

OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

REVELATION

NEW JERUSALEM
FROM THE
INSIDE

22:1-5

Revelation Observation Study Series

Revelation 22:1-5

New Jerusalem from the Inside

The video of the city, which began in Revelation 21:9, is still playing. The angel has shown John some unbelievably breathtaking sights—the ultimate tour! John must be *exhausted* by this time! Maybe some fresh, sweet, cold water would help!

Speaking of water... (I admit it, as far as segues go, that one was... bad.)

Take note that Revelation 22:1-5 is part and parcel with Revelation 21. There were no chapter divisions when God wrote this book for us. They were added by men to "help" us; sometimes, they don't. Revelation 21 shows us the *outside* of the new Jerusalem. Revelation 22:1-5 shows us the *inside*. It's that same "zooming in" pattern we have seen before.

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. 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. Revelation 22:1-2

The angel shows John a river in the new Jerusalem, a river that contains the water of life. It's clear as crystal, and beautifully matches the decor of the rest of the city.

The river comes from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The Greek word used for throne is "*thronos*" and means a stately seat, by implication, power, or (concretely) a potentate. There is no need to envision God and the Lamb in the same place; they share the "throne" because they are both ruling and reigning. They are part of the Godhead, 3 in 1. Revelation 3:21 helps us understand how it is possible to have separate "thrones" and yet share "the throne."

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." Revelation 3:21

Along with chapter and verse divisions, punctuation was also added by men in an attempt to help make the text more readable. The phrase, "in the middle of its street" is a good example. The punctuation leads us to understand it as belonging to verse one, but the verse division could point us in the opposite direction as if it were starting a new thought and actually belonged with the sentence beginning, "on either side of the

river...”.

What do we do in such cases? First, we let context rule. Sometimes that will take the confusion away completely. Other times, even context does not offer much help. If there is clear, repeated doctrine about the same subject in the Bible, we can use it to determine how we should read the passage. When neither works, the best thing to do is leave it alone. Where God has not spoken, neither should we.

In this case, the meaning of the passage doesn't change a lot, no matter which sentence you connect it to. The river is in the middle of the street (singular) either way.

On both sides of the river of life is the tree of life. Does this mean the same tree spans the river somehow? Could be. Or could it be there are groves of the "tree of life" united in their root system (tree is singular) on both sides of the river? Might be. The text does not tell us *how* this tree looks, just that it *is*. More importantly, the crucial word is undoubtedly *life!*

On the sixth day of creation, God caused the tree of life to grow out of the ground of the garden in Eden.

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. Genesis 2:9

After man disobeyed God by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he died, he was separated from God. He no longer had the union with God that he had previously enjoyed. He was dead in his sin.

God took his Holy Spirit from man and cursed the serpent, the woman, the man, and the earth. He then drove the man out of the garden and stationed warrior angels and the flaming sword to keep man from ever having access to it.

Why? Because God didn't want mankind to live forever in the state of death, separation from Him. God promised to send The Seed (right in the middle of His curse on the serpent) to bring eternal life in union with God!

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—therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. 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. Genesis 3:22-24

In Revelation 2:7, in His letter to the church in Ephesus, Jesus promised that He would allow the overcomers (the true church) to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise

of God.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God. Revelation 2:7

In our present scene in Revelation 22:1-5, we see that same tree of life. Who is granted the right to eat from it? At least the overcomers!

What else can we learn from Revelation 2:7? We can know that the tree of life is in the Paradise of God. Hmm... In Revelation 22:2, we see the tree of life in the city of God, the new Jerusalem. What is the conclusion? The Paradise of God and the new Jerusalem are synonymous. Cool, huh!

We now learn specific details about the tree of life; it bears 12 crops of fruit, yielding a fresh harvest each month. Does that mean a different type of fruit each month, each type appearing annually? Possibly. Or does that mean that it's a variety pack of 12 different fruits which grow anew every month? Could be. No one knows, so we have to let it go, just like the stones. Where God has not spoken, I will stay silent.

No matter how or what the tree produces, it's still a fantastic tree! This is just a taste (grinning...) of what is waiting for us. As an overcomer, I plan on eating every type of fruit this marvelous tree produces!

What about the leaves of this tree? They are for the healing of the nations. The aloe vera plant is often called a miracle plant. You just break a leaf open, put it on any wound whatsoever, and boom, you're healed! I think maybe the healing powers of aloe vera plant are a little overrated, but the leaves of the tree of life are not; they will heal nations and nations of peoples!

Hmmm... What might the kings of the nations pick up when they come to town? Leaves to take home to heal their people? Could be.

Let's remember who the nations will be. They are the righteous offspring of the Gentile sheep who enter into the millennial reign, the righteous ones who survive the great tribulation, and those faithful and obedient to Jesus Christ during His millennial reign. The sheep go straight from the judgment of the nations into the millennial kingdom and are then relocated to the new earth in the new heaven.

Just to clarify. The nations are *saved*, but they are *not* part of Christ's body; they are *not* part of the church. All those allowed entrance to the new heaven and new earth are *saved* because they have been rescued from God's wrath. Everyone and everything that ends up in the lake of fire is *not saved*.

I know, the head-scratching begins whenever I talk about the whole "different groups" thing. Don't worry. You're doing great! If you need to, go back and review what you've already learned. You can do this!

Back to the tree...

Why will the nations need healing, anyway? We are never told this group gets glorified bodies, yet they will live eternally. A glorified body will never corrupt, decay, or die. But not so with a non-glorified body; evidently, it will need healing. The healing will come through the leaves of the tree of *life*.

So, are you with me? Sure, you are!

Our minds cannot fully understand what God has prepared for us; He has told us as much. This is all greater than we can comprehend. It is also true that we are not able to fully comprehend Him or His ways. But, in trying to understand, we come closer to understanding. In reasoning through His Word, we learn more than we are aware of. The Holy Spirit is our resident teacher; He will not fail in directing us to Truth.

More good stuff ahead!

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; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. Revelation 22:3-4

In the new Jerusalem, there will no longer be *any* curse! There are many, many curses on our present planet, both against it and us. The first curses were issued in the garden against the serpent, the woman, the man, and the ground. Those who are under the Law are under a curse. And there are many more. But, in our future home, *nothing* will ever be cursed!

Just think of it; no weeds, no toil, no pain, no death; only blessing upon blessings!

No separation from God and the Lamb! Their *throne* will be in the city with us! *They* will be in the new Jerusalem with us! Immanuel! God with us! Consider the promise the Lamb made to the overcomers in His letter to the church in Philadelphia.

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore... Revelation 3:12a

Who are the bond-servants? The church. Us. What will we do forever and ever? We will serve Him even beyond the horizon of eternity future! This is one of the most glorious blessings we will receive; the privilege to serve our God!

What have you pictured yourself doing for all of eternity? Many people think it will be a time for personal pleasure, with God being the bestower of all blessings and delights, as

if He lives to serve us. Far be it from us to even think such a thing! To realize, instead, that we will be His servants for all of eternity, sadly, can be a real bummer for many.

Why do we think everything, including "heaven," is all about us? We've been programmed to read the Bible that way, thanks to the church's present-day culture of entitlement and license. The visible church (not the actual body of Christ) is biblically illiterate because it wants to be. If they actually studied the Bible and let God's word speak for itself, a great big bunch of their *own* beliefs would be all messed up!

As I write, I am reminded of just how much I appreciate you studying God's word. Keep it up. You will find that it is *more* than worth it! These verses are for you!

I will meditate on Your precepts and regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word. Psalm 119:15-16

As a child, it was described as something similar to a really long vacation, where you just sit around relaxing on clouds. As a tiny child, I remember part of a conversation with my parents in which I asked if there would be grape juice and bunk beds in heaven. They, of course, assured me there would be, along with everything else that I liked. I thought heaven was all about *me*. I pictured myself lounging on a cloud with a goblet of grape juice in my hand, perhaps with a set of bunk beds in the background (also perched on a cloud.)

While it is true that in eternity we will receive blessings, delights, and joys immeasurable from God, it will not be about *us*. It has *always been* about God, and it will *always be* about God!

That makes so much sense! We are His bond-servants *now*.

For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. 2 Corinthians 4:5

And we will be His bond-servants *then*.

...the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him;
... Revelation 22:3

Don't think of eternity as being one big cloud party, because it won't be; rather, it will be more like a glory gala with our glorious God as the center of attention. God created His creation so His glory would be seen. What will be seen in the new heavens, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem? God's glory! It's all about His glory! He deserves and demands to be served *then* just as much as *now*. Note the contrast; those who refuse to serve Him *now* will be tormented *then*.

How will we serve Him? What will we be doing? I can't answer that completely; it might be many things. One thing is sure; we will worship God. If you run cross-references

where worship and service are both found, you will find they go hand in hand. You serve what you worship, and you worship what you serve.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Romans 12:1

Another way we will serve God is to reign forever and ever. We'll look at that in just a moment.

What is another blessing God's bond-servants will receive? We will see His face!

Moses asked God if he could see His glory; God responded that no man could see His face without dying. He did let Moses see His back after He passed by Moses; that was all the glory Moses' earthly body could handle.

Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen." Exodus 33:18-23

Not so in our new glorified bodies; we will finally be able to endure the awesomeness of His full glory. We will see God's face! We can presently see God through His Son, His Holy Spirit, His Word, and His creation. *We cannot see Him face to face, not yet, but we will! We will behold Him face to face!*

Ever worn a t-shirt that said the name of your state or the name of your favorite team? Wearing the name showed you had an association or connection of some kind. But when you engrave your name on something you own, it's to show possession. Think back to the Lamb's promise to the overcomers in His letter to the church in Philadelphia.

...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. Revelation 3:12b

God's name will be on the foreheads of His bond-servants, along with the name of the city of God, and the Lamb's new name. We have a connection, or union, with Him that is intimate and unbreakable. We are His children, so we will bear His name (just as we do now when we call ourselves, "Christian.") We are one with Him. We belong to Him; we are His special, treasured possession! We are holy to Him, set apart for His use only! The Lamb has made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father. Glory to Him!

Aaron was the high priest of God under the Old Covenant, a picture of the New Covenant, the one God's bond-servants are in.

You shall also make a plate of pure gold and shall engrave on it, like the engravings of a seal, 'Holy to the LORD.' You shall fasten it on a blue cord, and it shall be on the turban; it shall be at the front of the turban. It shall be on Aaron's forehead... Exodus 28:36-38a

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. Revelation 22:3-5

No more night; we've seen quite a few "no mores" since the beginning of Revelation 21, haven't we? No more sea. No more death. No more mourning. No more crying. No more pain. No more curse. No more night. Sounds terrific to me!

No need for a candle, a flashlight, a lamp, or even the sun. No use for it, because our need for light will be amply supplied by the glory of the Lord God, Himself. No more darkness. No more shadows. No more gloom and murkiness. The rays of God's glory will shine in and through every nook and cranny of our existence. All will be revealed, all will be brightened, enlightened, and illuminated—all the time, forever. The Son will rise, and there will never again be a sunset.

We are told in 1 Timothy 6:16 that God *"dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see."* The light of the glory of His presence is now impossible for us to view, just as it was in Moses' day, but in the not too distant future, in the new Jerusalem, in our new glorified bodies—we will know Him as He is. We will bathe in His glorious light for all of eternity.

Who will reign forever and ever? Who is "they"? The Lord God's bond-servants. We will be reigning royalty, or "kings" if you will. We have already seen in Revelation that overcomers will be given authority to rule over the nations.

He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father. Revelation 2:26–27

But did you realize that we will also judge angels? What a hard thing to grasp!

Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? 1 Corinthians 6:3

For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. But one has testified somewhere, saying, "WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU REMEMBER HIM? OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM? "YOU

HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET." For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. Hebrews 2:5-8

God will not submit the world to come to angels, but rather, to us. Part of our service as bond-slaves will be in ruling and reigning over the nations and other groups. We will be elevated above the angels and "the world to come." We will have abundant responsibility. We must serve Him well.