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The River of Life

Series: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

October 17, 2021

Revelation 22.1-5

I. **Context**

A. Prologue

1. **Revelation 1:7-8** (NASB95) — 7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

B. **Theme**

1. **Jesus Christ is coming**
 - a. Tribes of earth will mourn over Him
 - b. Eschatological triumph of Christ over the anti-Christian forces of evil in the world and in the heavenly realms
2. **Purpose – encourage the churches under great pressure**
 - a. Series: Between Rock and a Hard Place

C. How is this purpose accomplished?

1. **Four visions**
 - a. **“In the Spirit”**
2. **Revelation 1:9-10**
 - a. **First vision**
 - (1) The glorified Christ
 - (2) The messages to the seven churches
3. **Revelation 4:1-2**
 - a. **Second vision**
 - (1) The heavenly vision
 - (2) The tribulation
4. **Revelation 17:1-3**
 - a. **Third vision**
 - (1) The mystery of Babylon
 - (2) Judgment of Babylon
 - (3) Coming of Christ
 - (4) Millennium
 - (5) Final triumph and consummation
5. **Revelation 21:9-10**
 - a. **Fourth vision**
 - (1) The New Jerusalem

D. Last Vision – expanded view of New Jerusalem

1. **The Bride, the Wife of the Lamb – Revelation 21:9-14**

- a. The Church
- b. The Glory of God
- c. Gates – tribes of Israel
- d. Foundations – apostles
- 2. **The Measurement of the City – Revelation 21:15–17**
 - a. Cubic construction
 - b. Extraordinary dimensions
- 3. **The Material of the City – Revelation 21:18–21**
 - a. Jasper walls
 - b. Gold city, streets
 - c. Gates of pearl
 - d. Foundations with precious stones
- 4. **Its Moral Quality – Revelation 21:22–27**
 - a. No temple
 - b. Glory shines through Lamb
 - c. Nations and the light of the glory
 - d. Gates never shut
 - e. Nothing impure
- E. Implications
 - 1. Unity of the saints
 - 2. Incredible size of the church
 - a. Church of the centuries, OT and NT
 - 3. Fulfillment of moral quality for which we gain just a foretaste today
 - 4. Impossible for us to imagine experiencing God unmediated

II. **The River of Life**

- A. **Revelation 22:1–5** (NASB95) —
 - 1. 1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street.
 - 2. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
 - 3. 3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.
 - 4. 5 And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.
- B. **The River of the Water of Life**
 - 1. River of life – symbolic of eternal life in scripture
 - a. **Psalm 46:4** (NASB95) — 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, The holy dwelling places of the Most High.
 - b. **Ezekiel 47.1-12** – New Jerusalem with river of water flowing from under the temple, bringing healing and life to the Dead Sea
 - c. Increasing levels from a trickle to a river which could not be forded
 - d. **Ezekiel 47:7** (NASB95) — 7 Now when I had returned, behold, on

the bank of the river there were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

- e. **Ezekiel 47:9** (NASB95) — 9 “It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there and the others become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes.
- f. **Ezekiel 47:12** (NASB95) — 12 “By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing.”
- g. **Zechariah 14:8** (NASB95) — 8 And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.
- h. New Jerusalem – picturesque way of seeing that death is abolished in the redeemed people

2. Jesus’ words about the water of life

- a. **John 4:13–14** (NASB95) — 13 Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”
- b. **John 7:37–38** (NASB95) — 37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ ”

3. Disparaging remarks about sea

- a. **Revelation 21:1** (NASB95) — 1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.
- b. **Isaiah 57:20** (NASB95) — 20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud.

4. River in Eden

- a. **Genesis 2:10** (NASB95) — 10 Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.

5. Representation of eternal life

- a. Source – Jesus Christ

C. **From throne**

1. Same throne for both God and Lamb

- a. **Revelation 3:21** (NASB95) — 21 ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.’

- b. Identification of Father and Son
 - c. Same throne for judgment?
 - d. **2 Corinthians 5:10** (NASB95) — 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
 - e. **Romans 14:10** (NASB95) — 10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.
2. God is the sole source of eternal life
 - a. Any attempt to circumvent God ends in death
 3. Middle of the street
 - a. Not meant literally
 - b. Central to the city is eternal life
- D. **Tree of life**
1. Genesis
 - a. **Genesis 2:9** (NASB95) — 9 Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 - b. **Genesis 3:22–24** (NASB95) — 22 Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”— 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.
 2. Represents eternal life again – through Jesus Christ
 - a. **John 3:36** (NASB95) — 36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”
 - b. **John 6:54** (NASB95) — 54 “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”
 - c. **John 20:31** (NASB95) — 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.
 3. Tree of life is indication of the consummation of everything Jesus accomplished in His life and ministry
 - a. Including the final transformation
 - b. **2 Corinthians 5:4** (NASB95) — 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.

4. Eternal life rooted in relationship with Jesus
 - a. **John 17:3** (NASB95) — 3 “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”
5. Transformation complete in the eschaton
 - a. **1 John 3:2** (NASB95) — 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.
6. Different crop of fruit each month
 - a. Unlike any earthly tree
 - b. No death cycle!
 - c. **Ezekiel 47:12** (NASB95) — 12 “By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing.”
7. Leaves for healing
 - a. John emphasizes the healing powers of the leaves while Ezekiel emphasizes fruit bearing
 - b. Again, population of glorified church from every nation
 - c. Eternal life will be the ultimate peace between nations
 - d. Not that in the eternal state the nations will be wounded and in need of healing
 - e. But that in the eternal state, with eternal life, healing is complete
- E. **No more curse**
 1. Curse in Eden
 - a. **Genesis 3:14–19** (NASB95) — 14 The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life; 15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.” 16 To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.” 17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. 18 “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; 19 By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.”
 2. Deuteronomy blessings and curses; death and life
 3. Nothing but life in the New Jerusalem

- a. **Zechariah 14:11** (NASB95) — 11 People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.
 - 4. Reason for transformation – God and Lamb will be in it
 - a. **Revelation 21:3** (NASB95) — 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them...”
- F. **Bondservants** will serve Him; see His face; name on foreheads
 - 1. Redeemed will forever serve God
 - 2. Immediate presence of God
 - a. **Job 19:25–27** (NASB95) — 25 “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. 26 “Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; 27 Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!”
 - (1) Desire of every Jew to see God
 - (2) Beatific vision – see God and be transformed
 - 3. Contrast with OT seeing God = death
 - a. **Exodus 33:20** (NASB95) — 20 But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”
 - b. In the eternal state, the redeemed, made holy, seeing God elicits life
 - 4. Incarnation brought the presence of God to men in person of Christ
 - a. To see Christ was to see the Father
 - b. **John 14:7** (NASB95) — 7 “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”
 - c. **John 14:9** (NASB95) — 9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”
 - d. Still a mediated vision, realized by faith
 - 5. In the end, faith turns into sight
 - a. **Psalms 17:15** (NASB95) — 15 As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.
 - b. **Matthew 5:8** (NASB95) — 8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”
 - c. **1 John 3:2** (NASB95) — 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.
 - 6. Will completely belong to God
 - a. Name on foreheads
 - (1) **Revelation 13:16** (NASB95) — 16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free

men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead...

(2) **Revelation 3:12** (NASB95) — 12 ‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; 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 out of heaven from My God, and My new name.’

(3) **Revelation 14:1** (NASB95) — 1 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

G. **No longer any night**

1. Cf **Revelation 21:25** (NASB95) — 25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed...
2. No need for lamp nor sun
 - a. God Himself is the light

H. **Reign**

1. Not important who will be objects of reign
 - a. Redeemed earth – original dominion restored
2. Issue is that we will share that office with Christ