

Then the Angel Showed Me the River of the Water of Life, Clear as Crystal

22: 1-2

DIG: What is the source of the river of life? Where will it flow? What will it do? Where is the Lamb? Why is this important? What was on each side of the river? Is there sickness in the Eternal Order? What did the leaves of the tree do? Who will have access to the tree of life and the Holy City?

REFLECT: When you have physical problems, how does the *health-giving* attributes of the tree of life encourage you today? What will it be like to walk down the main thoroughfare of the great City? What will the leaves and fruit of the tree be like?

In this final chapter in the Holy Scriptures **John** continues to describe the **New Jerusalem**, and then ushers us on into eternity. When he closes with the last invitation, last warning and last prayer, the Bible is then complete. All we need to know will have been revealed and recorded. Now we must wait expectedly for its fulfillment.

We were told at the beginning of the book that there is a blessing for **the one who reads the words of this prophecy (1:3)**. So here at the end of **Revelation**, we can finally begin to comprehend, in some small way, **Christ's indescribable gift** of eternal life (**Second Corinthians 9:15**) to sinners who had earned the wage of eternal death (**Romans 6:23**). Having heard and believed **the word of life (Philippians 2:16)**, having feasted on **the bread of life (John 6:35)** and drunk deeply of the **water of life (Revelation 21:6)**, assured that their names are indelibly written in the **Lamb's book of life (Revelation 3:5)**, and knowing that they will receive **the crown of life (Revelation 2:10)**, they will have eternal access to the **tree of life (Revelation 22:14)**.⁵⁰³

So far, **John** had only described the outer beauty of the **New Jerusalem**, with merely a quick glance at the golden street within its jasper walls. Now he will enter into the **City** itself, getting an introduction to the glory that has been prepared for our delight. The most noticeable of all is the mighty river of clear sparkling water (**Psalm 46:4**). Then the angel showed him the river of the water of life (**22:1a**). Since there was no longer any sea (**21:1**), the inexhaustible water supply of this mighty river will supply whatever hydrologic needs the new earth will have. This water will be as clear as crystal, just like the jasper

walls of **the City (21:11)**. There surely will be an abundance of luxurious grasses, herbs and trees everywhere, as in the original created world. The whole earth will be a well-watered paradise of rich resources and fulfilling ministries for **His people**.⁵⁰⁴

The source of this **river** is not the rain and the hydrologic system, it will constantly flow from **God's throne** to **God's people**. We are reminded that **ADONAI** will make **everything new (21:5)**! We learn from the **Psalms** that **there** will be a **river whose streams make glad the City of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. The LORD is within her (Psalm 46:4-5a)**. So while the **river** is literal, its symbolism is clear. Out of **the throne of God and the Lamb** will flow pure water, symbolic of the holiness and purity of **the LORD and the City**. This reference to a **river** should not be confused with the Millennial river as seen in **Ezekiel 47:1, 12, or Zechariah 14:8**. The **river of life** will be part of **the New Jerusalem**. It will flow **down the middle of the great street**, best translated *in the middle of its path*, or **the down the main thoroughfare of the City (22:1c)**.⁵⁰⁵

It is significant that **the Lamb** is pictured on **the throne**. Some have said that when **the end** comes and **Christ hands over the Kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power** of the devil, that **His** reign will end. But the fact that **He** is pictured on **the throne** during the Eternal Order shows us that **the Messiah is King of kings and Lord of lords** for all eternity (**17:14, 19:16**).

On each side of the river stood the tree of life. The placement of **the street, the river, and the tree** is less than clear. It seems that the tree is large enough to span **the river**, so that **the river is in the middle of the great street**, and **the tree** is on both sides of **the river**. **The tree of life** that existed in the garden of Eden (**Genesis 2:9, 3:11, 22-24**), will now return. It will be characterized by productivity, bearing **twelve kinds of fruit each month** of the year.⁵⁰⁶ Just as **Jesus** ate and drank after being raised from the dead, believers will eat and drink in **the Holy City**. The fact that months are identified as such in **the New Jerusalem** indicates that the orbital and rotational motions of the earth will go on as **God** established in the very beginning and that the moon likewise will continue orbiting around the earth.⁵⁰⁷

Presumably this means not only that everything will be made new but also that everything will then *stay* new. The law of entropy will no longer apply. Nothing will wear out or decay, no one will age or atrophy any more. Every **tree** will bear **fruit** abundantly and eternally. All things will remain eternally young and fresh and new, just as they were in the week of creation itself.⁵⁰⁸

And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. The word **healing**, or *therapeian*, can be understood as *health-giving*. The English word *therapeutic* is derived from this Greek word. Even though there is no sickness in the Eternal Order, the tree's **fruit and leaves** seem to contribute to the physical well-being of believers.⁵⁰⁹ **The leaves of the tree** will be like supernatural vitamins, since vitamins are taken not to treat illness, but to promote general health. Life in heaven will be fully energized, rich and exciting.⁵¹⁰ The word **nations** means *Gentiles*. This again shows that the Jewish-Gentile distinction will continue though there will be no functional difference.

The **tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:1-7)** caused Adam and Eve to know right from wrong. It is how they learned what sin was. That **tree** caused their spiritual death (the separation of their soul and spirit from **God**) and their physical death (separation of their soul and spirit from the body), and as a result *cost them* immortality. **The tree of life**, however, does the opposite. Eating **its** fruit *brings them* immortality.⁵¹¹