

THE RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE

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Reading: Revelation 22:1-9

In the book of Revelation we read about how the disciple John saw a wonderful city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. Through the middle of this beautiful city in the spiritual world, there flowed a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal. All the rivers in the other world come from the Lord. He creates them and causes them to flow everywhere in that world where they are necessary, in order that the angels and spirits may have water, and that the plants, shrubs, and trees may grow and flourish. And because the rivers flow forth from Him, they are, in their source, pure and clean, and give life to all things.

But the rivers that are found in the cities and countries where evil people live are muddy, and filled with impurities that make everyone sick who drinks of their water. I will tell you how this comes to pass.

In this world, a river starts high up in the mountains, where, from a spring deeply hidden in the rocks, clear cold water arises, and flows down toward the plains below. As it flows down, other streams that have had their source in other springs flow into it, and as it proceeds, more and more streams flow into it until, in the plains and valleys, it becomes a great river flowing on to the sea. By the time it gets down into the valleys the water is not so pure. This is especially the case where people build cities on the river's banks, with factories pouring their waste materials into the river, with boats motoring on its waves, and with smoke hanging over it in the air. Then the stream becomes impure, and the water can be unfit to drink unless it is cleaned.

Now it is somewhat the same in the other world. The river starts from the throne of the Lord, which is above the highest heaven, far, far higher than any mountain. There it is pure, and clear as crystal. This is the water that the Lord spoke to the woman of Samaria about, to whom He said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). And later the Lord said, "I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts" (Revelation 21:6).

This pure, clear river of water, so delicious you cannot imagine it in this world, which is able to make everyone live forever who drinks of it, flows down from the Lord's throne, and it comes first to the heavens which are on high mountains. It was on one of these mountains that the Holy City was seen by John. Here only those who love the Lord, and who love to receive the water of

life from Him can come. These people are very careful not to defile the water of the river. They guard it carefully, and allow nothing to disturb it or to pollute it. So it is that in this highest heaven, as in the Holy City, the river is described as pure and clear as crystal, although even here it is not quite as pure as when it proceeded from the throne of God.

From these mountains it flows down into the second heaven, which is on the hills. Here the angels also love the Lord, but they are not quite as wise as the angels of the highest heaven; and, not being so wise, they do not know how to guard and protect the water of the river quite so well. So with them it is not quite so pure. Still, they also love it, and protect it as well as they can. And among them it is still a clear river, whose water is very good indeed, giving health and strength to those who drink from it.

Lower down, on the plains, are the lowest heavens. Here the river proceeds more slowly and winds about. The angels here are still less wise, and in consequence the water is still less pure, although it is good to drink, and can cause the strong plants to grow and flourish.

But lower down, in the valleys, live evil spirits; and in the deep dark places live the very evil spirits. These people do not love the Lord. They do not like the water of the river. And they do not even try to protect it. So among them the water becomes polluted, muddy, dirty and unhealthy.

The only way to receive the pure, clear water of life is to get out of these valleys and climb the mountains to the places where the angels are. This is what the Lord wants us to do. He is always trying to draw us away from evil spirits and lead us toward heaven, where we may enjoy the water of life. So it is prophesied of the Lord that, "The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters" (Revelation 7:17). And as is also said of the Lord in the 23rd Psalm, "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters" (v. 2).

So, if we want the Lord to lead us to the Holy City, where we will receive the wonderful water of the river of life, we must always try to drive away the evil spirits who come and tempt us to forsake the Lord. We must try every day to learn more about the Lord, about heaven, and about what the Lord wants us to do, so that we can keep His commandments, and so draw near to the angels. If we do this, then in the other world we will taste this water of life from the river—pure and clear as crystal, as it flows out of the throne of God, and passes through the golden streets of the Holy City, New Jerusalem.