

## The New Garden

Revelation 22:1–5

*Studies in Revelation #30*

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I remember early in my freshman year in college traveling to Salt Lake City to face the mighty University of Utah, coached by the legendary Rick Majerus and led by Keith Van Horn, who went on to be the send player drafted right after Tim Duncan. If you have no idea what I'm talking about all you need to know was this was a big time game in front of 15,000 fans. Before the game our coach said, "If you can't get up for this, you don't belong here." There was no need for a motivational speech; the game itself was the motivation.

Here we stand before the end of the book of Revelation and if this doesn't get us going, nothing will! What a God we serve! What blessings he has in store for us! And from the outset as the reading is fresh in our minds, I want to apply this text to your worship. Here is the God who made you, who redeemed you, and who will glorify you—now you are to give yourself to him in worship. When we sing, open your mouth and sing out! How can you not? How can you mumble? How can you try to hide among everyone else? Sing! Sing with gusto! Sing with soul! God loves to hear you. Your fellow brothers and sisters here are encouraged when you sing. And the lost need to see that you actually believe this stuff so that they will give themselves to God too!

What a closing before us! John reveals to us what we call "the eternal state." This is what happens after Jesus returns and he judges the living and the dead. We've seen that

God makes a new heavens and new earth and that he describes a new city, which is symbolic of the bride of Christ, the church. Now John reveals to us our final relationship with God in the imagery of a new Garden of Eden. I want you to note three things:

1. *A Place of Healing*
2. *A Place of Serving*
3. *A Place of Communing*

## **A Place of Healing**

First, the new Garden is described as *a place of healing*. In the first Garden there was no sin. In the first Garden there was no fracture in humanity's relationship with the Creator. But because of Adam's violation of God's command, Jesus would later on speak of the reason why he came, saying, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17).

Apart from Jesus Christ every single human being in the world is sick in sin. We all have a blood type: A, B, AB, or O and either + or -. The Bible says, spiritually, we all have the same sin type: SIN+. And Jesus came to be the remedy for our sin sickness. Before I say anything else let me say to you that nothing else I am going to say will be of any benefit to you unless you are right with God through Jesus Christ!

The healing that Jesus initiated by his death and resurrection and applied and credited to us by the work of the Holy Spirit will be consummated in eternity. John sees that place of healing in terms of the Garden of Eden.

Like the Garden (Gen. 2:10) there is a river: **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** (vv. 1–2). But notice that this river does not water the ground, but waters the soul. In it flows **the water of life**. As the psalmist says, “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God” (Ps. 46:4). Why does it make us glad? Because as Jesus said, “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” (John 4:14).

Like the Garden there is the tree of life: **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** (v. 2). After Adam’s sin the Lord God put an angel with a flaming sword at the gate to the Garden so that he could not go back and eat from this tree. Every since humanity has been barred from its fruit; ever since humanity has been creating it’s own trees of life with its own forbidden fruit—religion, philosophy, pleasure, drugs, power. I’m here to tell you that the only way to access the true tree of life is through Jesus Christ, who will give it to us in the end. And if you do trust in Jesus today, God assures you of your access now. The reason God has given signs like the Lord’s Supper throughout history is to assure us. As we come to the Lord’s Supper again today, it is as if that tree of life to come bends its boughs now so that we might taste of its fruit in this bread and wine.

## **A Place of Serving**

Because our relationship with God will be completely healed, we will find in that eternal Garden *a place of serving*. Jesus came not to be served but to serve, and our

response in this life and the next is to serve him. Children, in our culture this is hard for us to see because we're always being served. We go to the grocery store and we are served at the checkout line. We go out to eat and we are served. We leave our trash in a trashcan because someone else is going to serve us by taking it away. Children, maybe every once in a while your parents ask you to serve someone else: let someone else go in line first, let someone else get on the swing first, let someone else go through the door first as you hold it open. You need to think of yourselves as servants of God and servants of your neighbor. That's whom God has made you.

And look at how John reveals this to us: **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** (v. 3). The curse is reversed. The curse is that there is enmity between God and us and between our fellow humanity. But because that curse is reversed in eternity, we will be fully enabled to serve God. How? By worshipping God.

What an encouragement this should be for us. In eternity God will receive us as his servants. Our sins will not be looked upon. Our ups and downs in sanctification will not be looked upon. Our doubts will not be looked upon. God will look at us and see what? **His servants!** And in eternity God will receive our service of worship. We'll know all the words, we'll sing on key and in harmony, and we'll sing with heart, soul, mind, and strength perfectly!

But there's also an exhortation here for us. I don't know how to put it any other way than to say if you don't find delight in worship now why would you expect you'll find delight in worship in eternity? I mean, we think we deserve a vacation from God and

worship every once in a while—yet we sit back and lament how the culture’s going to hell in a hand basket. What’s the phrase for that? Something about a pot and a kettle being black? I’m not sure why some of us are barely here or so sporadic in being here. Do you think because you’re already forgiven that you can sleep in? Do you think that because in eternity you’ll worship perfectly that you can treat worship so lightly now? Let me exhort you, brothers and sisters, that your attitude about worship now needs to reflect your belief about what worship will be then in eternity.

I hope you know me well enough by now to know that I don’t say this because I’m mad at you or because I want to lay a guilt trip on you. No, I say this because I love you individually and because I love this congregation as a whole. I want you to flourish as a believer. I want us to flourish as a congregation. I want us to grow and to continue into the future for the glory of God, for our edification, and for the salvation of our cities.

## **A Place of Communing**

So let me take us to our third point from the text, which is so amazing, such a blessing, and such a comforting thought: the new Garden is revealed as *a place of communing*. Again, think in terms of the original Garden of Eden, where Adam is said to have walked with God. That’s a way of describing intimate, personal, one-on-one relationship. I know that so much of post-1960s evangelical Christianity in our country has been affected (infected?) by the Hippie Movement. I know there are ways people speak and sing in an inappropriate way of this personal intimacy with God. But just

because some go off the track doesn't mean that there is no truth in it. We see the truth of it here.

Look at how verse 4 reveals to us our eternal communion with God: **They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads** (v. 4). We've seen already that the name of God on our foreheads is a way of describing that we belong to the Lord, that he knows us as his own. Like the Old Testament priest had God's holy name on the front of his headdress so we have God's name on us.

But here is added this phrase **they will see his face**. Whose face? God's. But how can we see God when the Scriptures say that no man can see him and live? This has led some in church history to say it's a mental and mystical contemplation of God with the eyes of the soul. But I think the simplest answer is to follow Jesus' words: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9) and the words of Jesus' beloved disciple, John: "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). In eternity we will see Jesus face-to-face, and in seeing him, we will see the Father and the Spirit. And in seeing our glorified God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, the words of Scripture come to their fruition:

For the Lord is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face. (Ps. 11:7)

As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. (Ps. 17:15)

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? (Ps. 42:1-2)

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. (Ps. 63:1)

What a God we have! What blessings he has in store for us! And as we conclude this book of Scripture together, we remember that it was written to beleaguered congregations in a hostile world—a world we are becoming more and more acquainted with in our time. Yet, no matter how fearful the Dragon, Satan, is to us, no matter what the beast of persecuting tyrannical government devises, no matter what false ideologies and what false promises the false prophet speaks, and no matter how seductive the world of Babylon is, we have these promises of God. “These words are trustworthy and true” (Rev. 22:6). Let us pray...