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READ Revelation 22:1-7, the last chapter in the Bible, page 1874. ☺

I love New York. Now that we have discovered my dad's cousin resides there, New York is even better! She lives very near Central Park. To get to her apartment we have to cross Central Park, so we often get off the bus and walk through the park, then get back on the bus on the other side.

It's amazing that in such an extensive urban setting there is this secluded natural area. People are happy there, relaxed. Men, women, and children play. People bike, boat, and musicians play. If you didn't see the tall buildings surrounding the park, you would hardly know you were in one of the largest cities in the world.

It makes me happy to go there! It's not quite Eden. It's a shadow; a distant hint.

You can rent a rowboat on the lake in Central Park. However, you do not want to rock the boat and fall in because the lake is filled with putrid green algae.

One day I was filled with worry—I don't even remember what it was about. But as I was praying suddenly a picture of that green, murky water came and the thought crossed my mind, *your prayer is weak and filled with doubt, like that revolting algae-filled water*. Then suddenly a vision came to me of a crystal clear, sparkling fountain of water bubbling up and overflowing into a clear lake. And I thought, that's how I want my prayers to be—clearly filled with trust that God is good.

John writes:

“Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It flowed down the center of the main street” (Rev. 22:1-2).

Can you remember any other rivers in Scripture? Gen 2:

Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground-- trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river watered the garden and then flowed out of Eden and divided into four branches. (v. 8-10)

That, of course, was God's original design.

Then again in Ezekiel 47 there is mention of God's city with a crystal clear river flowing out of it, through the desert to the Dead Sea, turning the salt water into sweet water. Then Ezekiel saw tons of fish because of the freshness of the water and many fruit trees beside it. (v. 1-12)

Joel also predicts a fountain bursting forth with water—and the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk. (3:18)

Sounds like heaven!

Remember in the beginning how water was chaotic and God separated the water from the dry land? In ancient Greek culture, water is a basic element which is considered to be dangerous. Think about the flood story. Think about floods in our day—Katrina, and Hurricane Sandy, and the tsunami in Japan. Destructive, chaotic water. But God says, in the end there will be a crystal clear river of life flowing from the throne of God and of Jesus, constant but not out of control; not a flood.

God knows the things that cause fear and destruction and they will be no more. This is what you have to look forward to.

Perhaps you are not afraid of floods or have no experience with your home being flooded. But I imagine you would enjoy a beautiful, crystal clear river surrounded by fruit-bearing trees without you having to do any work!

Sounds like heaven!

In Genesis Adam and Eve were banned from the garden so they would not eat from the tree of life. But healing will be our future and in this passage are TREES of life—not just one!—and they continuously produce all kinds of fresh fruit each month, have leaves that don't wilt but rather are used for medicine to heal.

Has anyone ever used an aloe vera plant for a burn or small wound? Jesus is into healing and so in God's city the very leaves of the trees will heal.

I have a friend who has a very bad cancer. Recently, he has been going through chemotherapy and it has been very hard on him. He has come to dread it. One day he was praying about it and he heard Jesus speak these words: *when you receive the chemo, think of it as my blood that is going into your body.*

He felt the presence of Jesus in his hour of need. That presence will be clearly seen in God's city at all times.

In Genesis, Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the evening. They had full awareness of the presence and power of God. But that ended after the fall.

Each week I say the benediction from Numbers, it comes from this command: "You shall bless the Israelites, "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace." Then God said, "So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them" (6:23-27).

That blessing is a preview of heaven. I am to ask God to make his face to shine upon you, and then, in the end, you will actually see God's face. God's face will literally shine on you. In that day his name will be written on your forehead because you are His.

There was a missionary couple in El Salvador and the wife had a baby. When the couple returned to Texas, something told the mother the baby was not hers. They challenged the hospital in court

and come to find out, two babies born that day were switched. Her real baby was found and returned to them.

There is no chance we will ever be misidentified when we belong to the Lord. His name will be written on us.

You can see why there is no sorrow there.

Revelation mentions the Lamb's book of life six times, and Philippians once, making seven times. Think of all the people listed in that book who are going to be oh so happy. Is your name there? Does this last chapter in the Bible make you happy?

It is indeed a happy ending. That may be hard to grasp because we are currently living in a world where Satan rules and things can get, shall we say, discouraging.

My friend that I spoke about lives in Israel. (He told me to please feel free to share his story.) He and his wife have an apartment on the Via Dolorosa. The Old City has such a sense of God's presence. And yet it is a place of tension, with so many divergent views and religions. He felt the tension. He wondered how the truth can ever be known. One night he was unable to sleep, he prayed for Jesus to put his hand on his shoulder—to just let him feel his presence. He felt nothing. Later he went out on the roof which overlooked the city. Again, he did not sense the Lord's presence he so desired. Again he was thinking about all the stressors in that city. But then suddenly, clearly, a voice came to him that said, "This is my city."

While we experience division and turmoil in these times and it can become scary, we must remember that this is God's world; God reigns, even though it may not always seem like it. Whether you are in the midst of illness, or politics is not going like you would like it to, or the truth seems far away from the daily reality, remember, God is never for one moment out of control. God's plans will certainly happen. His city, as prophesied here in the book of Revelation, is coming soon!

So obey the words. Tell everyone you can, with a spirit of grace, about this truth.

Remember, a thousand years is like a day to God, and a day like a thousand years – so take today seriously! Be ready, even when it looks like nothing is happening. Hang in there in tough times—because one day we are going to say, "Look at all the happy people!"

I will end with this story. Perhaps it will help us understand that with God, it's worth the wait.

Turning Point Church, one of the ten churches that participated in our Good Friday event, needed to move a few years ago. They put a bid on a building and had sold their own building. The building didn't pass code and it would cost a million dollars to fix it. They had to let it go. Disappointed, they rented someplace else. They looked at numerous buildings and finally put a contract on one. The owner of that property changed his mind.

They wondered, *what are we doing wrong, Lord?*

Pastor Dotson had looked at another building but dismissed it due to 3” water on floor, a leaky roof, and mold. The price was too high. He didn’t even tell anyone about it. But after these problems, he mentioned it. They went back to the bank. The price had been dropped substantially, to under \$20/foot. They bought it, did much of work themselves and it is a beautiful facility in a good neighborhood.

God knew where and how to give that church the best at the proper time. Have you been challenged by the need for more faith? Nothing is impossible! God is a God of huge resources. When we live by faith, expectantly, when we obey, we are in the greatest, most powerful hands.

But it’s a matter of trust and LOTS of it. Like the youth portrayed in their skit.

Do you want to find yourself standing in God’s beautiful city one day? It’s coming soon. The way to get there is to take this prophesy to heart. Jesus will lead you to this happy ending. Sometimes you will feel that you are going nowhere. But trust Him—and you, too, will be among the happy people.

AMEN