there. All of our Biblical heroes, church fathers, reformers Like John Calvin, John Hus, Martin Luther, Frances Turretin, Theodore Beza; the millions of martyrs from throughout history, great Bible translators like William Tyndale, dedicated missionaries like John Paton, Hudson Taylor, Adoniram Judson, Jim Elliot & his friends; preachers like John Bunyan, CH Spurgeon, D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones, George Whitfield, John & Charles Wesley. Jonathan Edwards, John MacArthur, John Piper, Steven Lawson; RC Sproul; hymn writers like Fannie Crosby, Isaac Watts, Philip Bliss, John Newton, George Matheson; great singers; and our own families and friends; angels...what a reunion! But the center of the focus of the greatness of such a scene for each and every one of us will be the Lamb on the throne, the One to whom we owe a debt we can never hope to repay, even though we are given eternity to do so. Even more amazing is the fact that the debt does not need to be repaid. He did it all at the ultimate cost – His own life – to purchase every soul that will ever be here in heaven, and every benefit we will ever enjoy forever! ④

"They will see His face" ( v. 4 ) – see **I Cor. 13:12**, and consider passages like **I Pet. 1:6-8**; **I John 3:2-3** & **Rev. 1:7**. This scene John now records in 22:4 is a complete reversal of Ex. 33:20, "*no one can see My face and live*". Here in heaven, it will be a relative reduction in joy not to gaze upon that face that means so much to us. Glimpses of God were supplied here and there to individuals in the OT – In Ex. 33, Moses saw God's back; Isaiah saw Him high and lifted up ( Isa. 6 ), and John 12:41 tells us Isaiah saw Jesus; and many saw the pre-incarnate Christ, like Abraham before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and Joshua before the attack on Jericho, etc. In the NT, Jesus Himself was the express image of God – cf. **Heb. 1:1-3**; **JN 14:8-11**, etc. But heaven will be a face to face, nothing in between sight of Him.

In heaven faith is no longer required, because it has been applied, tested and proven. Now, face to face we see Him in all of His glory. Jesus promised believers in Matt. 5:8 that they would see God. Job, in ancient times expected to see his

Redeemer in the flesh – cf. **Job 19:25-27**. What a glorious thing to be able to look forward to. The letter to the church at Philadelphia, in Rev. 3:12, tells us that everyone in heaven will have been an overcomer ( possible exceptions are infants & the mentally infirm – cf. lesson 72 ), and His name on our foreheads means we are His forever.

#### IV. No More Night v. 5

There has been a focus on the fact that an outside source of light is no longer needed in heaven ( 21:23,25 ), and now, again, we are told that night has been banished, and all darkness is gone. God's glorious light shines everywhere in heaven and in the New Jerusalem – cf. **Isa. 60:19-20**. The evil people of our day – and all days prior to the Great White Throne Judgment - love the darkness and John 3:19-21 tells us why – because their deeds are evil, and are best accomplished under cover of night. There is no evil in heaven though, and thus no evil thoughts or deeds will ever exist because the blazing light of heaven, whose source is God reveals nothing but goodness and righteousness.

The last phrase of v. 5 “...and they will reign forever and ever” is a bit confusing because we wonder, “who will reign over who”? Rev. 21:24 tells us there will be kings and nations, but obviously God will reign as The King of kings, but without sin or even the threat of it, will there be the need for government, police, law courts, taxes, etc. in heaven? These are some of the things we are familiar with when we think of rulers. There is a need for that in the Millennial Kingdom⑤ because there is still sin during that 1,000 year period, but not in heaven.

Revelation 3:21 and II Tim. 2:12 promise a reign with Christ and here this reign is to be eternal. **John Walvoort** points out here, *“The concept that the reign of Christ must cease at the Millennium, based on I Cor. 15:24-25, is a misunderstanding. It is the character of His reign that changes. Christ continues for all eternity as King of kings and Lord of Lords even though the scene of His mediatorial and millennial rule over the earth is changed to the new heaven and new earth. There is no contradiction, therefore, in calling these saints servants and at the same time recognizing them as those who will reign with Christ.”<sup>viii</sup>*

**James Hamilton** states, *“The statement that “the Lord God will be their light” in 22:5, hard on the heels of “they will see His face” in 22:4, means that no place will ever lack the light of God’s glorious presence. There will be an ongoing, all-enlightening enjoyment of the radiance emanating from the One we worship. This seems to be reinforced by the final statement in 22:5 that those who see God’s face will reign forever and ever”. God’s servants – so described in 22:3 – will reign – as described in 22:5 – as they worship ( 22:3 ) and live out God’s character, which is what having God’s name “on their foreheads” ( 22:4 ) entails. The servants will reign as they worship and reflect God’s character. What could be better than reigning by serving, worshipping by living out the character of God Himself?*

*John saved the best thing about the Edenic temple-city for last. It is better than walls of jasper whose foundations are 12 precious stones, better than gates of pearl and a street of gold, better than a river of the water of life and a tree of life whose leaves heal the nations. It is better than all that. It is the best of all. What makes all the rest meaningful? The presence of God.”<sup>ix</sup>*

I was able to locate very little commentary on this part of v. 5, so it will have to remain a small mystery as to what “reigning with Christ” looks like in eternal paradise where there is never a possibility of sin. The point that is clear here is that this is forever and ever, and is somehow connected to God being the light source.

Next lesson – Lesson # 77 -- Rev. 22:6-11 The Time is Near

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<sup>i</sup> Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record*, Tyndale, 1983, p. 463

<sup>ii</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis Volume 1, Creation and Fall Gen. 1-11*; Baker, 2000, p. 242

<sup>iii</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment*, Crossway, 2010, p. 78

<sup>iv</sup> John MacArthur, *Revelation 12-22*, p. 287

<sup>v</sup> John F. Walvoort, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Moody, 1966 reprint 1990, p. 330

<sup>vi</sup> Eric Sauer, *The Triumph of the Crucified*, Eerdmans Paternoster, 1951, reprint 1985, p. 199, quoting F. Dusterdieck.

<sup>vii</sup> Michael L. Brown, *The Real Kosher Jesus*, Frontline, 2012, pp. 137-138

<sup>viii</sup> Walvoort, p. 332

<sup>ix</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., *Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches*, Crossway, 2012, pp. 406-407