

The Revelation to John
Chapter Twenty-two
The Great Final News for Us
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Originally written in 2008

This final chapter presents a continuation of the previous “chapter” as some details of the city are further illuminated. The emphasis is on the inner life of the city. Paradise is regained! He returns to his images from Genesis 1-3 and Ezekiel 40. John then writes some generalizations as he returns to the time period of the revelation itself. He concludes with the great prayer: “Come Lord Jesus” and we all say, “Amen!”

A Further Vision of the Great City

Rev 22:1 “And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,

Rev 22:2 in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

The angel now elaborates on the city by showing me the river of the water of life. The water was clear as a crystal. I don’t know how many of you have seen a mountain stream and compared it in your mind with a muddy river, but the clear water is a beautiful sight. This stream runs from the throne of God and Jesus and it is in the middle of the street. Again we see that there is one street in the city, but with a river running down the middle. The street then must be very wide and I assume that smaller streets from the gates lead into this major street. We read in both testaments about the association of water with salvation and ministry of the Holy Spirit:

- Isa 44:3 *For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring And My blessing on your descendants;*
- John 3:5 *Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*
- John 4:13-14 *Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."*
- John 7:37-39 *Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. (38) "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" (39) But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*
- John 13:10 *Jesus *said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."*

- Tit 3:5 *He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,*

Other writers have given us visions of such rivers:

- Psa 46:4 *“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, The holy dwelling places of the Most High.”*
- Zech 14:8 *“And it will come about in that day that living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.”*
- Ezek 47:7 *“Now when I had returned, behold, on the bank of the river there were very many trees on the one side and on the other.”*
- Ezek 47:12 *“And by the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing.”*

The river does not flow from the temple as seen by Ezekiel but it flows directly from the throne of God. As noted previously, the main difference in the visions is that the entire city is now the Most Holy Place. God does not limit Himself to one place where previously nobody but the high priest had access and that only once each year. The river is very special in itself and because of the trees on each side of the river. It seems that the river does not flow out of the city but is there for all to experience. The trees bear twelve kinds of fruit and they yield their fruit every month. Some interpreters say that there is no sun or moon to mark the months but the Scripture does not say that. We were told in Rev 21:23 that the city does not need the sun or moon for light but it does not say that there is no sun or moon. We were also told that there was a new heaven and a new earth so that presupposes a new sun and a new moon. He is told that the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations but we do not know from what the leaves will heal the nations. Perhaps this is a prophylactic process. Some interpreters state that the healing is symbolic of the spiritual healing brought by the work of Jesus Christ. It seems that the healing work of Christ began 2000 years ago like a wave that does not intersect all of creation until the End Times. The river and the tree bring life and that reminds us of the tree of life in Gen 3:22-24 so now God’s people do have free access to the tree of life. People will live forever and without any illness of any kind or any sin so there will not be any misunderstandings between people that might during our life here cause problems.

Rev 22:3 “And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him;

Rev 22:4 and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.”

The curse announced in Eden is now removed (Gen 3:17). Life on earth without any curse will be a huge blessing! Before the sacrifice of Jesus Christ we were all under a curse. Jesus became a curse for God’s chosen people so that we are no longer living under a curse to be faced in its entirety after death.

- *Gal 3:10 "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them."*
- *Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"—*

But now in the new city the only people living here are the people who were redeemed from the curse by the blood of Jesus Christ. So there is no longer any curse! The angel repeats for emphasis that the throne of God and of Jesus will be in the city. Note the emphasis in this vision of the equality between God and Jesus (21:22-23; 22:1, 3). They each share the same glory, throne, and significance in the new setting. Remember Jesus said that He and the Father were one: *"I and the Father are one."* (John 10:30). In the OT there was a severe restriction on the interaction between the people and God:

- *Exo 33:20 "But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"*
- *Heb 9:7 but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.*

Now the redeemed community will be in the presence of God forever. Now not only will we see God but we shall see His face! What a great blessing. To see someone's face is to really know him and then we will know Him fully. We will also be marked with His name to show that we totally belong to Him. The Family is complete! In this new order we will not just be sitting around playing harps. We will be serving God in many ways as I discussed earlier. We will be praising Him and serving His world as He directs. See the comments on 14:1 about the name on their foreheads.

Rev 22:5 "And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever."

I have talked about the meaning and dangers of night and the angel repeats the comment here so that John will completely understand that in this city and in the new world there is no danger from any enemies of God. He also repeats that there will be no need for the illumination of the sun or an artificial light source because the Lord God will be the only needed source of illumination. Note again that John is not told that there will be no sun; only that there will be no need for its illumination. The term "illumination" has meanings other than just for providing physical light for surroundings. It also infers knowledge and we will no longer need to obtain knowledge for inferior sources for God, the Creator and Sustainer of everything, will be our source for understanding. This will be a time when there will be no misunderstandings of anything. As a scientist I can appreciate such a concept even more than some people. He states that the saints will reign forever and ever. This promise fulfills some other promises:

- *Rev 1:6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father--to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

- Rev 5:10 *"You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."*
- Rev 11:15 *Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."*

The book is then ending with the saints around God's throne both worshipping and ruling.

A Return to the Time of the Revelation

The conclusion contains three major emphases:

1. Confirmation of the reliability of the prophesy (vv. 6-7, 16, 18-19).
2. The proximity of the coming of Jesus (vv. 7, 12, 20).
3. The warning against idolatry and the invitation to enter the city (vv. 11-12, 15, 17-19).

Rev 22:6 "And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place.

Rev 22:7 "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.""

The angel spoke again to John to tell him that what he has heard and seen are from God and hence are faithful to His commands and true to His being. The Lord usually refers to Jesus and the angel tells John that He is the God of the spirits of the prophets who brought revelations to His people throughout the ages. This angel then says that Jesus sent His angel to show His bond-servants what would shortly occur. The two words "take place" can mean will begin to happen, which was fulfilled. Of course some of what John was told occurred soon after the writing and the rest is still happening and much will still happen in the future of this writing.

Verse seven is the blessing that we mentioned in the introduction to this commentary. We are blessed by studying this book as we see that God's judgment will occur and that God's children will live with Him in perfection forever. Wow! Note that, as usual, the blessing is only for those who keep the words of the prophecy and not to everyone who only hears them. We have already read of a precious promise for those who stay firm: *'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.* (Rev 3:10)

Rev 22:8 "And I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

Rev 22:9 And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God.""

John assures the readers that he is the one who heard and saw what he reports and such is not a third person revelation. I cannot really blame John for falling to worship the angel who showed him these revelations. This is the second time that he has tried to worship an angel, but we can only worship God: *Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"* (Matt 4:10)

The angel reminded John that he was a fellow creation of God and not God. The angels are to serve God's children as he said and also as written in the book of Hebrews: *"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?"* (Heb 1:14)

We should not worship angels but we should be more grateful for all that they do for us, mostly in ways that we do not ascertain.

Rev 22:10 "And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near."

I cannot imagine why John would want to seal these words since he was told to write them. Some wisdom is hidden but the angel reminded John that this prophecy was for immediate publication. The time is near was discussed above and means that some of the prophecy would be initiated during John's time period. Most Jewish apocalypses were to be sealed as were some other writings:

- Dan 8:26 *"The vision of the evenings and mornings Which has been told is true; But keep the vision secret, For it pertains to many days in the future."*
- Dan 12:4 *"But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."*
- Dan 12:9 *He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time."*

The churches would need to hear of the wonderful news quickly to aid them in their perseverance since they endured considerable persecution.

Rev 22:11 "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.""

The angel seems to be telling John that all people will follow their true character until the sudden appearance of Jesus and at that time there will be no time allotted for repentance. Satan's followers will remain true to their character and God's bond-servants will be true to their calling and new birth. This verse is not fatalistic but evangelistic. It is also an encouragement to the saints in the face of mockers:

Jude 1:18-20 that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." (19) These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. (20) But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

Repentance is an option for everyone until the Day of Judgment:

Heb 9:27-28 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, (28) so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of

many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

Rev 22:12 “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”

Jesus now declares that when He comes He will come quickly and at a time not suspected by people on earth. In 12:20 the fact that Christians will also be judged but not before this judgment throne was mentioned with the following verses that need repeating:

- 1Cor 3:12-15 *Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, (13) each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. (14) If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. (15) If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*
- 2Cor 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*
- Rom 14:10 *But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.*

Anyone waiting for His return before repenting will be very disappointed: “*And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,*” (Heb 9:27)

Rev 22:13 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

Jesus verifies that He is God by giving three titles to Himself. That each is really the same seems congruent with God being the “three in one”. Only in this book is God referred to as the Alpha and the Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. God is the Creator and He is the author of the End so the letters are appropriate. He is Lord God to His people and the Almighty: “*And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,*” Says the Lord Almighty.” (2 Cor 6:18)

Rev 22:14 “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

Rev 22:15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.”

The speaker seems to change now and it may be John summarizing a bit in the end result of the vision. Verse 14 is the seventh and last beatitude in the book and it has an evangelistic emphasis. Wash their robes indicates a willingness to participate with Jesus in His death and the result is access to the tree of life and entrance into the City of God. Again access to the city is restricted as he says that only the ones who have had their robes washed white in the blood of Jesus Christ will have access to the city and the tree of life. The “outside” must be hell for all of the enemies of God have already been taken

care of with the second death. Nobody who practices any sin will exist on the new earth. The “dogs” refers to those who rebel against the rule of God in several contexts:

1. From Deut 23:18 a dog signifies a male prostitute.
2. From Matt 15:26 a dog refers to Gentiles.
3. From Phil 3:2-3 a dog refers to the Judaizers.

Others who are outside are sorcerers, immoral persons, murderers, and idolaters as well as all who practice lying. The “outside” must then not be just outside of the City but not even on the new world as they will be in the Lake of Fire. The Holy City is symbolic of the corporate community of God’s people or the eschatological kingdom of God. It then does not have a specific geographical region other than being on the new earth.

Rev 22:16 “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.”

Using the Greek word “ego” for “I” leaves no doubt that the speaker is Jesus. He has the authority to send an angel to do His bidding. The word “you” is plural in Greek and since the message was intended first to John but then to be written and sent to the churches makes the plural understandable. The message is for the church of all ages including the seven at the beginning of this book and continuing to all the churches that will exist until the end. That Jesus is the root of David is most certainly true since he was chosen by God to be the great king of Israel and Judea. That Jesus is also the shoot of David means that He is of the physical lineage as written by Matthew and elsewhere: *“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”* (Matt 1:1)

So Jesus is the originator of David **and** his offspring. This was a mystery for many people.

Luke 20:41-44 “And He said to them, “How is it that they say the Christ is David's son? ⁴²“For David himself says in the book of Psalms, ‘The Lord said to my Lord,’ Sit at My right hand, ⁴³Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet. ” ⁴⁴“David therefore calls Him ‘Lord,’ and how is He his son?””

Saying that He is the bright morning star signals a new era with Him as the light.

Rev 22:17 “And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.”

The Holy Spirit joins with the church in issuing an invitation to come. If the church is taken to be the “final” church then we have a dilemma as to whom the invitation is issued. However considering the context, especially with verse 20, the Holy Spirit and the Church are issuing an intense invitation to Jesus to come into His City so that all will be finished. It seems then the rest of the verse is evangelistic to the early churches to bring in those other members of the church of Jesus Christ. Only those with ears to hear can hear the invitation from God. Only the ones who recognize their thirst will come and

similarly only the ones who know their need for the water of life will come to take it as it is offered freely by God. It must be that the rest of this invitation is being issued to the early church to evangelize. All Christians are urging Jesus to come as well as inviting other Christians to partake of the free gift of salvation based upon the work of Jesus Christ.

Rev 22:18 “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book;

Rev 22:19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”

Some people think that this warning is to the early copyists and certainly they should have trembled at the responsibility of accurately copying the words of this book. However he directs these warnings to those who **hear** the words of the prophecy. Again it is emphasized that the words are prophecy and thus are to be treated accordingly. It does seem likely that the person to whom the warnings are issued are the same as in the previous verse. This book has been received very differently by people throughout the church age. Calvin did not include it in his commentaries. Some others have refused to accept it as part of the canonized Bible. Many people have tried to interpret the book with various degrees of success. Anyone, and certainly I am included, must be extremely careful in handling this prophecy. I have done my best to not take away anything or to add anything to it. I have tried to just let the Bible interpret the Bible rather than bringing to my interpretation some pre-determined sequence of events. I can only say that I know that God knows my heart and that I have tried to present His prophecy with accuracy.

Rev 22:20 “He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

This is the third affirmation in this chapter that Jesus will come quickly and is perhaps His response to the invitation of verse 17. The statement “Come, Lord Jesus” was part of the liturgy of the early church and was part of the prayer at the end of the Eucharist celebration. Those three words are also equivalent to the Aramaic “*maranatah*” or Maranatha as quoted by Paul:

1Co 16:22 “If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha.”

Rev 22:21 “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”

This is an appropriate end to such a wonderful book addressed to the early church and to all members of God’s family forever. It is only the grace of the Lord Jesus that allows anyone to be a saint: “*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.*” (2Cor 8:9)

I can only echo the ending by John:

AMEN!