

SHALL WE GATHER AT THE RIVER?

Revelation 22:1-5

August 10, 2008 Sunday pm

INTRODUCTION

A. ROBERT LOWRY 1826-1899

Born: March 12, 1826, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Died: November 25, 1899, Plainfield, New Jersey.

Buried: Hillside Cemetery, Plainfield, New Jersey

SHALL WE GATHER AT THE RIVER-written in 1864

“One afternoon in July, 1864, when I was pastor at Hanson Place Baptist Church, Brooklyn, the weather was oppressively hot, and I was lying on a lounge in a state of physical exhaustion...My imagination began to take itself wings. Visions of the future passed before me with startling vividness. The imagery of the apocalypse took the form of a tableau. Brightest of all were the throne, the heavenly river, and the gathering of the saints...I began to wonder why the hymn writers had said so much about the “river of death” and so little about the “pure water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.” As I mused, the words began to construct themselves. They came first as a question of Christian inquiry, “Shall we gather?” Then they broke in chorus, “Yes, we’ll gather.” On this question and answer the hymn developed itself. The music came with the hymn.”

B. Today we continue our glimpse of heaven-22:1-5.

1. Much of what I share we covered last year when we finished our study of Revelations on Wednesday nights.
2. What do you think we will do in heaven?
3. Let’s see what John tells us we will do in heaven.

I. FIRST, CONSIDER WHAT WE WON’T BE DOING IN HEAVEN.

- A. First, heaven will not be an endless or eternal church service.
- B. Second, heaven will not be endless or eternal rest.
- C. **Twain: No Rest in Heaven**

We’ve overdone the idea of heaven as a place of rest. Mark Twain, not a Christian to be sure, nonetheless wrote a lot about heaven. In his story, *Captain Stormfield’s Visit to Heaven*, the heavenly guide says:

Eternal Rest sounds comforting in the pulpit ... Well, you try it once, and see how heavy time will hang on your hands. Why, Stormfield, a man like you, that had been active and stirring all his life, would go mad in six months in heaven where he hadn’t anything to do. Heaven is the very last place to come to rest in—and don’t you be afraid to bet on that!

II. SECOND, WHAT WILL WE BE DOING IN HEAVEN AND WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE?

A. First, heaven will be like the Garden of Eden.

1. Like Eden, a river will be there-1-2a.

- a. A river was in Eden-**Gen. 2:10**.

¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters.

- b. John’s imagery comes from Ezekiel 47:1.

¹ The man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar.

- c. In John’s day, water was a symbol of physical life.

- d. Jesus says water is a symbol of eternal life-**John 4:13-14**.
¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,
¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
- 2. Like Eden, a tree will be there-2b.
 - a. There were two special trees in Eden-**Gen. 2:9b**.
 ...In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 - b. John's imagery again comes from **Ezekiel 47:12**.
¹² Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing."
 - c. In Eden, man was forbidden to eat from the tree of life **Gen. 2:22**.
²² And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."
 - d. In heaven, we will eat from the tree of life and it will bring healing (spiritual food and health)—2b.
- 3. Like Eden, a curse is mentioned-3a.
 - a. In Eden, the curse was given-**Gen. 3:14-19**.-don't read.
 - b. In heaven, the curse will be removed. **How? Gal. 3:13**.
¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."
- B. Second, heaven will be like the best job you have ever had.
 - 1. Mankind was created to work and be productive, and is not a curse-**Gen. 2:15**.
¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.
 - 2. In heaven we will have productive, meaningful work to do-v.3b & 5b.
 - 3. California pastor, Jack Hayford, shares the story of a man he visited in the hospital shortly before the man died. Hayford writes...
 "A man of deep faith and commitment to Jesus Christ, and a very experienced and highly respected lighting director at CBS, he looked at me, his eyes misted slightly, and he said, 'Pastor Jack, you know when you're in my business, it's the combination of lights, the skill at blending things together in order to create special effects—that's what this job is about.'
 He said, 'This morning I woke up and in the quiet of my heart, Jesus spoke to me and he said, 'Carl, how would you like to direct a sunset?'"
 - 4. What are the benefits of this job in heaven?
 - a. Personal knowledge of God-4a.
 - b. Personal knowledge of self-4b. Who we belong to.
- C. Third, heaven will be like an endless day in paradise.
 - 1. Darkness represents....
 - a. Spiritual blindness-**John 2:11**.
¹¹ But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.
 - b. Sin-**John 3:19**.
 Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

c. Hell-**2 Peter 2:4**-KJV.

⁴ For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

2. In heaven, there will be no darkness-v.5.

CONCLUSION

Shall we gather at the river? By all means!