

Study 46: Revelation 22:1-7

1 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

- Once again, heaven is showing John something. This time it is a river. I heard a preacher say one time that everything that was begins in Genesis concludes in Revelation. I'm not sure that's true about everything that was introduced in Genesis, but there is a river mentioned early in Genesis:

A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters (Genesis 2:10).

- Now we see a clear river flowing from God's throne. A river in Bible times represented life, for it was a source of water for people, crops and transportation. This heavenly river would represent the same thing. The heavenly river is for the good of men so that God can water and sustain the growth that He has begun. God is able to finish what He started in your life.

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy--to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen (Jude 1:24-25)

being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

- The river is crystal clear. God has no hidden agenda as He works in our lives. He is working to see Christ formed in us. At the same time, He never apologizes for what He does in our lives. The river comes from the throne, the seat of His government. You must never compare what you are going through to that of someone else. God is working in your life according to His desire and will for you:

For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing (Philippians 2:13-14).

2 down the middle of the great street of the city. 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.

- You cannot avoid the river of God. It runs through the center of what God is doing and where He lives: in the midst of His people.

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified (John 7:38-39).

- God is working to bear fruit in your life and fruit in the Church. This fruit, planted and watered by God, is for the healing of the nations. The nations won't need healing in heaven; that is why I think Revelation is talking about the here and now. What is the Spirit working into your life at this time?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).

- The fruit of the Spirit is just that: of the Spirit. It comes from the Spirit; you can't will it or produce it in your own strength. It belongs to the Spirit; no one can take credit for the fruit that God produces in and through us. It is up to us to crucify the sinful nature; but only God can produce the Spirit nature.
- You can't rush fruit to harvest. It develops in its own time. The river nourishes the fruit development, but then fruit from a tree is not for the tree. The fruit is for someone else to eat and enjoy. God is doing something in your life, the benefit of which will be for others, not you. And it will all be for God's glory. Do you know what He is doing?

3 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.

- Revelation constantly focuses on the work of Jesus. There is no longer any curse because Jesus removed the curse by becoming a curse Himself:

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." (Galatians 3:10-13)

- But there are times when you must work to apply this truth and make it a reality in your life. You must sometimes go back and remove the curses that may be on your life due to the sins of your forefathers. Is there a recurring problem or tragedy in your

family line? Then consider specifically praying and breaking the curse, for Jesus came to remove all curses. Better yet, have someone pray with you.

- It has always been God's desire to live among His people. Since Jesus has removed the curse, God is now free to live in the hearts of His people. At one time, God lived among His people by means of the tabernacle and then the Temple. Now He lives in the hearts of men through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God (Exodus 29:46)

"As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, carry out my regulations and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel." (1 King 6:12-13)

He said: "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. The house of Israel will never again defile my holy name-- neither they nor their kings-- by their prostitution and the lifeless idols of their kings at their high places (Ezekiel 43:7).

"Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you," declares the LORD" (Zechariah 2:10)

- But we must honor the Lord's presence by living holy lives. Are you doing anything that would cause your "house guest" to be uncomfortable at this point in time?

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4:30-32).

4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

- Facial expressions are an important part of communication between people. That is why letters and emails are somewhat limited, for you cannot see or hear the person. I have always thought that "seeing God's face," while impossible to do, referred to knowing God intimately. It meant to be sensitive to His most subtle wish or command.
- I want to know if God is smiling or if He is "raising His eyebrow" at something I have said or done. I want to see Him nod His head in approval, even if He doesn't say anything. That requires being close to Him and watching Him. I know that this may

sound strange, but can we get to know God so well that He can communicate with us without dramatic events taking place in our lives?

- I don't think that His name will literally be on our foreheads, but I do think God will constantly be on our minds:

Eat unleavened bread during those seven days; nothing with yeast in it is to be seen among you, nor shall any yeast be seen anywhere within your borders. On that day tell your son, 'I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt. This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand (Exodus 13:7-9).

- When something is on your forehead, it is impossible to forget about it. You see it when you look in a mirror and feel it because usually nothing is there. I think the presence of the Spirit in our lives reminds us about God; it is impossible to go too far without thinking about Him. Do you agree or disagree?

5 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 forever and ever.

- We have discussed the issue of the light of God in previous studies. Yet there are many more references to light in the Bible that we did not look at. Let's look at a few from the Psalms:

Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD (Psalm 89:15).

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever (Psalm 118:26-29).

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path (Psalm 119:105).

The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple (Psalm 119:130).

If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you (Psalm 139:11-12)

- And then there is one more important passage about light in the New Testament:

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).

- Take two minutes and two minutes only to write down what these last six passages about light say to you. Do it quickly! Do you make a regular confession of sin? Do you need to? Are there dark times of depression or loneliness in which you need to see God's light shining? Go ahead, spend some time and write down your impressions.

6 The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

- We have not seen the word "soon" since the earliest chapters of this study. What does soon mean? Soon means, well, it means soon! Soon to the churches of Revelation would not be 2,000 years later! Do you agree?
- It is amazing how many times the Bible expresses that its message is true and trustworthy. Even Jesus reinforced what He was saying with the same endorsement, "Verily, verily" or "Truly, truly I say unto thee." Why is that? Because falseness is so pervasive that the truth seems totally bizarre at times. We must be reminded that it is truth!
- God is the God of the spirits of the prophets. He controls what they see, when they show it and who they show it to. There are some prophets today, I am convinced, who are "loose cannons." They are running around sharing words and prophecies that are premature or shared with the wrong people. May the Lord of the spirits of the prophets rule in prophecy and may the Lord be exalted in the prophecies and not the prophets themselves!
- I believe in prophecy, don't get me wrong. But the Church as a whole must do a better job of judging prophecy. I take the prophecies I have received very seriously; I have written them down, and study and review them regularly. But I take the time to judge them and then take the time to do my part, if there is one, to see them come to pass.
- I abide by the truth and guidelines in the following passages:

Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful." (2 Chronicles 20:20)

Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets (Amos 3:7)

Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil (1Thessalonians 5:19-22).

7 "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

- The book of Revelation is a prophecy. This doesn't mean it's some hidden, mystical book that is hard to grasp (although it is harder than most). A prophecy is a message from God and God wants to be understood. Anything that is only available to a select few isn't a message from God.
- What does it mean that the Lord is coming soon? Here are some of my thoughts:
 1. He is literally coming soon. But Revelation was written 2,000 years ago and He still hasn't returned. So that interpretation is out.
 2. The presence of the Spirit makes the return of the Lord feel like it will be soon. Almost every generation has felt that the Lord would return in their lifetime, this one included. When the Spirit comes into our lives and lives in us, we feel the closeness of Jesus and His Word. He feels like He is coming soon.
 3. We don't understand what "the return of the Lord soon" really means. Earlier in Revelation, John wrote:

Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you (Revelation 3:3).

- Could the return of the Lord be our death or some other visitation where the Lord works to set things straight? The return of the Lord in my life is "soon." I am 52 years old and it seems like things are happening pretty quickly as my life finishes. What I have been waiting for the Lord to do seems to be taking place at a faster pace. Is this Him returning in my life "soon"?
- What do you think?