

Life Giving Water

When we experience the joys, the beauties and loves of this world, it seems as if time passes so quickly and we get a taste of what eternal life in heaven will be like. Even the saints have contemplated its mysteries:

“If love, even human love, gives so much consolation here, what will love not be in heaven?” St Josemaria Escriva

Yet the amazing thing is that we do not have to wonder or guess what heaven will be like. We are given a clear vision and insight into the beauties of heaven through the revelation of John.

In order to understand the full import and significance of this vision we need to take a brief step back and understand the significance of the temple. After King Solomon succeeded his father David, he had built a glorious and magnificent temple around 1000 BC.

Unfortunately it was destroyed four centuries later by the Babylonians. Imagine the significance of this destruction. The temple was the equivalent to the Whitehouse, the Pentagon and the Twin Towers—all in one! During this period when no temple existed, the Jewish people received prophecies from Ezekiel and Zechariah foretelling the building of a new and glorious temple where water from the temple would give life wherever it flowed, the fruit that grew from these waters would provide healing and this would all happen when the Lord restored Jerusalem.

Fast forward several decades later when the temple was being rebuilt. Think of the hopeful expectation that the Jewish people had, think of the wonder and glory that would be restored to Jerusalem!

But when the foundation was being laid for the new temple, guess what they did? They wept. Why? Those who knew the original temple wept because this second temple was a pale comparison to what the original temple was. The waters that would flow from this temple would not have that miraculous effect told by the prophets, and so they longed for the day when the new temple foretold by the prophets would be revealed.

So when St. John reveals in his vision a 'river of life-giving water' from the throne of God and of the Lamb which waters the trees that produce 'leaves for healing/medicine', any first century Jew would have said: That's it! That is the fulfillment of all our longings for the new temple with life giving water yet it will be found in the new Jerusalem, i.e., heaven.

However, this reality can seem so distant to us that our hearts become weary. Notice what the Gospel tell us today: it does not say be on guard against drunkenness (although drunkenness is not advised by the scriptures), it says don't let your **hearts** be weighed down by drunkenness and the worries of this life.

A drunken heart is a heart that longs for the beauties of heaven, longs for this life giving water, but because it seems so far off that it becomes drunk through the excess pleasures of this world. Or a worried heart can become weighed down by the stresses of this life, deprived of this nourishing waters, and its vision for heaven becomes obscured.

What is the solution? Jesus tells us: "Be alert at all times, praying." Praying to have strength and praying to be ready to meet Jesus. We need a regular prayer life, we need an intimate prayer life where these life-giving waters are not in the future to come but within our present grasp.

The waters of this river, which is the very love of God, pour into the soul, and make it drink of the torrent of love, which is the Spirit of the Bridegroom infused into the soul in union. (St. John of the Cross)

So these life giving waters are not so far beyond our reach but a torrent of love waiting to be unleashed upon all of us through the intimacy and union of prayer. Let us persevere in prayer, in contemplating our God through mystery whom we will one day see in reality so that when we stand before the throne of the Son of Man and behold him face to face we will say: that's it! You are the fulfillment of all I have waited for, of all my longings!