

## THE REVELATION TO JOHN

### THE THINGS FUTURE, REVELATION 4 - 22

### THE ETERNAL STATE, REVELATION 21:1-22:5

#### INTRODUCTION

- Little is known about the new heaven and earth except that it is the home of all who are saved. More details are given to New Jerusalem which is in the new earth. It will come down from heaven and will be the home of God and the Lamb. The New Jerusalem will be the temple of God and the throne of God will be there. The redeemed will serve God in the New Jerusalem. We will forever be in the presence of God. Our sufficiency will be in Him. A proper motivation for serving God faithfully in the face of persecution is the blessed hope of being with Him in eternity.
- Thomas Constable, *Essentially what John saw next was Paradise regained* (cf. 2:7; Gen. 2; Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:2). *Having viewed the splendor of the New Jerusalem, he now saw what will nourish and enrich the lives of God's people there.*
- William Barclay, *So far the description has been of the exterior of the holy city; but now the scene moves to the interior.*
- Grant Osborne, *The visions conclude by returning to the first creation and the garden of Eden. God's intention in creating the first garden was to provide a "garden of delight" (the meaning of eden in Hebrew) as a reward for the covenant with Adam and Eve ... The vision here shows its descent to the renewed earth to be returned to God's people.*

#### A TOUR OF THE CELESTIAL CITY, REVELATION 22:1-5

- A. The River of the Water of Life (22:1-2a), ***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 2 through the middle of the street of the city;***
1. Related verses
    - a. Psalm 46:4, *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.*
    - b. Revelation 21:6, *And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.*
  2. Comments
    - a. Charles Ryrie, *The source of the river is "the throne of God and of the Lamb," and, like the city, it is "clear as crystal." The river is the "water of life," and its presence in the city simply means that fullness of life will be the experience of all those who inhabit it.*
    - b. Thomas Constable, *And he showed me" signals new aspects of the city that John's angel-guide proceeded to point out. The clear as crystal river seems to be symbolic of the refreshment and sustenance that God provides through eternal life* (cf. Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Ps. 36:9; Prov. 10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22; Zech. 14:8). *However, like the city itself, it may at the same time be a literal river* (cf. Gen. 2:10, 14).
    - c. John Walvoord, *As a provision for the saints and in keeping with the complete holiness and purity of the heavenly city, John sees a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. This is not to be confused with the river issuing from the millennial sanctuary* (Ezek. 47:1, 12) *nor with that of the living waters going forth from Jerusalem* (Zech. 14:8) *also in the millennial scene. These millennial streams anticipate, however, this future river which is in the new Jerusalem, which speaks of the power, purity, and eternal life manifest in the heavenly city. This river corresponds to the present believer's experience of the outflow of the Spirit and eternal life ... The throne is indicated as that of both God and the Lamb; this confirms that Christ is still on the throne in the eternal state, though the throne has a different character than during His mediatorial rule over the earth.*
    - d. Warren Wiersbe, *Man was prohibited from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and prevented from eating of the tree of life* (Gen. 2:15–17; 3:22–24). *But in the eternal home, man will have access to the tree of life. The river and the tree symbolize abundant life in the glorious city.*
    - e. Robert Thomas, *The point of the passage is to teach that in the eternal state God's people will live at the source of the life-giving stream, the very presence of God Himself ...*

B. The Tree of Life (22:2b-3a), *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. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed,*

1. Related verses

- a. Revelation 2:7, *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'*
- b. Revelation 22:14, *Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.*
- c. Revelation 22:19, *and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*
- d. Revelation 21:23, *And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.*

2. Comments

a. *the Tree of Life*

- 1) Charles Ryrie, *"The tree of life" (v. 2; cf. Gen. 2:9; Rev. 2:7) is also an assurance of fullness of life in that city. The tree yields fruit constantly, indicating the continuous blessing that will pour forth.*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *Several commentators took the reference to the tree (singular) as generic. They believed that John really saw many trees. I think it is better to interpret the reference as one tree, since this is the normal meaning of the singular noun. When Adam and Eve fell, they lost their access to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 2:9; 3:22–24). In the eternal city, the residents will have access to the tree of life there.*
- 3) John Walvoord, *Interpreters have puzzled over this expression that the tree of life is on each side of the river. Some take this is as a group of trees. Others say that the river of life is narrow and that it flows on both sides of the tree. The tree of life was referred to in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:22, 24), where it was represented as perpetuating physical life forever.*

b. *twelve kinds of fruit ...*

- 1) Thomas Constable, *This tree was perpetually, rather than seasonally, in fruit. It produced a new crop of fruit every month of the year ... Most fruit trees in the old creation bear fruit only a few months each year at most. In contrast, God's blessing of fruitfulness all year long (continually) will typify life in the new earth.*
- 2) John Walvoord, *the tree is represented as bearing fruit every month which apparently can be eaten, though the text does not say so,*
- 3) Kendell Easley, *Its fantastic abilities first are bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. This symbolizes blessings unending ...*
- 4) William Barclay, *The tree gives many and varied fruits. Surely in that we may see the symbolism of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–3). In the different fruit for each month of the year, may we not see symbolized that in the life which God gives there is a special grace for each age from the cradle to the grave? The tree of life is no longer forbidden; it is there in the middle of the city for all to take.*

c. *the healing of the nations ... no longer will there be anything accursed*

- 1) Charles Ryrie, *Its leaves are for the "healing of the nations," which again indicates blessing of some sort. Since there is no more curse (v. 3), what is meant by healing the nations? The word "healing" also has the meaning of "caring for." Thus, the phrase may well mean that the leaves of the tree enhance the quality of life in a positive way, not that they heal illnesses; for there will be no illnesses when there is no longer any curse.*
- 2) Mark Hitchcock, *... the word translated "healing" is therapeutic, from which the English words therapy or therapeutic are derived. This seems to refer to the "health giving" effect of these leaves that "promote the enjoyment of life in the New Jerusalem and are not for correcting ills that do not exist ... The text does not specifically say that God's people will eat the leaves of the tree, but this seems to be implied. The fruit of the tree will forever sustain and energize God's people both physically and spiritually.*
- 3) Thomas Constable, *The nations are people groups in the new creation viewed according to their old creation divisions (cf. 21:24) ... The curse in view is probably the curse that God pronounced on the old creation at the Fall (cf. Zech. 14:11; Mal. 4:6). God will have intimate fellowship with His people because this curse will then have been lifted.*
- 4) John Walvoord, *Even though there is no sickness in the eternal state, the tree's fruit and leaves seem to contribute to the physical well-being of those in the eternal state.*

C. The People of God around the Throne of God (22:3b-5), *but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 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.*

1. Related verses

- a. Revelation 21:3, *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.*
- b. Revelation 21:23, *And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.*
- c. Ezekiel 48:35, *The circumference of the city shall be 18,000 cubits. And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD Is There.*
- d. Revelation 7:15, *Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.*
- e. Matthew 5:8, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*
- f. 1 John 3:2, *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*
- g. Revelation 3:12, *The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.*
- h. Psalm 36:9, *For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.*
- i. Daniel 7:18, *18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.*

2. Comments

- a. *the throne of God and of the Lamb*
  - 1) Charles Swindoll, ... *all of the redeemed will have complete access to the tree of life ... flowing from the throne of God and Christ (22:1-2).*
  - 2) Thomas Constable, *Evidently believers ("His bond-servants" in the new creation; cf. 1:1) will occupy themselves serving God and the Lamb in the new earth. The Greek word for serve (latreuo) suggests priestly service, in view of its other uses in this book (cf. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). "His" and "Him" present God and the Lamb as essentially one Being.*
  - 3) John Walvoord, ... *the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in the new Jerusalem, and His servants will give themselves to serve Him unceasingly ... What greater privilege can saints have in the eternal state than being servants of the Lord? Who would want to be perpetuated in eternal idleness and uselessness?*
- b. *They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads*
  - 1) Thomas Constable, *God's bond-servants will see His face. We will enjoy personal, intimate fellowship with Him. We will be able to do this because we will be pure in heart, righteous, and holy then (cf. Ps. 11:7; 17:15; Matt. 5:8; 1 Cor. 13:12; Heb. 12:14) ... Scripture does not reveal whether we will see one, two, or three persons of the Godhead ... Moreover we will bear God's name on our foreheads. Having His name on our foreheads means that we will be His representative servants, children, and heirs, and will reflect His divine glory in our persons. Having God's mark (seal or logo) on one's body appeared three times earlier in this book (3:12; 7:3; 14:1). In each case it was a great privilege, indicating ownership and protection, not just identification (cf. Exod. 28:36-38).*
  - 2) Charles Ryrie, *Paradise includes the privilege of serving God and the Lamb (v. 3), of seeing His face, and of having His name on our foreheads - a proof of complete devotion to God's service.*
  - 3) John Walvoord, *Immediate access to the glory of God will characterize the saints in the eternal state. Further, His name is declared to be in their foreheads indicating that they belong to Him (cf. 7:3; 14:1; also 2:17; 3:12). The fact that they shall see His face demonstrates beyond question that these are glorified saints (1 John 3:2).*
  - 4) William Barclay, *The sight of God produces two things. It produces the perfect worship; where God is always seen, all life becomes an act of worship. It produces the perfect consecration; the inhabitants of the city will have the mark of God upon their foreheads, showing that they belong absolutely to him.*

- c. *night will be no more ... for the Lord God will be their light*
- 1) Thomas Constable, *The final point that John stressed was the intensely bright glory of God that will illuminate the whole new earth (21:23–25; cf. Zech. 14:6–7, 9). Previously he mentioned this to show how glorious the city will be, but now he did so to emphasize what a delightful blessing this will be for the city-dwellers (cf. Num. 6:22–27).*
  - 2) John Walvoord, *Once again in verse 5, John repeats the fact that there will be no night there and no need of a candle, that is, a lamp, nor the light of the sun, for God is the light of the city.*
  - 3) William Barclay, *John returns to his vision that in the city of God there can never be any darkness nor need of any other light, for the presence of God is there.*
- d. *they will reign forever and ever*
- 1) Charles Ryrie, *Paradise is not only the absence of evil but the privilege of serving God in His presence forever. It also means reigning with Him forever and ever. This is complete exaltation and perfect exultation.*
  - 2) Thomas Constable, *He added that His bond-servants will reign with Him forever, not just in the millennial kingdom (20:4, 6). This is the fulfillment of God's desire and command that humankind should rule over His creation (Gen. 1:26). Evidently faithful believers will have more authority in the new creation than unfaithful believers, as will be true also during the Millennium (cf. Matt. 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27).*
  - 3) John Walvoord, *Those who are His servants have the blessed privilege of reigning forever. The eternal character of the reign of these who are described as servants is another indication that this is the eternal state ... There is no contradiction, therefore, in calling these saints servants and at the same time recognizing them as those who will reign with Christ.*
  - 4) Warren Wiersbe, *Our faithfulness in life prepares us for higher service in heaven ... Not only shall we be servants in heaven, but we shall also be kings. We shall reign forever and ever! This speaks of sharing Christ's authority in glory. As believers, we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies today (Eph. 2:1–10); but in the eternal state, we shall reign as kings over the new heavens and earth. What an honor! What grace!*
  - 5) J. Vernon McGee, *Who knows but what He will give to each saint a world or a solar system or a galactic system to operate. Remember that Adam was given dominion over the old creation on this earth.*
  - 6) William Barclay, *The vision ends with the promise that the people of God will reign forever and ever. In perfect submission to him, they will find perfect freedom and the only true royalty.*

<b>SUMMARY</b>
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- Gregory Beale, *While the main goal of the book's argument is to exhort God's people to remain faithful so that they will inherit final salvation, this is not the most important theological idea in the book. The major theological theme of the book is the glory that God is to receive for accomplishing consummate salvation and final judgment ...*
- Charles Swindoll, *The complete reversal of the fall and its curse finally will have been accomplished. In fact, the final words of this section are worth repeating. No commentator can improve upon them.*
- Warren Wiersbe, *Certainly, many interesting questions could be asked about our future abode in heaven, but most must go unanswered until we reach our glorious home. In fact, John closed his book by reminding us that we have responsibilities today because we are going to heaven.*