

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**May 29, 2011**

**Tree of Life**

Revelation 22:1-9

**Key verse:** “On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:2)

The fountain of youth has not only been found, it has now been bottled! At least that is the message of a TV ad for Evian bottled water.

“Let’s observe the effect of Evian on your body,” says a narrator as the ad begins. Then we see a boom box holding a cassette tape labeled “Rapper’s Delight.” The music starts to play and a throng of babies fill the screen—happy babies, smiling, playing, and roller skating! With the aid of computerized special effects, the babies perform a number of athletic stunts on roller skates.

Next, as the sound of dripping water is heard, these words appear on the screen: “Naturally pure and mineral-balanced water supports your body’s youth.” The babies perform some more incredible stunts on roller skates. Then the ad ends with the narrator’s voice saying, “Live young, live young!”

It’s not the fountain of youth but the “water of life” that appears at the beginning of Revelation 22: “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. 1-2a).

I am reminded of Jesus’ words to the Samaritan woman. Standing with her at the local well, He said: “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” (John 4:13-14). Jesus did not mean literal water, of course. But He promised to give all who come to Him the kind of *spiritual life* that permanently satisfies the thirsts of the human soul.

In Revelation 22, that “spring of water” has become a great river, flowing from the throne of God. We do not have to wait until we get to heaven before we can experience life abundant and eternal. Jesus promises that to us here and now. But in God’s new creation, we will live and swim and play in the great river of God’s life and love!

Next John sees this: “On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (v. 2b). The healing that comes from the tree’s leaves represents the redemption that flows from the throne. The healing/saving work of Jesus—and its benefits—goes on into eternity.

“Nothing accursed will be found there any more,” John tells us. “But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever” (vv. 3-5).

Again, our experience of God’s grace in this life will be multiplied and *completed* in God’s new creation: Now, we walk by faith and follow the light we are given—sometimes only a little light. Then, we will live in the awesome light of God’s immediate presence. Now, we seek God’s presence and experience it in part. Then, we “will see his face” and live forever in His immediate presence!

“His servants will worship him,” writes John in verse 3. As we have seen in previous parts of Revelation, *worship* will be a central part of life in the new creation. Worship is so important that, when John falls down to worship at the feet of his angelic messenger, the angel corrects him: “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!” (v. 9).

In this present earthly life, as in the eternal city, only God is worthy of our worship. “Worship,” says Tim Keller, “is pulling our affections off our idols and putting them on God.”

One last word about the “tree of life”: Have you ever thought about the fact that the Bible begins and ends in a *garden* with a *tree of life*? We first read about the tree of life in Genesis 2, where it is an image of eternal life. Only after Adam and Eve sin are they prohibited from eating of the tree of life (Genesis 3:24).

When we get to Revelation, the tree of life appears again. This image connects the creation of the world to the re-created world that is to come. If the tree of life in Genesis represents paradise lost, the tree of life in Revelation represents paradise regained! “On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:2).

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