
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Revelation

Revelation 22:1-6: “The Water of Life!”

General idea: We have access to God and His life-giving blessings and renewal! Now, the angel shows John more of Heaven—the water and river of life flowing from God Himself, coursing down upon His faithful, watering the Tree of Life. This is the essential life of the universe that also heals the nations and fuels the faithful. God’s creation is no longer under the curse of sin; it has been renewed. Instead of evil and strife, there will be praise and worship of the Lamb. The faithful will see His face and bathe in His presence; our loyalty will be set and pure, and the Lord will shine upon us all! Then, the angel reassures John (and us through the ages) that these Words are from God and they are trustworthy and true. We can have hope beyond hope of His wonder beyond wonders. We have a future in and with Christ as Lord; we have a place in Him for eternity!

Why does John give us this preview of Heaven? Perhaps it is all about Hope, that vital fuel and stimulate necessary for all that we do successfully in life and for Him. It is also the fuel for us to be encouraged so we can encourage others—to prosper and grow in times of stress, suffering, and confusion. He has prepared a place for us; what is more wonderful than that (John 14:1-6)!?

Vs. 1-6, Contexts: This passage brings to a close John’s visions with a testimony to their importance, veracity, reality, and truthfulness. This passage also sets up the promise for Christ’s return. This is also about our assurance in Christ—that we will receive our rewards, comfort, and bliss in Him, but that we can also have it now—just as a taste—in our trials, setbacks, and failures and still be triumphant in Him as long as we have faith and allow it to mature and keep growing. Heaven is not just a carrot on a stick to those in persecution to show them what awaits them. Heaven gives hope and a sign to stay on His path; it is a reality, it is a wonder, it is a comfort and a means by which to stay focused on Christ rather than on our circumstances. Best of all, it is real and one day we will be there for all time!

This passage is also describing *Paradise* in the similar imagery Isaiah uses to show the splendor and wonder of a rebuilt Temple and a restored Jerusalem, but now it is about Heaven (Is. 51:3). This is a renewal of the imagery and reality of the Garden of Eden that somehow in some shape will be restored. The original Garden of Eden was a setting in nature; now, it is being described in the previous passage as a city, a contrast showing how God loves and works through humanity, bringing us to Him. The main point is not of the ecstasy of Paradise; it is about our intimacy with God who is with us, *Immanuel*, “God among us,” “God with us.” The garden imagery is that of God empowering and keeping us; this is the real, effectual Paradise of which we have just a taste now, but will come to fruition in eternity. This is also about our blessings for being with and in Him as God is the One who loves us and restores our communion with Him. God restores His creation back to its utopian, unailing state before sin entered into it.

As Adam and Eve started out in the Garden of Eden of perfection and utopia, and then it was ruined by their sin, now it is resurrected beyond measure for all those in Christ to live in and enjoy. The Bible starts off the history of humanity in a garden; after our journeys in sin, our fall, pride, struggle, and the work of Christ redeeming us, we end up back in the garden of Paradise—the garden of being in Him! This symbolism is based on fact and gives us hope and a sense of the reality and presence of God in our lives and His working in our church. This is meant to inspire us for the deployment of our faith so we can be confident in the reliability and steadfastness of our Christian life. He is empowering us. It is more than just a preview of what is to come; this is real. His presence is a genuine, effectual presence, a hope, and abundance for us now!

Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *River of the water of life* means that what is needed for life, even life itself, comes from God. It perhaps refers to the Garden of Eden, and the rivers that flowed there. This also refers to the river that flowed under Jerusalem; each of these themes means Paradise and “God with us.” *Water* means life, both in the ancient world and now; water is everything to life, and the growing and prospering of crops. Without it, everything dies. The Greeks saw *water* and *river* together to mean “virtue” and John uses this imagery to represent the Spirit and renewal in his Gospel. This also means Jesus is the answer to our thirst in life and for salvation! God is our abundant supply of all we need now and forevermore (Gen. 2:10-14; Psalm 46:4; Ezek. 47:1-12; Joel 3:18; Zech. 14:8; John 4:10-14; 7:37-39).
- *Each side of the river... down the middle.* This image is indicative of Eden found in Ezekiel 47:1-12 meaning “God nurturers us and extends His abundance and promises to us.” (Psalm 36:8; 46:4; Ezek. 34:27; 36:30 47:1-12; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13; Zech. 13:1)
- *Tree of life* refers to the garden of Paradise and Heaven. In context, it means the guarantee of an everlasting life, and that this life is to be abundant, vivid, pure, and true. The central focus of Heaven is our effectual, eternal relationship in and with Christ. The images from Genesis and Ezekiel mean having access to God’s blessings and Fruit. The tree of life was in the Garden of Eden from which humanity was locked out after the Fall. And, this refers to trees that are always fruit bearing, not just in their season, just as God’s Blessings are continual and forevermore. The promise here is the restoration of Paradise, and that this tree will grow again (Gen. 2:9; 3:22-24; Ezek. 47:7-12; 2 Cor. 12:2-4; Rev. 2:1-7, 14, 19)!
- *Healing of the nations.* This is not about political boundaries or even people groups; it is about people in general. For the Jew, “nations” meant Gentiles or everyone. Through Christ, there is no division or caste. We have direct, intimate access to Him. This also means that Jesus is Sovereign and greater than any nation, government, power, or authority. And, in context, it means no sickness or divisions or conflict or prejudices—thus, countries are not needed (Ezek. 47:12; Rev. 1:6; 2:26-27; 20:4, 6)!

- *No longer will there be any curse.* This means restoration and refers to “Paradise” and “pleasure garden.” This points to our restored, sinless state and/or the millennial kingdom, that God will reverse the Fall and remove the curse of sin from the universe (Gen. 2:8; 3:16-19; Ezek. 28:13; Zech. 14:11; Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7).
- *His servants.* This suggests that there is no special elite class in the Kingdom of God. We all are His servants; we are all special and anointed to serve (Matt. 5:8; Rev. 1:1).
- *See his face.* God's self-disclosure and our extreme blessing of eternity will enable us to see our Lord and be in His presence face to face. Currently, God cannot be seen, but in some phenomenal way, He will allow us to. In ancient cultures, to see a king's face meant blessing and honor; to be removed from the king and not be able to look onto his face meant punishment and banishment (Ex. 33:20; Esther 7:8; 2 Sam. 14:24; John 1:14-18; 1 Cor. 13:12).
- *His name will be...* This refers to the seal of God's ownership, as names meant not only possessions, but also who possessed you and that person's character. This also means that Christ is LORD Supreme; He is our "all in all." (1 Cor. 15:27, 28; Rev. 3:12; 14:1; 21:2, 10)
- *On their foreheads* means that God marks and protects the faithful who accept Christ as Lord and Savior, and who He claims as His. In ancient times, the forehead and hands were the only parts of the body that were visible to others. This, too, is symbolic; God will not “rubber stamp” people or give us some kind of a visible mark, tattoo, “branding,” or a “cross sign” (because the Hebrew letter *Taw*, looks like an X or cross sign), nor is this some kind of replacement for circumcision. God sees us as important and worth protecting (Ex. 13:9-16; 28:38; Deut. 6:8; 11:18; Is. 44:5; 66:19; Ezek. 9:4-6; Gal. 6:17; Rev. 7:3)!
- *No more night.* The original curse of sin is "no longer;" it is removed along with all subsequent curses. This is an image of sin and how God works it out, that even though we do not deserve it, we need it; we need His grace and redemption. This may imply that God resets His creation back to its previous “un-fallen” state where sin has not affected it (Gen. 3:14-19).
- *God will give them light.* In Jewish literature (Wisdom of Solomon), this also meant righteousness (Ex. 34:29-35; Dan. 12:3; 2 Cor. 3:13; Rev. 21:23).
- *They will reign.* All of God's people are holy to Him, and in the future, each of us will reign with Him. This means we will partake in His authority and rule as His representatives and holders of His promise.(Psalm 2:8-9; Dan. 7:18, 27; Matt. 25:21-23; Luke 19:17; 1 Cor. 15:41; Col. 1; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 2:26-27; 20:4).
- *Trustworthy/faithful and true* refers to a Jewish oath/testimony that gave credence to the veracity, importance, and reliability of the promise or statement spoken. This is

also a characteristic of God, who is faithful and true (as in, *He is personal and reliable*); thus, so is His Word. He is the One who is completely trustworthy and faithful. In context, these are the final sayings of the Angel, and then he signs off (Psalm 2:7; 89:27; Prov. 14:5, 25; Isa. 8:2; Jer. 42:5; Acts 13:33; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:20-23; Col. 1:15-18; 1 Tim. 6:13; Rev. 1:3-5; 2:10-13; 3:14; 19:11; 22:18).

- *God of the spirits of the prophets/flesh* is a name and title of God meaning “Lord of the Spirits,” the magnanimity of God as Lord over all, even those of humanity’s most influential (Num. 16:22).
- *Things that must soon take place*. A declaration of closure restating what was first said. The point here and throughout Revelation is not just for the future events, but also how we conduct ourselves in them. Whatever unfolds is irrelevant if we do not have the strength of faith to endure and learn from it (Heb. 1:1-2; Rev. 1:3, 7; 22:10). (See Revelation 1:1 study).

Thoughts and Applications:

Do you long for intimacy with Christ as Lord and love of your life? In this passage, He shows us He restores and seeks us to be renewed and to be in Him. Christ gave us grace from His love to make Him our home of faith and motivation in life. Then, He prepares an eternal home for us too. The question is, *as Christians, do we give back our worship, praise, gratitude, and devotion to Him? Are we at home with Him as our main inspiration, impulse, and comfort in this life, not just in the life to come (John 14:23)?* We can be assured He cares and loves us beyond description; but, do we love Him back? God has a purpose for this world and for our lives and it is all about communion in and with Him. We must find a way to increase our awareness and love for Christ in our daily lives so our lives mean something more than just “what I want” and “what I can get.” It must be Christ-focused, for this is what Heaven is all about too!

This incredible passage is more about hope—hope that we need more than anything else including eschatology, the study of end times. Our hope of Heaven is our fuel, our motivation—like gas is to a car; it will get us through life, the great times and the tough times, our adversities, so our soul will travel well. It is about our motivation to grow in faith, to be loyal to our Lord so we look to Him and not our troubles and trials. Heaven is our *hope of hope*, and so much more; it is a reality, a wonder, and a place we will be forever and ever. Our biggest problem has been solved, that of our sin causing us to die with no hope or salvation. Christ paid that debt. As a Christian, we have been saved; if you are not saved, you can be and then you can become a new creation in Him, set for eternity (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:17)!

Christ brings us Heaven! He brings peace and a future to us who do not deserve it. Because of Him, we have hope and a future and most of all, we have Him both now and forevermore! What is better than that?! There is nothing that can be a greater motivator and comfort than knowing for certain who Christ is, what He has done, and what place He has for you and me! Now, let us live our lives as if that is true—because

it is true. And, keep in mind these powerful passages as well as John 14 in mind, as love and obedience are connected in Him!

The Two Prevailing Views: (Chapters twenty-one and twenty-two deal with the literal versus the non-literal interpretation of Scripture).

The Literalist View: Sees this passage as the continual, exact description of our inheritance and hope—Heaven. This passage also sets up the second coming of our Lord. Some in this camp debate whether the Temple will be rebuilt and if this, along with the previous and coming passages, describes this new temple built on the mount, as the armies of the Muslim world seek to destroy it while God protects it. Some of this theory's main points are that God will use this altar of the *Holy of Holies* as His main communion with humanity in a millennial kingdom or in a Heavenly kingdom. Some in the non-literalist camp hold to this view too.

The Non-Literalist View: They see this passage as clearly symbolic drawing mainly from the Old Testament in Ezekiel 47 and the New Testament in John 7 as meaning God keeps His promises and will provide for us in abundance now and forevermore. This is about how God dwells among us through His Church and that our purpose is to worship Him. Others see this as our future abode of Heaven and eternity. Some see this as about the advancement of the Gospel and the building of the Church for His glory. The Church becomes the refuge of Ezekiel (Ezek. 17:22-23; 47).

The point in these views? Most in the literal camp are the futurists and dispensationalists who do not always do a good job at looking to context or word meanings or *genres*, which are essential for accurate Bible interpretation. In contrast, many in the non-literalist camp miss the point of the passage all together. Remember, these are man's theories read into the text, and not necessarily taken from the text. What do we need to know? God does not always give us explanations to live by; He gives us His promise and His empowerment! God is most concerned with what these images represent—the “living water” from John 7:37-39. He is our substance, hope, and life that we are to live for now and that we will have forevermore.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What is the most beautiful place you have ever been? How does this passage set up the promise for Christ's return?
2. Do you fully realize that all things are under His control? How does this affect your hope and staying power? How can this passage help you endure for the future? What do you think it meant to a persecuted people? What would it take for you to earnestly feel and see that God is in control? What do you need to do?
3. Why do you think John gives us this preview of Heaven? What does it mean to you to have "hope beyond hope?"
4. How do you feel knowing that you have access to God and His life-giving blessings and renewal now, and not just in Heaven?
5. Can you picture Heaven? What do you think this water and river of life, flowing from God Himself and coursing down upon you will look like?
6. How can your hope in Heaven help you eliminate the evil and strife that is in our churches so we can better praise and worship of the Lamb now?
7. What needs to take place to reassure you that these words in Revelation are from God and they are trustworthy and true? God has prepared a place for us; what is more wonderful than that? How is this fact going to assure and inspire you?
8. What does it mean to you that you have a future in and with Christ as Lord and that you have a place in Him for eternity?
9. How does Hope play a role in your relationships? How does Hope play a role in your spiritual growth? What about other areas in your life?
10. How does Hope help you be encouraged so you can encourage others? What and when are you going to do this more? How is Hope a vital fuel and stimulate necessary for all that we do successfully in life and for Him? What are some other valuable faith stimulants and how can you use them? What can you and your church do to implement these hopes?
11. How is God keeping your church faithful and watering you now? What fuels the faithful in your church? What can your church do to better "water" its people?
12. What can your church do to help its people see and feel Hope and the wonder of Christ? How will this help prosper and grow your church even in times of stress, suffering, and confusion?