

# The Revelation

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Revelation 22:1-21

Vss.1-5

- As we come to the last chapter of the Bible, we find it is very much like the first. God's people live where there is no curse. They have no responsibilities but to be, and to worship and serve Go. There is a river and the tree of life (Gen. 2:10; 3:6). And God is with them, as He was in The Garden.
- Here, John moves into the center of the City. In Ezekiel 47:1-7, the prophet is shown a vision of a river flowing from the great Temple, but here in the New Jerusalem there is no Temple, for it is the Throne of God that sits in the city center and the river flows out from there, right down the middle of the main street. The Psalmist tells of "a river whose streams make glad the city of God (Ps. 46:4). "A spring shall go out from the house of the Lord" (Joel 3:18). Jesus gives us an even deeper understanding of the crystal clear river (John 7:37-39).
- On either side of the river was the Tree of Life. Perhaps the image is something like a massive banyan tree that reaches across the river, dropping roots on both sides. We see here the Water of Life and the Tree of Life working in unison for the benefit of the residents of New Jerusalem.
- In Ezekiel 47:12 the prophet is shown a similar vision.
- The Tree of Life is no longer forbidden. It produces 12 kinds of fruit year round and its leaves bring healing. Look at the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 and it is easy see where healing comes from.

Vss. 3-5

- There will no longer be any curse. This is a cause for great joy! Day to day, we forget the cosmic consequences of sin. We may

see someone whose life is ruined by sin, but we forget what it means when we say - (Romans 5:12). The consequences of sin, the curse of sin, is death and all the suffering that death brings (Romans 8:22). Earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, pandemics, cancer, birth defects, the impairments of old age, all the suffering of humanity stems from the sin and its curse. And here, in the City of God, all of that is gone. No death, no aging, no suffering, no cancer, no walkers or wheel chairs, no blindness...all of that is gone.

- Free from fear, for God's perfect love is the air the citizens of the City breathe, God's people, His bond servants who have been bought from the slavery of sin and death by the blood of Christ, serve Him with joy and gladness.
- And they will see His face! Not even Moses was allowed to see the face of God (Ex. 33:20, 23).
- And His name will be on their foreheads: we saw this in the letter to the church in Philadelphia (3:12) and in 14:1 concerning the 144,000. In John's time it is a mark of ownership, loyalty, dependence, and safety.
- The end of vs. 5 reiterates 21:23-25. No seeing a sun or moon would have to be hard to grasp, but harder still would be the realization that God's glory alone illuminates a city of 2,250,000 square miles!

#### Vss. 6-9

- There are three speakers here. The first is the angel who had been John's guide who drives home the point that just as God's Spirit had guided and spoken through the Old Testament prophets, so now that same Spirit speaks to John of what is to come. The second speaker is Christ who shares a beatitude of blessing. The third is John who is so overwhelmed he says he again fell down to worship at the feet of the angel as he did in 19:10. He is scolded by the angel who informs John that not only is he, the angel, a servant of God, but that he is merely a fellow

servant with John and the prophets and all others who heed the words of this book...like you and me. Thus angels are to be understood as created beings, NOT to be worshipped. Worship God, the Creator, not the created.

Vss. 10-13

- In Daniel 8:26, Daniel is told to “keep the vision a secret” for all that was told was for the distant future. Here the opposite is true. “Do not seal up the words” John is told because Christ is coming quickly. Everyone needs to know this NOW!
- Vs. 11 is not a call to end evangelism, for an evangelistic call goes out in vs. 17. It is a message to us for life between now and the end. We who are righteous must *PRACTICE* righteousness. We who are holy, must keep ourselves holy and not be polluted by the world. The world is going to be the world. Sinners are going to be sinners. Earl Palmer, the longtime pastor of First Presbyterian in Berkley, CA, offers an illustration from “A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich” by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. In the story, Alyoska is a man in a Soviet prison and is the only Christian in his barracks. He has the same 10-year sentence, does the same work, but “he reads his Gospels facing the light bulb.” Alyoska allowed his righteousness and holiness to shine through in all he did and altered the lives of his fellow prisoners. We are the people of God’s character and Truth, we look like our Father more every day, and we are to live our lives “facing the lightbulb” for all to see. I cannot *force* the sinner to stop sinning. My only weapon is the Word of God. But I can dramatically show the sinner another Way, a better Way, THE Way that leads to life.
- Jesus speaks again stating that He is coming quickly. We need to remember that God’s time is not our time. Indeed, as CS Lewis points out in “Mere Christianity”, time exists only in Creation, not in Heaven. In Ch. 21, the 12 monthly gem stones of the zodiac are given in reverse, turning time around. Sit down with Albert Einstein sometime and let him explain time to you. So it is entirely

- appropriate to say Christ is coming “quickly” or “soon” for the key points have already been laid. He is the Beginning. He came, died, and was resurrected, conquering sin and death. And he is the End. All that is left to be settled is His the “when” of His return.
- Christ comes with our rewards, our wages. So similar of the Parable of the Talents. Here is the fulfillment of Matt. 6:19-21 in the Sermon on the Mount and the climax of the Parable of the Rich Fool in Luke 12:20-21. Here we receive the dividends of our heavenly investment. And no, everyone does not get the same participation trophy.

#### Vss. 14-16

- The angel gives us another beatitude: “Blessed are those who wash their robes”. It is a reference back to 7:14. It also carries with it a connotation of confession and repentance. 1 John 1:9 tells us “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us (Greek – to wash us) from all unrighteousness.” Confession to Christ and repentance of sins leads to His Grace and Forgiveness and our salvation, where Christ writes our name in The Book of Life and enter into the City!
- Vs. 15 is a repeat of 21:8 but adds “dogs” to the list. Dogs represented all that was generally unclean throughout the ancient world. Packs of feral dogs roamed every city. The term was also an ancient euphemism for a male prostitute (Deut. 23:17-18).
- Vs. 16 is an affirmation of 1:1. Jesus was the author of the Revelation but communicated it through His angel for the benefit of His churches. He goes on to make sure that we are clear that He is the long awaited One of the Jews. He is “the root of David” from Isaiah 11. He is “the bright morning star” (Numbers 24:17).

#### Vss. 17-21

- The common ending to the 7 letters to the 7 churches was “Let he who has ears, hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches”. Here now the Spirit and The Bride, the church, join voices with an

- invitation to the todays world to be saved while there is still time. Come drink of the water of life (John 4:13-14; 6:35).
- Vss. 18-19 are a warning, similar to what we find in Galatians 1:8-9. Anyone who teaches a different gospel, that will ultimately lead people astray are to be cursed. It is also a warning to scribes. Up until the last 500 years all books were hand copied and any scribe deliberately miscopying in order to deceive or offer an alternative message was to be cursed. Remember that when you hear sceptics ask how you can trust the Bible, a book that has been copied over and over. The scribes went to task feeling that their very salvation, their immortal souls, hung in the balance with each word...and God was watching.
  - This serves as reminder to us as well. There are parts of Scripture that not only trouble us, but that we find offensive. We are often put off by the *EXCLUSIVE*, not inclusive claims of God's word and so we develop a theology that tries to bend it, get around it, make the Gospel more accepting with fewer hard parts to swallow and less requirements. Too often we seek to conform God's Word to suit our feelings. But we recall the words of Karl Barth that theology has "its position *beneath* the Biblical scriptures". We are to conform ourselves to the Gospel. Repent what must be repented. Sell what must be sold. Shed what must be shed. Surrender all.
  - Jesus speaks one last time into His Revelation. "I am coming quickly!" to which John reply with the earliest Christian confession "Maranatha!" "Come, Lord Jesus!"
  - And then Holy Scripture ends with nothing other than Grace. What else could it be? Grace, grace. God's grace. Grace that will pardon and cleanse within. Grace, grace. God's grace. Grace that is greater than all our sin.