

### **Glory of Christ in Paradise Restored Even Better (Rev 22:1-7)**

This morning we get to see heaven with the apostle John. Rev 21 is a vision of the city of heaven coming down to earth, and as we turn to Rev 22 John sees more of heaven and the eternal glories of God in Christ for His people. We've been studying the glory of Christ thru the book of Revelation, and for most of the earlier chapters we averaged 2 chapters each message, but as we come to the last 2 chapters I'm slowing down and zooming in as John does and also because I don't think we focus on heaven enough. I don't. I don't think we can think about heaven too much. I'm not sure it's possible to be so heavenly minded we're of little earthly good (and even if it were possible I don't think that's a danger for our generation). Christ teaches us the more heavenly minded we are, the more earthly good we do for His kingdom. It is possible to focus too much on smaller details of end times, but we can't focus too much on the big and beautiful glories of heaven as history ends. In Rev 21 John saw a new earth then a new city, Rev 22 zooms in, details are magnified so we can be edified to persevere in lives where Jesus is glorified

*Rev 22:1 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.<sup>6</sup> And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."<sup>7</sup> "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."*

That repeats the blessing at the beginning of this book of prophecy, Rev 1:3. Some people think it's best to keep away from Revelation, but Jesus thinks we're blessed if we keep His words in it. If I read and heed its truths, listen to it and live in light of it, God promises blessing to all applying Revelation. A pastor explains how Richard Baxter kept Rev 22 in particular in his heart:

Richard Baxter was a very effective pastor in England in the 1600s. His whole adult life was spent battling one sickness after the other. He was harassed by a constant cough, frequent nosebleeds, migraine headaches, digestive ailments, kidney stones, and gallstones. He believed in ... healing

and said several times he was restored to fruitful labor because of God's direct intervention. He said once a cancerous looking tumor in his throat vanished while he was in the pulpit testifying to God's mercies in his own life. Yet bodily suffering was with him to the end, and he once said that from the age of 21 he was "seldom an hour free from pain." One of the effects of this suffering was to make him intensely conscious of how temporary his life is and how inevitable death is. Once, when he was 35, he was bed-bound by one of his diseases and thought he would probably not recover. He began to meditate on the joys of heaven and the age to come in preparation for leaving this world. He focused especially on "the hope of glory" and began to write his thoughts. To his surprise he recovered and his thoughts became a book entitled *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*. He took up the practice of meditating on heaven a half hour each day because of the powerful impact it had on his life. He commended the same thing...

If you would have light and heat, why are you not more in the sunshine? For [lack] of this recourse to heaven, your soul is as a lamp not lighted, and your duty as a sacrifice without fire. Fetch one coal daily from this altar, and see if your offering will not burn . . . Keep close to this reviving fire, and see if your affections will not be warm.<sup>1</sup>

Col 3:2 '*Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth*' (KJV) or '*set your hearts on things above*' (v. 1 NIV). The NASB has '*keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above*' then it applies it to relationships, marriage, family

King Jesus said '*Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness...*' He said that the context of the things of this life, right after He taught us heaven is to be our treasure and where our heart is to be also (Matt 6). King Jesus in Rev 22:7 says we're blessed if we keep these words in our heart and our life. Today we only open the treasure chest, there's more to explore, dig deeper. Today we touch the tip of the iceberg, there's bigger and deeper things you can explore later in its living water. Rev 22 is really just a taste like the fruit of its trees, but it should stimulate our spiritual taste buds for more. It's like a teaser trailer, it grabs our interest as we wait to see the whole big picture. It's treasure I'm to keep in this life, living in light of it as a child of the King.

### **3 truths of heaven for us to treasure, to taste and see the Lord is good:**

1. The Water and Tree of Life (v. 1-2)
2. The Wonderful Intimacy and Glory (v. 3-5)
3. These Words Applied Now (v. 6-7)

### **First, The Water and Tree of Life (v. 1-2)**

In v. 1 the angel shows John a river of the water of life. Not literal physical water like we know it, it says this is water as bright as crystal and it's living. Some translations say 'clear as crystal,' which by itself would be surprising for a river in a city. At our old church in the SoCal San Fernando Valley the Los Angeles river ran through the city and under the street of Roscoe Blvd, but it was nothing like what John saw. When I lived in the Philippines the Manila River ran through the city, but it wasn't bright or clear, it was brown like Charley's Chocolate Factory river (except Manila's river wasn't sweet!)

I do remember a few times seeing rivers run down through the streets but it was when there was a flood and it wasn't for the healing of that nation. We also don't see in this world what v. 2 describes, a tree that bears fruit every month or a single tree that bears 12 kinds of fruit. You don't have to be a gardener to know v. 2 isn't describing a tree of this world. Notice also the water source isn't from a mountain or spring like in our world, it flows from the throne of God and Christ in the world to come. It says in v. 2 this flows *'through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life...'* That's hard to visualize literally, 1 tree of life on both sides of the river? How can 1 tree be on either or each side of the river? And you don't normally think of a street in a city with a river through the middle of it

Do people in heaven need the tree of life or water of life to live forever? v. 2 says its leaves are for healing of nations, but do people in heaven still need to be continually healed after they're resurrected in perfect glorified bodies? Not according to other Scriptures, this is symbolism, but where from? Turn back to Ezekiel 40 (p. 472 on pew Bible, after Isaiah and Jeremiah). Ezekiel was an OT prophet exiled by Babylon much like John the NT prophet was in exile on Patmos by Rome, the new Babylon. They were both away from Jerusalem and its worship, both saw similar visions of a future Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 40:2 *In visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city ...*

In Rev 21 John in visions of God is brought to a very high mountain and also sees a structure like a city (21:9), a new Jerusalem in renewed Israel. Ezekiel in v. 3 sees an angel with a measuring reed who then measures the structure, its gates and walls in cubits, just like John sees in Rev 21:12-17. Now go to chapter 47 to see a parallel to Rev 22, the river and tree of life. Later Ezekiel says its 12 gates will have names of the 12 tribes of Israel and the city will be a perfect square, very much like Rev 21 says (Eze 48:30-34)

47:1 *Then he brought me back to the door of the temple [literally 'house'], and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold... [skip to v. 9] And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may **become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes ...** ... <sup>12</sup> *And on the banks, on **both sides of the river**, there will grow **all kinds of trees for food**. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit **every month**, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their **leaves for healing**. [Rev 22 mentions healing for nations, but Ezekiel sounds Israel-centered...till v. 21] <sup>21</sup> *So you shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel. <sup>22</sup> You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves **and for the sojourners** [foreigners/Gentiles] who reside among you and have had children among you. **They shall be to you as native-born children of Israel. With you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel.** <sup>23</sup> *In whatever tribe the sojourner resides, there you shall assign him his inheritance ...****

Even in the OT the promised land wasn't just for Israel. This says foreigners among Israel, implication is they believe, foreigners receive inheritance of the land with Israel like native-born ethnic Jews. Paul didn't make that up in Galatians/Ephesians. Whose land is it? Can Gentile Arab Christians get in?<sup>2</sup> Yes! Jews who believe in Jesus? Yes! Only Jesus has a divine right to land. The Jews who reject the Prince of Peace won't have Israel in peace. Jesus is the heir but He says to joint-heirs this land is my land, this land is your land  
[He will give it to father Abraham and his many sons of many nations]

When John sees eternal promised land, it's like Ezekiel 47 but even bigger and better and for all nations in Rev 22:1 *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life ... flowing **from the throne of God** ... 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**.*

The book of Revelation isn't so much new revelation as it is showing God's fulfillment of older revelation in the OT prophets. Ezekiel in particular has the same imagery and same visions, very much the same order as Rev 4-22:

Visions	Rev.	Ezek.
Heaven's throne, God's glory, 4 living creatures with wings	4	1
A prophetic scroll of judgment with writing on both sides	5	2-3
Plagues of war, sword, famine, pestilence, beasts, death	6:1-11	4-5
The Wrath of God	6:12-17	7-8
Believers Sealed on Forehead to Protect from God's Wrath	7	9

Angel throws coals from heaven's altar to earth in judgment	8-9	10-11
Heaven pronounces no more delay for prophesied judgment	10:6	12:28
Jerusalem compared to Sodom but still has a future hope	11:8, 13	16
God's cup of wrath poured out on a great prostitute/people	14, 17	23
Lament over the city with Satan behind it as it falls	18	27-28
Judgment on nations but future grace for God's people	19	29-36
Resurrection of God's people	20:4-6	37
Gog and Magog surround Jerusalem, God's fire rains down	20:7-10	38:1-22
Judgment of all nations for final vindication of God's glory	20:11-15	39:21
City of God seen from a high mountain, measured by angel	21	40-46
River of living water from it, tree of life that heals nations	22:1-2	47
The place where the Lord is from that time on to forever	22:3-21	48:35

[order suggests Eze 40-48 is another symbolic view of Rev 21-22]

Now look at Eze 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.* In Rev 22 the next thing John highlights is the Lord is there in the city (v. 3-4). 18000 cubits=6 miles, bigger than Jerusalem in NT times, but the surprising expansion in Rev 21: New Jerusalem is 6,000 miles around, 1,000 x bigger and better forever. Rev 21 ends saying the Lord is always there in this city. It seems in Ezekiel a temple is the city's central reality, but it seems Rev 21 expands the vision to say the whole city is the temple. God fills it all. He *is* the temple, Rev 21 says. So when Ezekiel 47 says this river of living water flows from the sanctuary (holy place of His presence) or literally from the 'house,' Rev 22 sees and says a living water river flows from God's 'throne'

God's throne is another way to say where God dwells (to OT saints *temple* or *house* or *sanctuary* were other words used for where God dwells). What was the application for Ezekiel's OT readers? I don't know all what Eze 40-48 symbolizes. It may describe OT worship in terms they would understand to picture true worship in the future, renewed worship in the renewed world (sacrifices/priests=worship to OT saints, like swords/plowshares=weapons disarmed using OT terms, but the prophets could mean modern weapons or Christian worship using the only language to communicate it in OT times).<sup>3</sup>

But look at chapter 43 for the point of all temple plans and measurements. 43:10 says it isn't just for the future, it was also for OT Israel to apply then:  
<sup>10</sup> *As for you, son of man, describe to the house of Israel the temple, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and they shall measure the plan.*  
 OT Israel in Ezekiel's day was to measure God's plan and requirements for holiness and they were to see they didn't measure and they were to repent.

v. 12 says the law of the temple was ultimately about holiness around God. In Rev 22 there's no separate temple (all is holy), water flows from a *throne*. **43:6** *While the man was standing beside me, I heard one speaking to me out of the temple<sup>7</sup> and he said to me, 'Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever. [not just for 1,000 years, God says this is the place His throne will dwell in the midst of Israel forever, sounds like Rev 20-22]*

[37:26 says His *sanctuary* will be in the land forever, not only 1000 years]

Ezekiel sees the river of living water flowing from *the temple* by the tree of life that heals the nations, 43:7 says this temple is the place of His throne, so John wouldn't be surprised to see a river flowing from the throne. I think he saw Rev 22 as Eze 47 fulfilled: eternal blessing flows from God's presence; life, cleansing, healing for all nations (physically, emotionally, spiritually of sin and its consequences). Water symbolizes joy, satisfaction, refreshment, and in Eze 47 it even freshens the Dead Sea and brings life to the wilderness of Judea. That could literally happen and/or this could symbolize a renewal or restoration of all things in creation like Acts 3:21, Rom 8:21, Matt 19:28, etc. I think Eze **43:7** is God's eternal throne, as v. 7 ends saying God dwells here with His people *forever*. Not just the millennium, it's to eternity forever and some prophecies I think include both in new world visions (Isa 65-66).<sup>4</sup>

[the renewed world begins at the 2nd coming and continues forever]

But there's more if you look back at chapter 36, which takes us to point #2. 36:22 says God doesn't do this for Israel's sake, it's for His glory and name. 36:30 *I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations ...<sup>35</sup> They will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden ...'*

### **2<sup>nd</sup> truth of heaven: The Wonderful Intimacy and Glory (Rev 22:3-5)**

The mention of the garden of Eden takes us back even farther, Gen 1-3 (turn there). Man forfeited original glory and intimacy with God who walked and talked with them in the first world. Sin brought separation, death, darkness, a curse that drove man away from God, destroying fellowship and worship. But Rev 22:3 restores it: *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.*

Gen 1:5: God created light 3 days before He created the sun, His own glory lit up the first world, and it seems the future world is restored to that state.

Gen 1:26, 28: Adam and Eve were created in God's image to reign, with a dominion over creation, a rule and replenishing of earth. Rev 22 restores it. Gen 2:9: in the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> garden of Eden was a tree of life and tree of knowledge of good and evil, v. 10 a river goes out from Eden. But Rev 22 is even better with its tree of life in the middle of the garden city, because now there's no other tree to bring evil or sin into the new world, just the tree of life and its leaves heal everything from original sin. And it's not just a river in a garden like Genesis, in Rev 22 it's a river of *living* water of *eternal* life.

Gen 2:15 Adam served God as he worked and worshipped Him all the time. In Rev 22:3 that's restored. Gen 3:8: our 1<sup>st</sup> parents lost wonderful intimacy and face-to-face fellowship by sin. v. 17-19: earth, man's work was cursed, but in Rev 22 the curse is removed and intimacy with God is renewed with the rest of the renewed world. Paradise lost is Paradise restored even better as Gen 3:15 is fulfilled, the serpent crushed forever, a new earth, new Eden, a renewed world for those who are renewed now in heart, all who repent.

In Gen 3:22 God says in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the verse: *Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—* therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden ... <sup>24</sup> *He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Angel warriors blocked the way back to the tree of life. Eden's paradise was lost on earth in the flood ... but there's a way the heavenly tree of life can be restored. It's through the One who is The Way, Truth, and Life. No one gets back to the Father but through Jesus. Where Adam failed, Jesus prevailed. Adam used leaves to hide his sin, in Rev 22 Jesus gives leaves to heal sin.

It's through another tree that Paradise is restored. The Greek word for *tree* in Rev 22 is the same word used in Acts for the tree, or cross, Jesus hung on that gives life to all who come in faith.<sup>5</sup> The man next to Him on the tree, or cross, recognized he was a sinner deserving punishment, and that Jesus was the King of the kingdom to come with authority to pardon sin. So he begged Jesus for mercy and Jesus promised: *Today you will be with me in Paradise!*

[have you ever begged Jesus to save and change you? Why not today?]

Paradise is restored through the Lord on the cross, dying for sinners, rising for them, to reverse the curse. How? Gal 3:13 *'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by **becoming a curse for us**—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"*—that's the tree that brings life.

1 Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*  
 The images of a tree and healing of the sin's curse in Rev 22 only happens in Christ. The Bible begins with a garden and ends with a garden, but the only way to the last one is through another garden, Gethsemane, the way of the cross. God turned His face away from Jesus on the cross temporarily as He took my sin, PTL I can one day see God face to face eternally in Christ!

I can only imagine what my eyes will see, When your face is before me ...  
 Surrounded by Your glory, What will my heart feel?  
 Will I dance for Your Jesus, Or in awe of You be still?  
 Will I stand in Your presence, Or to my knees will I fall?  
 Will I sing hallelujah, Will I be able to speak at all?  
 ...I can only imagine when that day comes, And I find myself standing in the Son  
 I can only imagine when all I will do, Is forever, forever worship You<sup>6</sup>

Rev 22 helps imagine a little of the wonderful intimacy and glory, worship forever. In conclusion v. 7 also gives **These Words Applied Now**  
<sup>7</sup> *And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words...*

#### 1st application: Glorify Christ By Trusting Him to the End

He motivates us to keep/apply these words by blessing and His faithfulness:  
<sup>6</sup> *And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy [or 'faithful'] and true..."*

Christ is glorious in light in v. 5 and in v. 6 He's also glorified in lives that trust Him. He is worthy of trust here because v. 1-5 fulfill earlier promises. If you were to look back at Rev 2-3 you can see the promises fulfilled here: **2:7** *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers [that means overcomes, perseveres in salvation, Jesus says] I will grant to eat of the **tree of life, which is in the paradise of God...*** [John sees that promise fulfilled in Rev 22 along with v. 26 here promising a reign, a rule to come to those who overcome co-heirs reigning with Jesus, and in chapter 3, middle of v. 12 promises]...*I will write on him the name of my God...*[John also sees that in Rev 22, God's name written on His people]

Ps 46 applies imagery of a river in the city of God to trusting God in our life  
*'There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells ... Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress [application of image: trust Him]*



## 2nd application: Glorify Christ by Representing Heaven Now

The privileges of heaven's citizens in Rev 22 should affect us in this country as Paul explains in Philippians *'straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of **the upward call**...[not] with minds set on earthly things...our citizenship is in heaven'* (3:13-14, 19-20). So how do we represent that now as citizens of a peaceful kingdom? Paul's glad you asked: *'Do everything without complaining or arguing ... shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life...'* (2:14-15). Before the day of Rev 22:5 comes and God's glory replaces sun, moon, and stars, we shine forth His glorious Word now. Jesus applies the imagery in v. 5 of lamp and light to us before heaven, too. Before Jesus is the light of the world in the new world with its glorious city set on Zion's high hill, Jesus tells His church:

*'You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden ... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.'* (Mt 5). Reflect His light now.

[we're to reflect and represent God's city as ambassadors]

What about v. 4? Is seeing the glory of His face something I can see now? Paul says in 2 Cor 4:6 God *'has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'* We see His glory now in the face of Christ by His Word, and that can change us now: *'we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another'* (3:18). As I gaze at His glory I get changed by His glory. I behold Him to become like Him.

What about v. 3? Is that just future? Hebrews tells us we get to come to His throne now in prayer, boldly to the throne of grace through Jesus (Heb 4:16) The 2nd half of v. 3 says His servants will worship Him. We get to come in worship every Lord's Day, before the throne of God above. People destined for heaven love to do that, long for more, because it's what heaven's about and we want to be about our Father's house? Do you? Where is your heart?

The word for servants is literally slaves in v. 3 and the verb can mean 'serve' Him. We're slaves of a great King. Are you serving Him? You can serve or work for Him in whatever you do during the week, doing all to God's glory.

Is there an application in the end of v. 2? We're to bring to all peoples the message of healing in Christ. Pr 15:4 *'A tongue that brings healing is a tree of life'* (NIV, other versions say a 'wholesome tongue' or 'soothing' or 'gentle tongue' is like a tree of life). Even the fruit of the tree of life in v. 2 applies

to us now in Pr 11:30: *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise.* We are to bear fruit now as if sharing from heaven's tree of life on earth. Pr 3:18 says God's Word and God's wisdom *'is a tree of life to those who take hold...happy are all who hold [it] fast.'* Ps 1 says a happy or blessed person *'shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither'* (NKJV). How? It says delighting in the Word keeps us abiding in it, meditating 24/7.

Jer 17:8 adds that a blessed one who trusts in the Lord *'is like a tree planted by water...and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.'* Ps 92 adds the righteous *'who are planted in the house of the Lord ... shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing'* (NKJV). May God help us to want to be in God's house, to plant our roots here, so that to old age we continue to be bear fruit of the Spirit. May God help us delight in His Word so we abide in it day and night, meditating on it, treasuring it. May it help us be heavenly-minded so we'll be of earthly good for His glory

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, sermon on Rev 21, [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org)

<sup>2</sup> See "Who Owns the Land? Jews? Gentile Arabs? Jesus?"

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=5211214572410>

<sup>3</sup> Even among more staunch "literalists," the *New Scofield Bible*, 1967 revision, explains:

<sup>4</sup> For Isaiah's visions of a new world including Rev 20 and 21-22, see "Renewed Worship for a Renewed World," <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=43015152135>

<sup>5</sup> Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29.

<sup>6</sup> MercyMe, "I Can Only Imagine."