

April 7, 2024 by Steve Brandon



What's So Great About the New Jerusalem?

Revelation 22:1-5

- 1. The Water of Life (verses 1-2a)**
- 2. The Tree of Life (verse 2b)**
- 3. The God of Life (verses 3-5)**

I want to begin this morning by showing you a picture of my favorite place on planet earth. Of all the places I have ever visited, this, by far is my favorite place. It's my in-law's home in Danville, California. This is where Yvonne grew up.

There is nothing particularly fancy about this house. It's a modest three room ranch house, nestled away in a very busy place in the San Ramon Valley in Northern California. The size of the lot isn't huge, about a third of an acre, but it does have a swimming pool in the back yard. The house isn't new. It was built in the 1940's. The house isn't in such great condition. When the house is sold, I'm quite sure that it will be torn down, to make room for a new house.

What makes this my favorite place on the planet is what this house represents. Yvonne and I have been married for almost 32 years. With only one exception (when Yvonne was pregnant with our fourth child), we have spent a week or two or three at this home every summer of our marriage. This house has become our family vacation spot. It's practically the cheapest vacation spot there is for us. We don't have any rent. We can use their cars to get around. We don't have to eat out. Our only cost is travel to get there, and our food from the grocery store. Every time that I'm at this home, it's a time of vacation and relaxation. it's a time for me to unwind. it's a time to spend with Yvonne's parents, who are great. it's a time for me to devote to my family.

Our children love this place. They have loved swimming the pool. The house is only a few miles from where two of their cousins live. The cousins found a cheap Nintendo 64 at a garage sale, which they could play as much as they wanted, because we had nothing like that in our house.

We have used this house as a central place from which we would often make side trips. From this house, we have taken day trips to San Francisco and Alcatraz and Muir Woods. we have taken camping trips to Yosemite and Sequoia. we have taken short trips to Los Angeles and Lake Tahoe.

Furthermore, even our travels to California have been memorable. We have driven the northern route to California, and have camped in the Badlands of South Dakota and Yellowstone of Wyoming. we have driven the southern route, visiting Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks. we have usually gone the central route across the United States. we have driven across the Salt Flats in Salt Lake City more times than I can count.

Vacations are intended to create memories. We have made plenty of family memories in this home, and traveling to this home. It's my favorite place on planet earth.

Perhaps you have a place like this? A cabin in the woods, A time share on the coast, A favorite water park in the Dells.

Whatever place may be your favorite, it will not last forever. In Revelation 21:1 we read, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away." Whatever your favorite place it is here on earth, it will pass away. But don't worry, you will have a new favorite place on the new earth. It will be in the New Jerusalem. This will be your favorite place, if indeed, you are in Christ and trusting in him.

This morning I want to tell you what's so great about this place. The title of my message this morning is, "What's So Great About the New Jerusalem?" My message comes from Revelation 22:1-5. Now, before I read the five verses that we will look at this morning, I want to set the context a bit.

For about the past eight months we have been working our way through the book of Revelation, chapter by chapter, verse by verse. We have seen the glory of Christ (in chapters 1-5). Chapter 1 included the a vision of Christ. Chapters 2 and 3 included the words of Christ as he spoke to the churches. Chapters 4 and 5 show us the worship of Christ, the Lamb upon the throne.

We have seen the wrath of Christ (in chapters 6-20), poured out in the seals, the trumpets and the bowls. Whenever the seals were opened, or the trumpets blown, or the bowls poured out, God's judgment came upon the earth.

Now, of course, his judgment doesn't come upon all on the earth. It comes upon those who have not trusted in Christ. It comes upon those who have rebelled against the Lord. But there are those who escape the judgment. whom the Lamb has redeemed (Revelation 5:9), who are washed in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14), who follow the Lamb wherever he goes (Revelation 14:4). These are the ones who are sealed and protected by God, for salvation and not for judgment. These are the great multitude who cry out, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:10). These are the ones invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9). These are the ones who will be with the Lamb in the New Jerusalem.

Are you one of them? Have you confessed your sin to Jesus? Have you trusted in his sacrifice upon the cross? Then you will enjoy everything described in Revelation 21 and 22, which speaks about the new heaven and the new earth.

In chapter 21, the first 8 verses tells us what is outside the new Jerusalem. Then, verses 9-27 tell us what's inside the new Jerusalem. And now, in chapter 22, the first 5 verses, we are told what is at the heart of the new Jerusalem. So, let's consider our text.

Revelation 22:1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

What's so great about the new Jerusalem? First of all,

1. The Water of Life (verses 1-2a)

Revelation 22:1-2a

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city;

This just sounds refreshing, doesn't it? It's pure water, clear as can be. If you think about this for a little bit, you can see how strange this is. This is water flowing through "the middle of the street of the city," and yet, it is still "bright as crystal." This water is pure. But rivers that flow in the heart of the city, are not normally so clean. Try going downtown Rockford and looking at the Rock River. It would not be described as "bright as crystal." But remember, this is the new Jerusalem, where there is no sin. Only perfection. The river that flows through this city is pure as can be.

When we want pure water, where do we go? We go to the mountains. We go to the springs. I have in my hand some bottled water. The brand on the label is "Arrowhead." It says that it is "100% mountain spring water." But this water in the new Jerusalem doesn't come from the mountains. It comes from the throne of God and of the Lamb. That's why it's so pure, because it flows right out of the holy throne!

This water is fully accessible. It flows in the center of the city for all to see. It flows from the throne. It flows right down the middle of the street.

This is nothing new to Biblical Revelation, especially as it has to do with prophecy. In Zechariah 14:8 we read, "On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter." The eastern sea is the Mediterranean Sea. The western sea is the Dead sea. Normally, in Jerusalem, the rivers dry up in the summer time. But not this river! It flows with living waters. This is exactly what John saw. It's a picture of the abundant supply of God's life-giving goodness to us.

Now, what is curious about Jerusalem is it has no river in it. The only way that Jerusalem can have a river is if there is a new earth and a new Jerusalem. Zechariah 14:8 must be talking about the new Jerusalem.

We also see another life-giving river in Ezekiel 47. He speaks about the water flowing from the temple, which of course, is in Jerusalem. The river begins as a mere trickle (Ezekiel 47:2). Then, as Ezekiel travels 1000 cubits downstream (a half-mile or so) he saw more of the river, it was ankle-deep (Ezekiel 47:3). Traveling another 1000 cubits downstream, it was knee-deep (Ezekiel 47:4), then waist-deep (Ezekiel 47:4). Until finally, it was over Ezekiel's head. Ultimately, the water flows into the Dead Sea, with such an abundance of water that it makes the salt water to be fresh water!

That's the picture of the abundance and purity of this water. It flows so freely that it makes the salt-water of the Dead Sea fresh. The Dead Sea is one of the most salty bodies of water on the planet, because it has no outlet. Without any effort at all, you float in the Dead Sea. For the water from the throne to flow in such an abundance that it makes the Dead Sea become fresh water shows the abundance of this water!

What is difficult about harmonizing all of this, is that John writes in Revelation 21:1 that "the sea was no more." Yet here in Ezekiel, he describes this water taking over the sea, making it fresh! But again, this is apocalyptic literature! It's not meant to be harmonized. It's not a puzzle to be figured out. It's a picture to be enjoyed! What John and Ezekiel saw were similar things, not exactly the same thing. But they are talking about the same reality. The picture they both give is of the abundance of life-giving water.

Now the remarkable thing about this water here in Revelation 22 isn't its purity. It's the fact that this water is described as being "the water of life." It's the water that brings life. It's the water that sustains life. The city is alive and well.

This is the point of the water in the city Simon Kistemaker says in his commentary, "This water of life signifies a steady stream of blessings to all the saints."^[1] George Eldon Ladd says a similar thing in his commentary: "The presence of the river of life in the new Jerusalem is a picturesque way of saying that death has been abolished and life reigns supreme. The fact that the river flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb means simply that God is the source of all life."^[2] That's the point of the imagery of the water here in the new Jerusalem.

This water is like the water that Jesus spoke about in John 4, when talking with the woman at the well. He was weary from his travels. She was at the well drawing out water for her daily needs. Listen to the story:

John 4:7-15

Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

This is the water that is served in the new Jerusalem. It's the water that gives life. It's the water that sustains life. It's the water that wells up to eternal life.

Does your heart resonate with the woman at the well, "Sir, give me this water" (verse 15). This water comes through faith in Jesus, that brings you to heaven, where you can drink of this water, and live forever! This water in the new Jerusalem will be so fresh and pure and life-giving, that you will love it.

What's so great about the new Jerusalem? It has "The Water of Life." But there is a second thing that makes new Jerusalem so great. It has,

2. The Tree of Life (verse 2b)

We see this in the second half of verse 2.

Revelation 22:2b

also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

This tree is huge! It's on both sides of the river flowing from the throne. I'm not quite sure how this works, perhaps it's a banyan tree, which is able to grow out and establishes new trunks in the ground.

For our 30th anniversary, Yvonne and I were able to travel to Hawaii. We were on the island of Maui. We were able to visit one of the most famous banyan trees in the world, which is simply known as "the Lahaina Banyan Tree." The tree is huge. It covers almost two acres! It's the largest banyan tree in the United States.

If you look at a picture of the entire tree, you will be confused because it doesn't look like one tree. It looks like a bunch of trees. But if you look more closely, you discover that the other tree trunks are mere extension from branches that the tree put out. I picture that this is what John saw! He saw this single tree, which had many trunks on either side of the river of the water of life.

There's a sad story about this tree in Lahaina. The tree was a gift from missionaries in India. It was planted April 24, 1873 in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the first Protestant mission in Lahaina. The community so adored this tree that in April 2023, Lahaina held a birthday party to celebrate the Banyan Tree's planting 150 years ago. Sadly, four months later, in August of 2023, the wildfires in Maui severely damaged the tree. Now there is question as to whether it will even survive. It's being carefully cared for and monitored. Some little growth has begun growing on the tree, so there's hope. But only time will tell if it will ever survive.

Survival is not a question for the tree that John saw in his vision. This tree of life in the new Jerusalem will live forever. It will forever bring forth fruit. It will do so all year round.

Revelation 22:2b

also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.

This tree is like no other tree that we have ever experienced before. It has "twelve kinds of fruit," one kind each month. In our world, trees bud only once a year, and they only give one type of fruit. Now, of course, you can graft some types of trees together. But they need to be of the same type. You can graft orange trees with lemons and limes. You can graft peach trees with plums. You can all sorts of varieties of apples together.

But when you graft branches into trees, all of these fruits will yield its fruit at the same time. But this tree in the new Jerusalem yields fruit all year long! A different fruit every month: oranges in January, peaches in February, apples in March, plums in April, grapefruit in May, apricots in June, lemons in July, bananas in August, cherries in September, figs in October, coconuts in November, and pineapple in December!

Surely, this isn't accurate, but it's a picture, like the river, of abundant supply, of eternal satisfaction! Even the leaves are capable of healing the nations.

Revelation 22:2

... The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Again, if you try to figure it all out, you are going to be in a puzzle. Because by this time in the chronology of Revelation, the nations are already healed. Further, verse 3 says that "no longer will there be anything accursed." There is no need for further healing. Perhaps this simply means that these leaves prevent all illness, and provide all physical needs that we have. There is fruit all of time. There is health throughout all eternity. This tree, after all, described as "the tree of life." It gives life! It sustains life!

Again, like the river of the water of life, there is plenty of Biblical imagery wrapped around this “tree of life.” It starts in the garden of Eden. In Genesis 2:9 we read, “And out of the ground, the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” The picture of the garden of Eden is one of paradise, with abundant, pleasing food! All that Adam and Eve wanted was all there.

But there were two trees in particular that stand out: 1) the tree of life, and 2) the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and were cast out of the garden, keeping them from the tree of life (Genesis 3:1-7). Consider the following verses:

Genesis 3:22-24

Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

The last thing that Adam and Eve saw was the cherubim, and a flaming sword turning this way and that way, which formed a fire barrier, prohibiting them from access to the tree of life. That’s because access to the tree would come through another way.

Sinful hands were not able to take the fruit of that tree. God had to come and redeem us, so that we could take of the tree. He redeemed us through Jesus, the Lamb of God, whose sacrifice upon the cross was sufficient to remove the curse. For those of us who believe and trust in Jesus, we can come and take of this tree in the new Jerusalem. It’s as if paradise has been restored to us through Jesus! We will be able to take of the fruit of this tree.

Ezekiel also talks about this tree, when he sees a similar vision to what John saw. In Ezekiel 47:12 we read, “And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”

Again, we see that Ezekiel and John saw similar visions, though not exact. Ezekiel saw a bunch of trees. John saw a single tree. But John’s single tree easily look like a bunch of trees as it spread on both sides of the river. But the point is the same: “Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”

I love the way that Chris Brauns, pastor of the Red Brick Church in Stillman Valley, talks about this tree, trying to put some realism into heaven. He writes this in his blog.

My family talks about where we are going to meet when we get to the Heavenly City.

You have to see the picture in your mind. Revelation 22 says that there is a river as clear as crystal flowing from the throne of God down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river is the Tree of life.

Can you see that in your mind? The Lord Jesus sitting gloriously on a throne, a great tree-lined river crashing down from his throne, and vast throngs of people from every part of the world celebrating?

I can’t wait. But, I also want to make sure my friends and family know where to meet. Here is the plan. We are all going to meet at the 5th tree on the right side of the river facing the throne. Be sure it is the right side of the river as you face the throne. Then count 5 trees back.

My daughter Allison is concerned that our spot may already be reserved. What if someone like Daniel has reserved our tree? But, I tell her they’ll just have to share our space. We’re going to be right next to that tree in the Heavenly City. [\[3\]](#)

Church family, where should we meet? I think it’s best for us to join with the Red Brick Church. We have joined them in ministry here on earth. Let us meet up with them in heaven. So, as you look at the throne, we will meet at the 5th tree, on the right hand side.

OK, Let’s look at our final point. What’s So Great About the New Jerusalem? (1) The Water of Life (verses 1-2a); (2) The Tree of Life (verse 2b) and thirdly,

3. The God of Life (verses 3-5)

Revelation 22:3-5

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

This is the great contrast of the new Jerusalem with our lives today. All around us, we see sin and evil, and all of the painful consequences that these things bring. But in the new Jerusalem, “No longer will there be anything accursed” (verse 3).

No more sin. No more suffering. No more death. No more disease. No more hatred. No more violence. No more fear. No more pain. No more tears. No more guilt. No more shame. No more regret. No more despair. No more doubt. No more bitterness. No more resentment. No more injustice. No more oppression. No more division. No longer will there be anything accursed.

Rather, “the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.” Nothing will be accursed in the new Jerusalem because the “God of Life” will be there. In fact, this is the best thing about the new Jerusalem! God is there!

We have already seen this in chapter 21:3, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God." The great thing about the new heavens and the new earth is that God is there! And that he is our God! And that we are his people.

We see this again in Revelation 21:7, "The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son." These verses speak to us of the presence of God in heaven and the presence of God in the new Jerusalem. He is "The God of Life.

In verse 3, we see that "the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him."The center of activity in the new Jerusalem will be worship. We saw this in Revelation 4 and 5. When John was taken into heaven, to see the throne of God, the overwhelming sense we get is how God-centric heaven will be.

Five times, John records for us the worship that is given to the Lord. The four living creatures never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (Revelation 4:8). The twenty-four elders in heaven say, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (Revelation 4:11). They sang a new song in "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9-10). Then, the myriads of myriads of angels joined in, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:12). And all of creation joined in, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" (Revelation 5:13).

If you don't enjoy worship here on earth, neither will you enjoy it in the new Jerusalem! If you don't enjoy serving the Lord here on earth, neither will you enjoy it in the new Jerusalem! If you don't enjoy worship here on earth, you won't be in the new Jerusalem. If you don't enjoy serving the Lord here on earth, you won't be in the new Jerusalem. John continues,

Revelation 22:4
They will see his face,

This is the hope of all believers in Christ! to see him someday face to face. God told Moses, "You cannot see my face ... and live" (Exodus 33:20). John said, "we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). When we are like him, we shall see him face to face! This is the hope of the redeemed, that one day, our faith might become sight! Our hope is that one day, we might fellowship with God, and Adam and Eve once did in the garden, walking with him in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8), talking with him as one would a friend (Genesis 3:9).

Revelation 22:4
They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

We have seen this idea of God's name being on the foreheads of the redeemed. This is in contrast to those who worship the beast (in Revelation 13). They take his mark upon their foreheads. But followers of the Lamb have the mark of God upon them. "Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (Revelation 14:1). Here, in Revelation 22, we see that we have his name on our foreheads forever!

It's a sign of ownership. It's a sign of protection. When the locusts were released from the bottomless pit to have power over the earth to torment men for five months, "They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads" (Revelation 9:4). God's mark upon the foreheads is a sign of eternal security!

Revelation 22:5
And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

This makes the new Jerusalem great! No more night, because God is our light (Revelation 21:23). We will reign forever and ever. There is some question about what exactly this means. I believe it means that creation will be restored to what it was meant to be! On the sixth day of creation, we God said,

Genesis 1:26-28
"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Here in Revelation 22, we see the final fulfillment of these words. We see the redeemed in heaven reigning over the created order!

What makes the new Jerusalem so great? (1) The Water of Life; (2) The Tree of Life; and (3) The God of Life. This makes any vacation spot pale in insignificance. The new Jerusalem will be far better than your favorite place on earth. And it will be forever!

I have one last question to ask you.

John Piper wrote a book entitled, "God is the Gospel." In this book, he speaks about how the good news of forgiveness of sins is only good because it means opening the way to the enjoyment of God himself. Piper speaks about how "justification is good news because it wins access the presence and pleasures of God himself." He says that "eternal life is good news because it becomes the everlasting enjoyment of Christ."^[4]

In the book, he asks a penetrating question: "Would you be happy in heaven if Christ were not there?" He writes, "The critical question for our generation—and for every generation—is this: If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you every liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven, if Christ was not there?"^[5]

This is the whole point of verses 3-5. God will be there in the new Jerusalem! This is the greatest blessing of the new Jerusalem. Certainly, we love the river of the water of life! It will nourish us throughout eternity. Certainly, we love the tree of life! It will also nourish us and keep us healthy throughout all eternity. But these are merely gifts to helps us enjoy the giver of the gifts, God himself. So let us not love the gifts more than the giver!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on April 7, 2024 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] Simon Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 580.

[2] George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 286.

[3] <https://chrisbrauns.com/2009/09/5th-tree-back-right-side-as-you-face-the-throne/>.

[4] John Piper, *God is the Gospel* (Wheaton, Crossway, 2005), back cover.

[5] *Ibid*, 15.