

THE TREE OF LIFE

Revelation 22

We finish our look at Revelation with the last chapter, chapter 22. This gives a wonderful promise of what awaits those who follow Jesus. John begins:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city.

Rivers were vital to people in the lands of the Bible. Most of the land was dry. It was the flooding of rivers like the Nile in Egypt and the Tigris and Euphrates in modern day Iraq that enabled civilizations to grow. The city of Antioch is modern day Syria is where the first focused on sharing the Gospel with Gentiles and where the name “Christian” was first used. This city prospered because the River Orantes flowed through it. Rivers are seen to represent how God’s blessing flow to us as in the words from the Psalmist:

There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. (Psalm 46:5-6)

On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

We already saw the tree of life mentioned early in Revelation. In the Garden of Eden there were two trees—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve ate from the latter as they were told not to do, so they and all sinners since have been barred from the tree of life.

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.

We think of what St. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13 about being face-to-face with God:

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I am also known.

Jesus is the light of the world. In God’s presence there will be no darkness. John in his Gospel uses darkness to illustrate evil. When Judas goes to betray Jesus, he writes, “It was dark.” That is why John says:

There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

As Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians:

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent His angel to show His servants the things that must soon take place."

"Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll."

This is the sixth of seven "blessed" found in Revelation. Here are the other six:

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (1:7)

Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." (14:13)

Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed. (16:15) "

Then the angel said to me, "Write this: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God." (19:9)

Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (20:6)

The last "blessed" is later in chapter 22:

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. (22:14)

Remember 7 is the number of God. How great are God's blessings to us!

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!"

“Then he told me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy.”

Look, I am coming soon!

This statement can cause a lot of problems for people. If Jesus says He is coming soon, then where has He been? We hear what the Psalmist says about God’s perception of time:

A thousand years in God’s sight are just like yesterday past, like a watch in the night. (Psalm 90:4)

2 Peter 3 uses this to support this statement:

Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ He promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

My reward is with Me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.