

THE RIVER OF LIFE

The city by the Bay is a jewel on the West coast of a great nation. Surrounded by mountains and water of natural beauty, it stands out like an island as a monument of human achievement born during the gold rush. But it has nothing over the God's holy city, the New Jerusalem.

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Revelation 22:1.

God's great city has a Central Park unlike that of New York City. At the head of it stands the throne of God and the Lamb. In the very heart of God's city the very focal point from which all the streets radiate outward, the grand circle in the center is the throne and the cross—the sacrificed Lamb.

This is the headwaters of the great River of Life. Here you have the Father, the Lamb, and the Holy Spirit. It's amazing that this river does not start out as does the Mississippi in upper Minnesota, as a small stream that one can cross on flag stones by foot. This is a grand and broad river at its very source. Its headwaters, coming from the city itself, indicates an amazing attribute of its waters. They are crystal clear. You can drink from these waters without using purification tablets or filtration system. They are crystal clear.

"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." Revelation 22:2.

The General Sherman tree stands 275 ft, the largest living organism, of all the monarchs of the forest. The fourteen-story, fifty foot wide, Disney tree of life, is a theme park man-made wonder. God's tree of life is unlike any tree on this earth. Its base spans the waters of the great River of Life rising up over Central Park.

It was this tree which Adam and Eve shunned in preference for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹ As a consequence God

¹ "The fruit of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden possessed supernatural virtue. To eat of it was to live forever. Its fruit was the antidote of death. Its leaves were for the sustaining of life and immortality. . . .

restricted their access to eating of the tree of life otherwise the eating of it would have immortalized sin. That tree was later transplanted in heaven and incorporated into the landscaping of the New Jerusalem.

This amazing tree produces twelve different kinds of fruit monthly throughout the year. When granted access to this tree, it will sustain life for the redeemed for ever. We will make regular visits to this tree, and the river, and this wonderful park. It will be a perpetual reminder to us that we are sustained by God. We are not self-perpetuating immortal beings. We are immortal because of the gift of God in Christ Jesus.

Why are the leaves of the tree needed for “the healing of the nations”? There will be no disease or deformity in the new earth. The leaves of the tree will be for the ongoing service to the nations of promoting their health and longevity.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Revelation 22:17.

The invitation to come and drink of the river of life comes from all quarters. The Holy Spirit bids us come. The bride of Christ bids us come.² And those who respond are to bid others to come and drink. If you sense your need for a thirst quencher, then come. Jesus invited the woman at the well to drink the water that he would impart and she would never thirst again and “the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

With God is the fountain, the well-spring of life. He Himself is “the Fountain of living waters.” Jer. 2:13. This is demonstrated to us by the river of water of life, which flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. It is a real stream, as plainly to be seen by the inhabitants of the heavenly country as any earthly stream is by those who dwell on

“The tree of life was a type of the one great Source of immortality. Of Christ it is written, ‘In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.’” Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, pp. 233, 234.

² “The bride also says, Come. But the bride is the city, and how does that say, Come? If we could be strengthened to behold the living glories of that city and live, and should be permitted to gaze upon its dazzling beauty, and be assured that we had a perfect right to enter therein, and bathe in that ocean of bliss and blessedness, and revel in its glory forever and ever, would it not then say to us, Come, with a persuasion which no power could resist? Who of us in view of this could turn away and say that we had no desire for an inheritance there?” James White, *Ibid*.

its banks. Nevertheless it is spiritual, it is indeed the Spirit, for the Spirit of God is living water. John 7:38, 39. "The Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom. viii. 10); and in the world to come we shall be able to see the Spirit of life proceeding from God in a never-failing stream.

God is the Fountain of living waters. "A brook, whose waters make glad the city of God, Is the Most High in His habitation." Ps. 46:4. God Himself is the stream of life, for God is Spirit. Of the new earth Isaiah said, "there the glorious Lord will be to us a place of broad rivers and streams" (Isa. 33:21). The reason for this is that "the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King: He will save us." Verse 22. He saves us by His life,—the cleansing stream,—which flows from the throne, the foundation of which is righteousness and justice, that is, His everlasting law. The Lamb in the midst of the throne leads the redeemed unto "fountains of waters of life." Rev. 7:17, R. V. That fountain, God's own life, will be our drink, and the life of everything that grows from the earth. Thus will it be as plain to the eyes of the redeemed saints that they live directly from the life of God, as it now is to any man that we live by food and drink.

The good things of God, however, are not reserved for the future. God has given us Himself in Christ, and so with Him all things. Even now God chooses men, and causes them to approach unto Him, that they may dwell in His courts. By the blood of Christ we are "made nigh." Eph. 2:13. By that blood,—the stream of life from out God's throne,—we have boldness to enter into the holy place where God dwells. "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures; for with Thee is the Fountain of life." Ps. 36:7-9. So we see that the river of God's pleasure is the river of life flowing from His throne.

The word translated "pleasures" in this text is "*Edna*," the feminine form of the Hebrew word "Eden." The Garden of Eden is the garden of pleasure, and from its waters God gives us to drink even now.

The river that flowed from Eden divided and watered the whole earth. Gen. 2:10-14. Eden is no more in this earth, but God still allows men to drink of its waters. Who may drink? "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22:17. God took the man whom He had made, and (literally) "caused him to rest in the garden of Eden." In Eden there is rest. "We who have believed do enter into rest," for there remaineth a rest to the people of God (Heb. 4:3, 9), a rest that comes to us from Eden. That rest is the Lord's own rest—the Sabbath of the Lord. Rest is delight. Those who with all their hearts

believe God, worshipping Him as Creator of heaven and earth, rest in His almighty power, and delight their souls in Him. They drink of the water of Eden, and keep the Sabbath that was given to man in Eden.³

³ E. J. Waggoner, "The Water of Life," *The Present Truth* 14, 34 (August 25, 1898), pp. 533, 534.