

APPRECIATING ABUNDANCE Sunday School- May 29, 2011

Unifying Topic: TREE OF LIFE

Lesson Text

I. The Source Of Life (Revelation 22:1-5)

II. Keeping God's Word (Revelation 22:6-9)

The Main Thought: 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, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Our lives are filled with abundance. What is our attitude toward receiving the bounty provided for us? The Revelation to John made it clear that there is no more appropriate response to what God has done than to worship Him.

Lesson Aim: To teach your students about the abundant blessings God will bestow on us in the new creation, such as the river of life and the Tree of Life.

Life Aim: To teach your students about the ways God sustains us, even after we die.

22:1 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.

22:2 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.

22:3 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:

22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

22:5 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.

22:6 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.

22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

22:8 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:

22:9 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.

HISTORY:

Everything New

Chapter 21:1-8 John first sees all things made new. There is a new heaven and a new earth. Gone the first Heaven, gone the first earth, and gone the sea. The holy city, the New Jerusalem, descended out of heaven from God and with a loud voice from heaven, declares, "*God will dwell with His people and He will be their God and they will be His people.*" God is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. He will wipe away all tears; death, sorrow, crying, and pain will be no more for all things are made new. He will provide freely the fountain of the water of life to them that thirsts. He tells John to write all this down; it is done; each word is dependable and accurate." you can depend on it! Overcomers or conquerors will inherit all this! But for the rest, will inherit the Lake of Fire and brimstone which is called the Second death!"

The City of Light

Chapter 21:9-11 One of the Seven Angels who had carried the bowls filled with the seven final disasters spoke to John, saying, "*Come here. I'll show you the Bride, the Lamb's Wife.*" He took John away in the Spirit to an enormous, high mountain and showed him the Holy Jerusalem descending out of Heaven from God, having the bright glory of God.

Chapter 21:12-14 The city had a great majestic high wall with twelve gates. At each gate stood an Angel, and on the gates were inscribed the names of the Twelve Tribes of the sons of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. The wall was set on twelve foundations, the names of the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb inscribed on them.

Chapter 21:15-21 The Angel speaking with John had a gold measuring stick to measure the City, its gates, and

its wall. The City was laid out in a perfect square. He measured the City with the measuring stick: twelve thousand stadia (*an instrument for measuring distances or heights by means of angles*), its length, width, and height all equal. Using the standard measure, the Angel measured the thickness of its wall: 144 cubits. The wall was jasper, the color of Glory, and the City was pure gold, translucent as glass. The foundations of the City walls were garnished with every precious gem imaginable: the first foundation jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold as translucent glass.

Chapter 21:22-27 But there was no sign of a Temple, for the Lord God Almighty—and the Lamb are the Temple. The City doesn't need sun or moon for light. God's Glory is its light, the Lamb its lamp! The nations will walk in its light and earth's kings bring in their splendor. Its gates will never be shut by day, and there won't be any night. They'll bring the glory and honor of the nations into the City. Nothing dirty or defiled will get into the City, and no one who defiles or deceives. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will get in. (The Message Bible).

LESSON:

Revelation 22:1-5 The Source Of Life

22:1 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: The vision progresses. There are seven provisions of the heavenly Jerusalem.

1. There is a pure river in the city, a river that has the very water of life.

Is there a real river in the heavenly Jerusalem or is this to be taken symbolically? Probably both! Certainly the New Jerusalem being 1500 miles cubic, will have the beauty and refreshment of a running river and of many other bodies of water. We too often spiritualize when we think of heaven, imagining that we will be in some kind of dreamy, unreal world instead of a real world. We must always remember the teaching of Scripture: God is going to recreate this earth and the heavens of this universe. This is what He explicitly teaches in the Scripture (cp. 2Pt.3:10-12; Rev.21:1; etc.).

A recreated world would certainly have the same features that this world has with one exception: it will be perfected! The heavenly Jerusalem is said to have a particular river flowing through it, and the river has the water of life in it. What does this mean? The verse tells us. Note where the source of the river is: "*the throne of God and of the Lamb.*" The water of life flows from God and Christ: they are the source of all life that lives in the city. There will be no life there, no person there, other than those who have drunk of the life that God and Christ give. Therefore, the river symbolizes the life that flows out from God and Christ. It will be a constant reminder to us that Jesus Christ is the living water who gives us life...

- who quenches our thirst for life
- who satisfies our thirst for life
- who fulfills our thirst for life
- who completes our thirst for life.

22:2 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.

The river flows down the middle of the street of the city.

2. There is a tree of life in the city.

Remember the tree of life was planted in the Garden of Eden (Gen.2:9). As long as man remained sinless, he was allowed to eat of the tree; but as soon as he sinned, he was not allowed to eat its fruit. The fruit was the nourishment of life; it infused eternal life into Adam's body. Or else it symbolized the perfect and life-giving environment God had given Adam. The tree of life is now in the heavenly Jerusalem. Note there are two things said about it:

1. The tree of life bears twelve crops of fruit—one crop each month. The tree bears fruit year round. This symbolizes continuous fruit or continuous life. There is no time that the tree does not bear fruit, it always bears fruit—eternal fruit. Therefore, the person who eats of the tree of life is nourished by its fruit eternally. He lives forever. The tree here represents the eternal state. There is also another

symbol here: bearing the fruit of God's Spirit. The person who eats of the tree of life will bear the fruit of the Spirit eternally.

2. The leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nation. That is, they provide a perfect life. The leaves prevent sickness and disease. They give the person who eats them a perfect body. This symbolizes the perfection that Jesus Christ gives, the perfect healing and deliverance from all suffering that He gives the perfect body He will provide in that glorious day.

As far as eating, in the Old Testament, angels ate when Abraham entertained them. Jesus ate after He rose from the dead. We will eat at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

22:3 And there shall be no more curse:

3. There is no more curse in the city.

¹After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God placed a curse on them and on the earth (Genesis 3:14,17; Galatians 3:10,13). The word "*curse*" here is an intensive word. It denotes an accursed thing. God placed a ban on the person cursed from His presence. The earth is cursed. It's cursed to aging, corruption, deterioration, decay, death, suffering, evil, disturbance, division, disasters, and so on. It's cursed because man has chosen to make his own life in this world and to reject God's life. God's life is eternal. Therefore, when man chose to make his own life, he chose to die. Consequently, man brought death and all its evil into the world. But note, the heavenly Jerusalem has no curse. There is no curse at all in Heaven. This means that it is free of evil and death. It is perfect and will last eternally. There is no curse of evil or death in the city. Its citizens are free of the curse; they are perfected forever and ever.

22:3b ...but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it:

4. There is the throne of God and of the Lamb in the city. This means two things:

1. The Lord's servants will serve God and Christ, operating out of the city. That is, the heavenly Jerusalem will be the capital city of the universe, the headquarters of the Lord's government and rule and reign. The idea is that we will receive our instructions and do our reporting from the very throne of God and Christ. We will have access to the very throne of heaven itself. The throne is now the center of God's presence replacing the temple.

22:3c and his servants shall serve him: The throne of God will be in this city and the saints will serve Him. The word "*serve*" is for priestly service. This service means to worship, to serve God. Our service will never diminish or decline. While service here as we know it, is imperfect; our service there will be pure. We mar our service here with the flesh, with false motives and with pride. We often use service to get ahead or be famous. But our service there will be without fault.

22:4a And they shall see his face:

2. The Lord's servants will see His face. We will see Him face to face; actually stand face to face with our wonderful Lord and God. This will be wonderful: talk with, share with, serve, discuss, worship, praise, and offer thanks. And after all our service for Him, we will have the right to see Him face to face throughout all of eternity. "*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God*" *Matt.5:8*.

22:4b ...and his name shall be in their foreheads

5. There is the name of God written in the forehead of believers.

This is why we will be His servants and be enabled to serve Him totally and wholly—his name will be written on the foreheads. Presently Christians are sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph.4:30). God seals us until the day we go to be with Him. The seal today is invisible but the seal in that day will be apparent for all to see. This means possession and security. We shall be wholly possessed by God. We shall belong to Him and be under His care and love, direction and guidance, security and safety—eternally.

22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light:

¹ <http://versebyversecommentary.com/1999/02/14/revelation-223-2/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

6. **There is eternal light** in the city.

John again repeats that there will be no night in the New Jerusalem. The light of God's presence is all they need (21:23, 25).

22:5b ...and they shall reign for ever and ever:

7. **There is eternal rule**—work and service—for God and Christ.

None of us can comprehend how wonderful Heaven is. It will transcend all of our expectations. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. The throne of God and the Lamb is in it. This is the source of blessing. His servants serve Him. God and the Lamb are spoken of as one constantly in John's writings. His servants shall have the fullest privilege of His constant presence.

Revelation 22:6-9 Keeping God's Word

There is a better world coming, the most glorious of worlds, a perfect heaven and earth: a world in which there will be no sorrow or tears, suffering or death; a world of righteousness and joy. God wants man to know the message of Revelation. Therefore, as the Lord closes this great book, everything He says has to do with the overall message of Him revealing His Word. The message of Revelation is so important that the Lord takes the time and space to talk about the message of Revelation itself.

22:6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: All that John had seen was genuine. He had heard the Words of God.

- The message is "*faithful*": it can be trusted, and reliable.
- The message is "*true*": it is not a lie, not false, not a message created by the imagination of men.

²The prophecy began with a glorious worship service in heaven (Rev 4:1; 2-11) as the Lamb prepared to take possession of His inheritance. But at that time, the earth was still filled with evil, and the Lamb faced an intense battle to defeat that evil. Now, 1007 years later, the prophecy draws to a close with the vision of another worship service honoring the Lamb. This time the worship is not just in heaven, but in a new heaven and earth combined. The Lamb's inheritance has been transformed into the paradise He always intended it to be; and with Him in that paradise are His People.

How do we know that the message of Revelation is trustworthy and true? Well, from what the verse continues to say:

22:6b and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done: The message of Revelation is from the same Lord God that inspired the prophets of old. It was the Lord, the God who inspired the prophets, who had revealed what John had received. The holy prophets add support to the claims that Scripture can be trusted. God sent His angel to show to His bond-servants that what is written was sent directly from God. The purpose of this verse is to stress the authenticity of this revelation and to encourage anticipation of its fulfillment. God keep His Word! Assurance is the theme. God's promises always depend upon His character. The Lord does not give us a specific time as to when these things will happen, only that they "*must shortly be done.*"

22:7 Behold, I come quickly: ³John's vision concludes with verse 6 and then Jesus resumes speaking directly to John just as He did at first. Verse 7 is best described as a continuation of John's meeting with Jesus that John initially described in Chapter 1 (1:8). This meeting was interrupted with the visions John reported in Chapters 4-22:6 and now Jesus returns John's focus to his place there on the island of Patmos (1:9). ⁴"*Behold*" is a term intended to grab our attention. "*Give this your undivided attention!*" When Jesus comes, it will be quick (1:7; 22:12, 20). The Greek word "*quickly*" means soon. Jesus will give no warning when He comes. He will come suddenly. It will be unexpected. That is why we need to be alert to His coming. The phrase "*I am coming quickly*"

² <http://bereanbiblestudygroup.com/2011/01/revelation-219-to-2221%e2%80%93living-with-god/>

³ <http://bereanbiblestudygroup.com/2011/01/revelation-219-to-2221%e2%80%93living-with-god/>

⁴ <http://versebyversecommentary.com/1999/02/16/revelation-226-7/>

occurs three times in the conclusion to Revelation. Therefore, we must be prepared, and we must quickly witness to a world lost in crime, drugs, suffering, and death. We must study and study Revelation. We must prepare ourselves and do what we can to prepare others, for the Lord and the final days of human history are upon us. And there are imminent signs of His coming!

22:7b blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book: The Lord's blessings are endless to the person who truly studies His Word. The word "*keeps*" means to guard, protect, pay attention or give heed. We are to guard God's Word by applying it to our lives. ⁵Here we are promised blessings not just in obeying God's Word in general, but especially the things that are in this book of Revelation. Revelation isn't just a book about things to come, it's a book that encourages us to let our knowledge of the future affect the way we live.

22:8 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: In other words, John is trying to testify that he had actually witnessed the things he wrote down. The message of Revelation stirs worship. When John heard the prophecies of the Revelation and seen with his own eyes, he was so astounded that he was gripped with a spirit of fear and worship. He actually fell down at the feet of the angel who was delivering the message for the Lord. God alone is worthy of our worship and adoration. He is above all creation, even the angels.

22:9 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: John's reaction to the revelation is the same as Daniel. Both attempted to worship, but were prevented. This is not a new problem with John. He's forgotten that he's already done this to the angel back in Chapter 19:10, and was quickly rebuked by the angel. The angel instructs John to worship God alone.

SUMMARY:

⁶God will create a new unspoiled universe and earth. Until then, this earth will be filled with corruption, deceit and immorality. Scars will cover the face of the earth as long as there is sin and humans will continue to live for themselves. Pride will be a problem until Jesus comes back. Weeds grow faster than grass. It is difficult to persuade things to grow in our day but in the eternal state that will not be a problem. Fellowship in Heaven will exceed fellowship here on earth. Fellowship here is imperfect because of our capacity for sin. Other people see our imperfections just as clearly as we can see theirs. These deficiencies hinder our fellowship here. But our fellowship there will be free from flaws.

⁷In the New Jerusalem; the happy abode of the redeemed, the phrase "*water of life*," means living or running water, like a spring or fountain. It does not spring up, from the ground, but flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. Perhaps, also, the writer had in his eye the description in Ezekiel 47:1-12, where a stream issues from under the temple, and is parted in different directions. Earthly streams have their source in some mountain spring, but the "River of Life" has its source in the Throne of God.

Jesus is the one who heals us for eternity. He forgives our sins for eternity when we believe that He died on the cross for our sins, however, in the midst of the street there is a "*Tree of Life!*" This "*tree*" was an emblem of Christ and of all the blessings of His salvation; and the "*leaves*" on the tree are for the healing of the nations, meaning that His favour and presence supply all good to the inhabitants of that blessed city. Not that there will be any sickness, but to preserve them in health, as Adam would have been preserved in health if he had eaten of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden (Gen.3:22-24).

Why need a Temple when the object of worship is present? We will see Him face to face. The great glory of God will illuminate the whole new earth; there will be no need for the light of the sun or a candle or even night. An

⁵ <http://www.calvaryfullerton.org/Bstudy/index.htm>

⁶ <http://versebyversecommentary.com/1999/02/14/revelation-223-2/>

⁷ <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/31082/eVerseID/31082/RTD/barnes>
<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sundayschool.html>

added bonus, we shall reign forever and ever.

The Lord Jesus spoke by the angel, solemnly confirming the contents of this book, particularly of this last vision being faithful and true. Also His messengers showed them to holy men of God. They are things that must shortly be done; Christ will come quickly, and put all things out of doubt. John confessed that when he had heard and seen these things he reacted by worshipping the angel who revealed them to him. And by the integrity of that angel who had been the apostle's interpreter. He refused to accept religious worship from John, and reproved him for offering it. People should worship God and not His servants.

Can you see the abundance that God has in store for those that will be with Him?

APPLICATION:

Don't let your knowledge of future events just be another one of those trivial treasures that you can wow your friends with. It ought to change the way you live. Does your knowledge of future events affect your life and you loved ones?