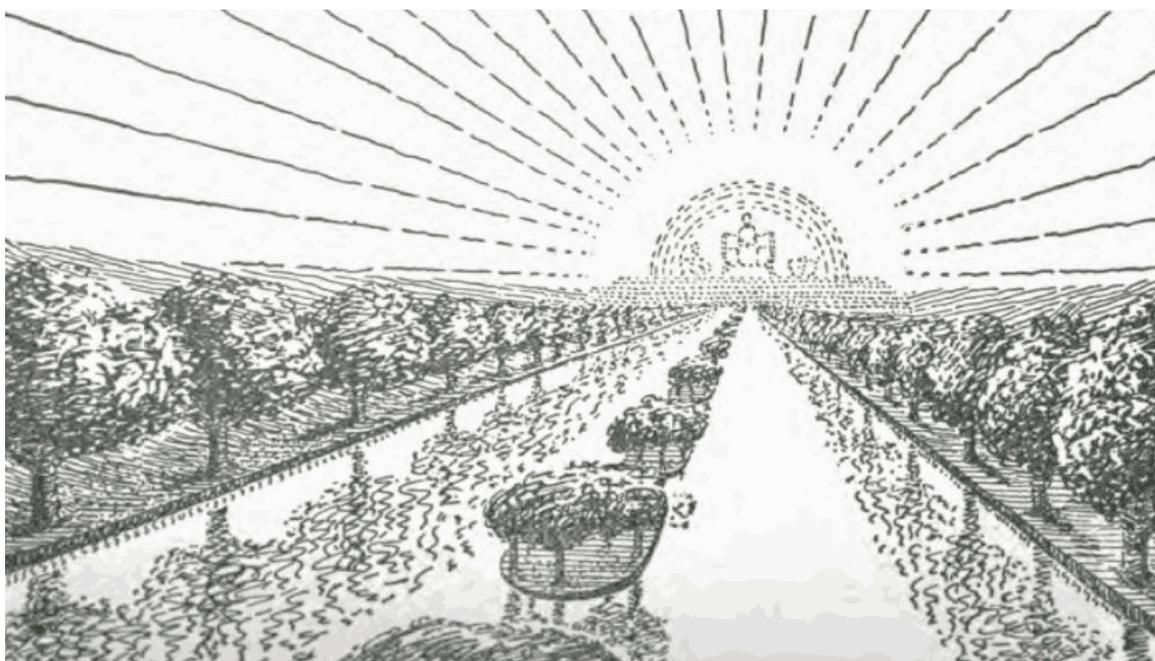


“APOCALYPSE SOON”**“IT ALL ENDS WELL - Part 1” (Revelation 22:1-13)**

The Apostle John had been taken on a personal guided tour of the New Jerusalem. We can only but imagine what a blessing that must have been to the heart of this aged saint suffering on Patmos.



And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
(v1-2)

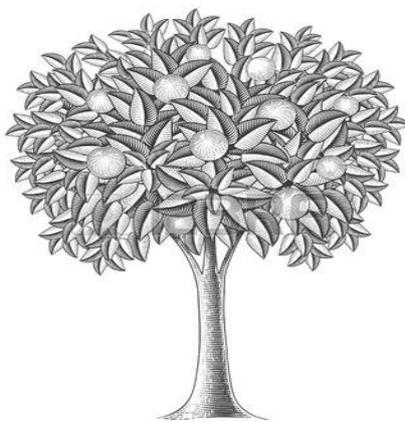
John was then shown the internal characteristics of this unique city. The first thing John saw was a river. This river is described as, “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal.” It is a sparkling, unpolluted channel of water that flows “out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” down through the New Jerusalem. Water is key to life on earth. Towns and cities spring up historically around water because of it is essential to the survival of mankind. Likely in the New Jerusalem this, “river of water of life” symbolizes the everlasting life flowing from the presence of Almighty God, “He that bath the Son bath life; and he that bath not the Son of God bath not life.” (1 John 5:12) Its source is divine and its flow is endless. This river is the one that the Psalmist revealed, “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.” (Psa. 46:4)

*There is a river, and it flows from deep within
There is a fountain, that frees the soul from sin
Come to this water; there is a vast supply
There is a river, that never shall run dry.*

Another important feature is in the middle of this city there is not just a river but also a tree, “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve

manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month.” Just as the city had 12 gates and 12 foundations, the tree of life will yield 12 crops of fruit. This is the heavenly counterpart to the Tree of Life in the original Garden of Eden, “*And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*” (Gen. 2:9; cf. 3:22) John MacArthur observes,

“The tree of life was a familiar Jewish concept that expressed blessing (cf. 2:7; Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4), and the celestial tree symbolizes the blessing of eternal life. That the tree bears twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month emphasizes the infinite variety that will fill heaven. The use of the term month does not refer to time, since this is the eternal state and time is no more. It is an anthropomorphic expression of the joyous provision of eternity couched in the familiar terms of time.”



The fruit of this tree of life will be celestial food for God’s people, “*which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*” We know that angels are able to eat food (cf. Gen. 18:1-8) so it is not inconceivable that we will enjoy these celestial fruits for all of eternity. The word “*healing*” here is the Greek word *therapeia* but should not be taken as to mean that it is healing the saints from disease since the effects of the curse such as illness or hurt have been eternally eradicated. It is more likely that the *therapeia* here is to eternally strengthen us to serve the Lord. These fruits may well impart, nourish, and sustain eternal life to the whole being of the redeemed - body, soul, and spirit. It is for the healing or health of the nations of the saints. Seiss commented, “Like the golden table of showbread which ever stood in the ancient Tabernacle and Temple for the priests to eat, so the Tree of Life stands in all the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, with its monthly fruit for the immortal king-priests of heaven.”

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. (v3-5)

The curse will be partially lifted during the Millennium when the earth will bloom and blossom so that even the desert will no longer be desolate and dry.

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even

with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. (Isaiah 35:1-2)

However, the New Heaven and the New Earth will be infinitely greater than the Millennium. This time we are explicitly told, *“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.”* This expression *“And there shall be no more curse”* is one of the most glorious in all of Scripture. Life as we know it now is radically different in almost every aspect. This is truly the Blessed Hope! Swindoll noted,

“Evil, sorrow, suffering, sin, and selfishness will not exist in the Celestial City. Death will never enter our minds. No good thing will ever come to an end, as God's people give praise and honor to Him and enjoy Him forever. That's our true home. That's where my mother is. That's where my father is. That's where my believing grandparents and friends and relatives who have passed on have gone. They're home – and they will be home there forever. Feeling homesick yet?”



The final earth will be a full restoration of God's original perfection for this world. All the terrible consequences that entered this world with sin are now completely reversed. The greatest feature of this renewed world will be the intimate fellowship between God and His people, *“And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads.”* We will *“serve Him”* and we will *“see His face.”* We will spend all of eternity is serving Him and being with Him. That overshadows everything. MacArthur notes,

“Being perfectly holy and righteous, they will be able to endure the heavenly level of the blazing, glorious light from God's presence without being consumed—something impossible for mortal men (Ex. 33:20; John 1:18; 6:46; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12). The redeemed will also be God's personal possession; His name will be on their foreheads (cf. 3:12; 14:1). That identification will leave no doubt as to who they belong to forever.”

Because the effects of sin are completely reversed, we never feel tired. There is no need to sleep. Hence, *“And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the*

Lord God giveth them light.” The limits of time we are now constrained by today are absent there in eternal celestial bliss, “*and they shall reign for ever and ever.*”

And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to shew unto His servants the things which must shortly be done.. (v6)

The last section of this book concludes the glorious visions with words of application to the readers. It will bring John and us down to earth with a bump! We must learn certain lessons from the visions of the future. John was given a definite assurance that these visions can be fully trusted, “*These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to shew unto His servants the things which must shortly be done.*” When God ordains events they will certainly come to pass exactly as He promised. No power in this universe can inhibit or alter that fact, “*yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.*” (Isa. 46:11b)

Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. (v7)

There is a change of speaker in this verse. The speaker is now the Lord Jesus Christ, “*Behold, I come quickly.*” The Lord reminds His servants that there is a blessing to the one that, “*keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*” This verb “*keepeth*” has the idea of heeding or guarding. We are called to study and meditate on this Book of Revelation. It has profound lessons for us. The truth of it must be defended and proclaimed to all around us. It must also be obeyed. These great prophetic insights are not given to us to simply debate or to entertain but to change our lives.

The Lord is coming to Judge this world. That was the message that old Enoch preached, “*And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*” (Jude 14-15) We must prepare ourselves daily for the Second Coming. It is to be a Blessed Hope and a means of grace to guard our testimony (cf. 2 Peter 3:11-14)

And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. (v8-9)

John reacted to these words, “*And I John saw these things, and heard them.*” His response to this glorious and awesome sights was to worship, “*And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.*” The act of worship was the right response but John misdirected it to the angel rather than the One who sent the angel. The angel corrected him, “*Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*” We must never worship the creature instead of the Creator. Only God alone is worthy of our worship.

And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. (v10-11)

The angel then spoke again. He commanded John that these prophetic visions were not to be hidden, “*Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.*” The message of Revelation is not some cryptic series of clues for only a few enlightened souls but a message for

this world. The imminent return of Christ is a message that must be preached from John's day at the end of the first century, "*for the time is at hand.*" The soon return of Christ is a warning to those who are ungodly. Hence the warning, "*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*" The Apostle was declaring that the way to hell is to keep on going the direction the ungodly are on. John MacArthur notes,

"It is sobering to realize that people's response to God's gospel truth in this life will determine their eternal destiny. When they die, or when the Lord returns, their character will be forever fixed. Those who respond to the warnings in Revelation will live forever in heaven. But those who fail to heed those warnings and repent will remain forever in their sinful state. It is also true that God's Spirit will not always call sinners to repentance, and Scripture warns sinners not to harden their hearts to the point where God judicially abandons them (Ps. 95:7-8; Heb. 3:15; 4:7). Yet, tragically, those warnings often go unheeded, and the opportunity to repent and believe the gospel is wasted (cf. Matt. 25:1-13; Luke 13:24-25)."

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. (v12-13)

The Lord Jesus Christ suddenly spoke again. He reminded John that His return is imminent, "*And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*" The Greek term that is translated *quickly*" has more the idea of suddenness rather than how soon Christ will come. Christ is coming in the twinkling of an eye (around one trillioneth of a second!)

The Lord underlines that Christians will be rewarded in accordance with their faithfulness to the Lord on earth, "*and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*" The Bible makes this clear in repeated passages.

Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:9-10; cf. 1 Cor. 3:9-15; Matt 19:29; Luke 19:17)

There are some commentators who argue that every saint will be treated the same in glory. But the majority seem to think that there is clear biblical evidence for distinctions between those who have been more faithful and those who haven't. Lot will not receive the same reward as Abraham! What we fail to do for the Lord will have very real consequences both here on earth and in heaven for all eternity. Choices have consequences. We want to make an impact while we can because no one lives forever. Our lives must count for something. We must seek not to waste it on things that don't ultimately matter. The return of Christ should be an inspiration and a warning to believers of the danger of careless and inconsistent Christianity. The assurance of salvation should not be misused in complacency. John warned the saints of his day, "*Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.*" (2 John 8) R.C. Sproul observes,

"There are degrees of reward that are given in heaven. I'm surprised that this answer surprises so many people. I think there's a reason Christians are shocked when I say there are various levels of heaven as well as gradations of severity of punishment in hell."

We should never imagine, however, that there will be deep sadness in heaven with a group of jealous saints with long faces looking on enviously on those who have received greater rewards. Every saint is promised a “*crown of righteousness*” (2 Tim. 4:8), a “*crown of life*” (James 1:12), and a “*crown of glory*.” (1 Peter 5:4) Just being in the New Jerusalem for all eternity is an amazing reward in itself. It is more reward than any of us deserve.



The Lord declared, “*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*” The Alpha and the Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This alphabet reflects in its combinations all the knowledge of this universe. The Saviour is the One “*In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*” (Col. 2:3) It is also a declaration of the One that transcends time as the Eternal One, “*And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.*” (Col. 1:17)

We need to daily take time to think about Him and our eternal home. Paradise Lost will be Paradise Regained. Spurgeon urged his members, “We do not suppose that a man is shooting at a target if he does not look that way; nor can we imagine that a man’s ambition is fixed on heaven if he has no heavenward thoughts or aspirations.”

**His is the kingdom from pole unto pole,
Far above all while the ages shall roll,
With Him the victors, who follow’d His call,
Share in His royalty far above all.**

**Far above all! Far above all!
Jesus the crucified far above all!
High as His members upon Him we call,
God hath exalted Him far above all!**