

Come and Walk In the Garden

Revelation 22:1-6 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. ³ And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. ⁶ Then he said to me, "These words *are* faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.

Christ and the Spirit invite you to come and walk under the trees of life. The day will come when we will walk among the garden which John sees in our text. In the meantime, we walk among the trees through the sacraments.

In order to properly understand this text we really have to start with a discussion about the tree of life.

The word used for tree here is not the normal Greek word *dedron*, but instead *xulon*. *Xulon* is not normally used to mean tree, but rather a piece of wood, or something made from wood.

Matthew 26:47 And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and **clubs**, came from the chief priests and elders of the people.

Clubs in Greek is *xulon*, you could translated it a piece of wood.

Whereas in:

Luke 13:19 "It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large **tree**, and the birds of the air nested in its branches."

Here the large tree is the Greek word *dedron*.

So why is *xulon* used here in Revelation 22? Well actually every reference in scripture to the "tree of life" in Old and New Testament uses this word *xulon*. Even in Genesis 2 God planted the tree of life in the garden, in the Greek translation the Hebrews used the word *xulon*.

Possibly this is simply because that is the word the Hebrews used to translate the word tree of life in Gen 2. Therefore the Spirit also uses it in Revelation 22.

Possibly this is because when Jesus died he died on a *xulon*, a piece of wood.

1 Peter 2:24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree

Here tree is xulon, which is what we would expect because the cross was a thing made of wood not an actual tree.

The cross is the tree of life for us sinners, as we see in our VBS logo for this summer. It would not be surprising if the connection between the cross and the tree of life is so great that God chose the word which would be used for the cross as the word for the tree of life from the very beginning.

There is another possible reason. Xulon unlike dedron can be used as a collective noun. In essence it might be better translated as woods or forest. This is possible even in Genesis chapter 2. The Hebrew word for tree of life can also be a collective noun, which means it could have been not a tree of life but the woods or forest of life which God put in the middle of the garden.

A collective idea makes far more sense in the context of Revelation 22 which speaks of 12 different fruits, and which also speaks of this forest of life being in the middle and on either side of the river and the street.

The picture then in Revelation 22 is a road which leads the people of God to the throne. Flowing out from the throne of God and parallel to the road is the river of living water. In the middle between the road and the river, and on either side of the road and river are the woods of life. This woods is made up of twelve different kinds of fruit bearing trees. The fruit of these trees gives life to the people of God as they walk under it. The leaves of these trees bring healing for every disease and sickness and sorrow.

The forest of life has twelve different kinds of fruit. Usually, the number twelve in scripture indicates the people of God, the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve apostles, etc. Here however the twelve doesn't seem to have any connection to that, but rather just emphasizing that the forest of life producing fruit year-round. A different fruit for each month of the year, but there is always food available so that God's people always have plenty to eat. As we hear in Psalm 23 God's people, "shall not lack."

These trees produce not only food for God's people, but their leaves are the medicine of life that heals all disease of mind and body and soul. Verse three reminds us that "anything that is a curse is no more."

This road that leads to the throne of God is one and only one.

Many like to think that "all roads lead" to God, but that is not the case. We are not told that there are many roads leading to throne of God but one, those who wish to come to the throne of God must walk along this road.

Jesus says, "I am the way the truth and the life."

Jacob saw the vision of the stairway to heaven. Jesus later told Nathanael He was that stairway.

As Jesus himself reminds us this path is narrow

Matthew 7:13 ¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

Solomon reminds us this path is contrary to the way we think is right.

Pro 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Few people take the time to get off the freeway and travel on the rustic roads, and the country roads, unless they have no other choice. Even so most people, even those who claim to be Christian are too busy rushing around on the board highways to seek out the narrow road that leads to the throne of God.

Too many believe that if God is loving, they do not have to worry about which way their life is going. Do not be deceived if you would walk among the trees of life and come to the throne of the Living God, you must seek out the way of Christ with a repentant heart. That is to say, not only acknowledging that you are a sinner but honestly seeking to avoid sin and temptation in the future.

Ezekiel 18:30-31 "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. 31 "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.

From the throne of God goes forth the river of living water, which gives life not only to the people of God but also to woods of life, from which the people eat.

The sacraments, both Lord's Supper and Baptism, which we receive now are a picture of this heavenly forest or garden.

In the sacraments God invites us to walk up the road that leads to his throne. However again make no mistake, this path to God is the path of true repentance. Anyone who come to either sacrament intent on continuing in that which they know to be sin, will not find the trees of life but only the judgement of God.

Having come to throne of God through repentance and faith in Jesus, out from God flows His blessing, the water of life. In heaven God's blessing of life is hidden in the water that flows from His throne. So also now that blessings comes hidden in the water of baptism, and the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper. These elements come to us from God's throne blessed and purified by God himself.

The trees of life receiving these blessings from the very throne of God, bear fruit. As the living river nourishes the trees of life so also do the sacraments cause fruit to be born in our hearts and lives as well, so that we ourselves are the trees of life to those who are on this earth.

Revelation 22:17 ¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come.

Let all those who know that they are sinners and desire to be rid of their sin, come, and receive the water of life in the bread and the wine.

Let all those who desire to walk in the forest of life, come, and receive healing in the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let all those who weary and seek shade come before the throne of God and of the lamb.

Revelation 22:20 Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!