

River of Life and the Tree of Life

by Zac Poonen

The river of life in Revelation 22 is a picture of the Holy Spirit, which brings life wherever it goes, and is restored to man through Jesus Christ, who is the way to partake of God's nature.

Scripture: Genesis 3:24, Ezekiel 47:1, John 7:37, 2 Corinthians 4:10, Revelation 22:1

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spirit Filled Life"

Description

Zac Poonen delves into the imagery of the river of water of life in Revelation 22:1-2, symbolizing the Holy Spirit bringing life and healing. He connects this to Ezekiel's vision of the life-giving river and Jesus' promise of rivers of living water to believers. Poonen emphasizes the Spirit-filled life where believers are carried by the Holy Spirit, no longer bound to earthly limitations. The purity and transparency of the river reflect the need for God and Christ to be exalted on the throne for the Spirit to work powerfully.

Transcript

Rev 22:1-2: And He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street and 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.

This is obviously a picture of the Holy Spirit.

In Ezekiel 47:1-12, we read of a river, about which it says that "every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes will live" (v.9). The river brings life wherever it goes. Jesus referred to this passage and said, "He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" (Jn.7:37,38).

Ezekiel went deeper and deeper into this river until he came to the place where his feet had to leave the earth. Thereafter, he was carried by the river. That is a picture of the Spirit-filled life - where we are no longer earth-bound. Our feet leave the earth and the Holy Spirit carries us onward and upward.

We see the emphasis on "clear as crystal" in relation to this river. We find a repeated emphasis on purity and transparency, again and again in chapters 21 and 22, with words such as "clear", "transparent", "pure as glass", etc.

We notice that the river flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, teaching us that the Holy Spirit works in power only where God and Christ are given their rightful place on the throne.

The opportunity that Adam lost to take part in the tree of life has now been restored to man. We find a lot of similarity between Gen. 2 and Rev.22.

The tree of life symbolizes the life of God Himself - eternal life or the divine nature that we can now partake of. Eternal life does not mean "existing forever", for those who go to the lake of fire also exist for ever. But they do not have eternal life. Eternal life means a life which had no beginning and has no end. That is the life of God Himself. That is what is symbolized in the tree of life.

Adam foolishly went to the tree of knowledge, instead of to the tree of life, just like many do today, who seek for Bible-knowledge rather than life. The tree of knowledge of good and evil is not found in Rev.22. It has disappeared.

In front of the tree of life, God placed a flaming sword (Gen.3:24). This teaches us that a sword must fall upon our Self-life, if we are to take part of the tree of life. This is why most Christians would rather go to the tree of knowledge, in front of which there is no sword. To get Bible-knowledge, we don't have to die to our Self-life or take up the cross daily. But to partake of God's nature, we have to "bear the dying of Jesus in our body" always (2 Cor.4:10). We have to allow the sword to fall upon us.

The way of the cross is the way to the tree of life. The sword fell upon Jesus and He was crucified. Since we too were crucified with Him, the sword is to fall upon us too. Thus we can partake of the tree of life, which bears a new kind of fruit every month, and whose leaves bring healing.

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