

The River of Life

All good things come from the Father. The River of Life is a picture of that truth and all that it implies.

"Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow."
James 1:17



The design of the window shows the River of Life coming from the Throne of God. It transitions from the sea of glass, flowing right to left across the window. It falls to the earth in a waterfall on the left side of the window then

flows into the sunrise through the center of the lower half of the window.

There was a river fed from four great rivers that watered the garden paradise of our origin giving life to its inhabitants. Adam and Eve never experienced thirst, hunger or need while they remained in the garden. They accepted its beauty and provision from the hand of the Lord. There was no toil or strife. The waters that fed the garden, the trees whose fruit nourished and satisfied man were received with ease. Our first parents could not imagine a world without abundance and fulfillment. The waters of the garden seemed as naturally to them as the Lord walking in their midst in the garden in the cool of the evening.

To a people in a dry and arid land, a land whose very life depended upon the yearly rainfall in order to raise crops and feed livestock, water was a powerful image. A river pouring forth that grew deeper and wider in abundance was seen as from another world, and such was the vision that Ezekiel witnessed when He was given a tour of the Heavenly Temple.

"Then he brought me back to the door of the house; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced east. And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar. ...When the man went out toward the east with a line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he led me through the water, water reaching the ankles. Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, water reaching the knees. Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, water reaching the loins. Again he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not ford, for the water had risen, enough water to swim in, a river that could not be forded."

Ezekiel 47:1, 3-5

Man separated from the presence of God has a thirst only God Himself can satisfy. Ezekiel witnessed a river that could quench the deep thirst of man, coming from the foundation of the Temple. So similar is Ezekiel's vision of the river to the River of Life in the book of the Revelation that it is assumed to be the same.

Just as water is elusive and difficult to describe, taking on different forms, the River of Life has several different meanings as well as descriptions. In Zechariah it is called Living Waters;

"And it will come about in that day that living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter."

Zechariah 14:8

In Psalm 36 it is called the River of Pleasure and the Fountain of Life;

"How precious is Thy lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Thy wings. They drink their fill of the abundance of Thy house; And Thou dost give them to drink of the river of Thy delights. For with Thee is the fountain of life; In Thy light we see light." Psalm 36:7-9

In John we find Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well. He introduces the phrase, "well of water springing up to eternal life" When Jesus encountered the woman at the well he told her

"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

John 4:10

Interested in what He had to say, she inquired further. Jesus explained,



"Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life. "

The River of Life represents the glory and joy which are grace perfected. Its waters signify the Gospel of Christ going forth from Jerusalem to spread to the nations around her. The waters are a picture of the power of the Holy Spirit which accompanies the spiritual gifts that proceed where the Gospel is preached. In Acts we see the Spirit of God poured out on the Apostles while they were in Jerusalem. It was from the temple that the gospel was first preached. Christ is the Temple, from which the Living Waters flow, out of His pierced side.

The increasing waters as described in Ezekiel 47:2 is a picture of the church with its small beginning in the temple, growing wider and wider and deeper, but still pressing on. In Ezekiel 47:8-9 the River of Life brings healing. It describes the salty seas to which it flows becoming fresh. It enables every living creature to live:

"These waters go out toward the eastern region and go down into the Arabah; then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea, and the waters of the sea become fresh. And it will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes will live."
Ezekiel 47:8-9

Wherever the River of Life is given a free course to flow, it brings life and makes even bitter waters sweet. Both wonderful and restorative, its effects are a picture of the changed lives of those who encounter and receive the Gospel. It is a picture of all those who were dead in their sins now made alive in Christ. Wherever this river flows it brings life; everything is made fruitful and flourishing.

All these descriptions show the quality of this river to be life: the giving of life, the blessings of life, the receiving of eternal life for those who accept the invitation to come.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."
Rev 22:17

The River of Life in the book of the Revelation is a river clear as crystal that flows from the throne of God, down the middle of the streets of the New Jerusalem. (Rev 22:1) The river here is different than all other descriptions of the living waters. The River of Life in the new Jerusalem is more than the purifying waters of ceremonial washing and baptism. There will be no need for these ordinances in heaven. It is more than the blessings and gifts of the Holy Spirit which flow from the Father. It is more than the quicken quality that gives new life to man. It is more than the doctrines of the Gospel that enlighten man and bring life, more than the joy and holiness it's message brings.

The River of Life in the book of the Revelation is the abundant, immeasurable, everlasting love of God. It is the Lord God Almighty Himself that is the eternal source from which all other blessings flow. There is nothing greater than He.

The Tree of Life

The Lord planted a variety of trees in Eden. He placed them there for their beauty and pleasure. Their fruit was described as good, its purpose, to nourish man. In the midst of the garden, one tree was named the Tree of Life. Another tree named was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It was concerning the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil the Lord gave Adam specific instruction.

"From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."

Genesis 2:16



From this verse we know that to eat freely from the Tree of Life was permissible. This tree, the promise of eternal life, was to be food for our ancient parents. It was to be their source of nourishment and would allow them to potentially live forever. For Adam and Eve it was the way of life. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the forbidden tree was the way of death. The Lord allowed man to live among the trees, giving them freedom to choose between the two paths. Ultimately, they tasted of the forbidden tree and chose the way of death.

Not wanting them to be left without a means of redemption, the Lord drove them from the garden. His purpose was to keep them from eating from the Tree of Life and therefore, live forever in their sin. He placed the cherubim with a flaming sword before the entrance to the garden.

"So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life."

Genesis 3:24

Man today faces the same choice Adam and Eve did. Christ stands before us as the Tree of Life and invites us to choose the way of life. He said about Himself that:

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."

John 14:6

Jesus Christ is the author of all life; physical, spiritual and eternal. John testified to this truth when he wrote:

"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

John 1:4

Our ancient father did not choose life and, being born in his image, we are not inclined to choose it either. The Lord did not abandon His plan that we should live in the midst of His presence forever. When man did not choose life, life chose to seek us out and made a way to reconcile us to God and to restore us to our original state of blessedness. He chose to reconcile us to Himself upon a tree.

The scriptures were written over a period of 1,500 years. The Tree of Life is found in both the beginning and the end of the Bible. In Genesis 2, the Tree of Life is found in the Garden. In Revelations 22, it points to the world to come and is found next to the River of Life from where it derives its strength. In Proverbs, Solomon speaks of wisdom as a tree of life. Known for his wisdom, he instructs us in true wisdom; a wisdom received by God.

"She (Wisdom) is a tree of life to those who take hold of her."

Proverbs 3:18

Proverbs 2 provides us with the wealth of the wisdom of the Tree of Life and invites us to eat of its fruits. We find that true wisdom is from the Lord. It is He who gives us knowledge and understanding. The Lord stores wisdom up for us and if we are upright and seek wisdom out, He provides it with abundance. Wisdom becomes our shield, it guards our path, it preserves our way. By wisdom we discern righteousness and justice. If we eat of wisdom it will enter our hearts and bring pleasure to our soul and guard us from evil.

Solomon's writing on wisdom points us to Christ. The New Testament, in 1 Corinthians 1:30, describes Jesus as the Wisdom of God:

"But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption."

All that wisdom promises us we find in Jesus Christ. In Ephesians Paul instructs us in prayer to experience and know deeply the knowledge of Christ to the point that the eyes of our hearts are open to His glory and power.

"I do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." Ephesians 1:15-19

True wisdom always points us to Jesus Christ, to the way of Life. In this world we can glimpse but a part of what the Tree of Life brings. It is in Revelations, in the New Jerusalem, that we find the fulfillment the promise of the tree, the promise of eternal life.

"And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Revelations 22:1

We know life in the New Jerusalem will be a better place than earth, but it is also a better place than the garden paradise of our origin. In Eden there was one Tree of Life, but in heaven there is no other kind, but many of the same kind. The fruit of the heavenly trees appear each month. They produce an unending, always new, always fresh supply of nourishment, delight and health. Their fruit is pleasure, blessedness, an endless variety of happiness and always sufficient for our souls. The leaves of the tree are for healing. It is because of the leaves of this tree that there is neither death nor disease anymore. The leaves of the tree are said to represent the ministry and doctrines of the Gospel. In Christ Jesus we have all we'll ever need or want.