

From This Corner

## A River Runs Through It

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Revelation 22:1-3

*1 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<sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the city. 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. No longer will there be any curse.<sup>1</sup>*

The river of Revelation 22 is one of my favorite rivers. Mind you, I have not seen it yet, but I have come close enough to have a sense of it. I have come close by visiting several like it here on earth. The phrase that captures it in my mind's eye is "bright as crystal."

As a few of you know, I am a trout angler and I am on intimate terms with several crystalline rivers. For instance, there is Furnace Brook in Vermont whose waters run most of the year so clear that the bottom is visible even in the deepest pools. In the summer, God provides an umbrella of green coniferous and deciduous trees. I am not surprised that the River of Revelation has trees on its banks. Another one of my revelatory rivers is the Upper Genesee near the Pennsylvania border in Shongo, New York. Unfortunately, it is in Ron Isaman's district rather than mine, but we do not always get the appointments of which we dream. For most of the year, the Genesee near its source runs clear. It also has a series of splendid hatches that include mayflies and caddis that get the trout rising to the emergent insects. It is my contention that it will be so in heaven. This will be disappointing to any who were hoping for a bug-less paradise.

It has always perplexed me that the most popular images of heaven seem to come from other Scriptural references: the gates of pearl from Revelation 21, and the mansion in John 14. As far as I am concerned, you can have your mansions, pearls, and gold. I will be down at the river.

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<sup>1</sup>*The New Revised Standard Version*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989.

So as some of the best trout fishing of the year approaches you will find me taking my Sabbaths contemplating the waters of life, as clear as crystal. Paradise, after all, is not a bad location for a Sabbath rest. Both the Old and New Testaments concur as they frequently associate water with the salvation God offers through the cleansing and imparting ministry of the Holy Spirit. As Revelation 22:3 says “there will be no curse when we gather at the river.”

If you still have doubt about this part of my spirituality, I would quote Izaak Walton in his The Compleat Angler; or, The Contemplative Man’s Recreation written sometime in the seventeenth century:

“He that views the ancient Ecclesiastical Canons ... shall find Angling allowed to clergymen as being a harmless recreation, a recreation that invites them to contemplation and quietness.”