

The New Jerusalem Described, and Closing Warnings and Exhortations

Revelation 22

Revelation 22 - *"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.*

⁶ Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. ⁷ "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

⁸ Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. ⁹ Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." ¹⁰ And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. ¹¹ He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."

¹² "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. ¹⁴ Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." ¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

¹⁸ For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! ²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

Background Notes

As we come to the last chapter in the last book of the Bible, let's do a brief review of Revelation.

In Revelation 1-3 the apostle John saw the Lord standing in the midst of the seven churches of Asia, and the Lord's message to each of the seven churches. All the letters to the churches have applications for churches and individuals today.

In Revelation 4-19 we saw the judgments that will take place on this earth during the seven-year Tribulation Period of the future. There will be seven Seal Judgments, seven Trumpet Judgments, and seven Bowl (or Vial) Judgments.

At the end of Revelation 19 John saw the Lord returning to this earth in judgment at the end of the Tribulation Period. Revelation 20 described the Millennium, that wonderful 1000-year kingdom of Christ on this earth, when Satan will be bound and believers will reign with Christ for one thousand years.

At the end of Revelation 20 we saw the final rebellion of unbelievers at the end of the Millennium, when Satan has been released from the abyss. But the rebellion will be short lived. Satan will be cast into hell and all unbelievers will be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Revelation 21 moves on to the new heavens and the new earth of the eternal state, with the description of the New Jerusalem and its descent to earth. The New Jerusalem will be the home of believers in the eternal state, and possibly during the Millennium as well.

The first five verses of Revelation 22 give us a further description of the New Jerusalem. The river of coming from the throne of God and the Lamb (v1) is part of the New Jerusalem of the eternal state, when there will be no more curse (v3) and no more night (v5). The Tree of Life is associated with this river. The Tree of Life was off limits to mankind after Adam and Eve sinned, but in the eternal future we will regain the paradise that was lost as a result of sin. The Tree of Life will be available at all times in the eternal state (v2).

The word "healing" (v2) would be better translated "health-giving." Healing will not be necessary in the eternal state. The mention of nations (v2) implies that, in the eternal state, people who have been saved out of all the various nations will be remembered, bringing further glory to God. In the eternal state we will not be bored! We will have the privilege of serving the Lord and being in His presence forever (v3-4).

Doctrinal Points

1. Decisions now determine your eternal destiny.

Verses 10-11: *“And he said to me, “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.”*

Question: Why was the prophet Daniel told to seal up his prophecy until the end times in Daniel 12, whereas in verse 10 the apostle John was told not to seal up the prophecy of Revelation? Answer: Because in Daniel’s day, more prophecy was yet to come, but biblical prophecy was completed with the Book of Revelation.

The following illustration is from a commentary on Revelation. An artist will often cover his work when it is under construction, but fully and finally reveals the painting when it is complete. In the same way, God covered much of His prophetic painting of the future until it was completed. Revelation completed God’s prophetic work; there is nothing more to be added. There is a blessing pronounced on those who read and hear the words of Revelation.

What is the meaning of verse 11? *“He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.”* Does this verse mean that you can’t change your ways? No, such an interpretation would contradict many Scriptures that say you can repent. You can change your ways - you can be converted! However, there is coming a time when it will be too late to change. Hell is eternal and those who are in hell will not and cannot change. There will be no second chance.

The good news here is that in the eternal state believers cannot sin. They remain righteous and holy forever, praise the Lord! Decisions now determine your eternal destiny.

2. Service now determines your eternal reward.

Verses 12-14: *“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. ¹⁴ Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.”*

In Revelation 20 we saw that the judgment of unbelievers will be based on their works of unrighteousness. Here we see that rewards for believers will be based on works as well: *“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”* These works are the believer’s good works of Christian service.

Salvation is a gift, but reward is earned. Rewards for the believer in the Kingdom and in the eternal state are determined in this life. The Lord backs up His promise of reward with His all-powerful names: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last”* (v13).

In verses 14-15 we see that all believers receive the reward of the right to the Tree of Life and entrance into the New Jerusalem. All unbelievers, whose lifestyles reveal their unsaved condition, will be outside the blessings of the eternal state. They will be lost forever. No one **has** to go to hell -- it's a matter of an individual's choice! The door of salvation is still open: *“... Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely”* (v17).

Not only is the door of salvation still open for the unbeliever, but the opportunity of earning rewards is still open for the believer. Don't wait, because the Lord is coming soon as the Bright Morning Star. His return will signal the arrival of the New Day of the Lord's Kingdom on this earth – when the Son will reign as the Root and Offspring of David. Service now determines eternal reward.

Practical Applications

1. Don't determine your own doctrines.

Verses 18-19: *“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”*

In these verses, “this book” specifically refers to the Book of Revelation, but it can be extended in application to the whole Bible. To add to or take away from God's Word doesn't refer exclusively to writing “new scripture,” or tearing pages out of the Bible! No, determining your own doctrines would also be adding to or taking away from Scripture.

If you were to begin to teach a false doctrine that included, for example, the worship of angels, you would be adding to the Word of God. Why? Because verse 9 specifically tells us not to worship angels – we are to worship God alone! Another example: if you were to water down the doctrine of hell, and say that hell doesn't exist or that it is not eternal punishment, you would be taking away from the Word of God. We have seen that the Bible clearly says and clearly teaches that there is a hell, and it is a place of eternal punishment. Don't determine your own doctrines.

2. Do desire the Lord's Return.

Verses 20-21: *“He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! ²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen.”*

In these closing words of the Bible we have what every believer's response should be to our Lord's promise that He is coming quickly: "*Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*"

A few days ago a Christian jokingly said to me that he hoped that the Lord would hold off the Rapture for another week and a half. "Why?" I asked. "Because I'm going on vacation for a week!" he replied. Now you and I would never think like that -- would we? Well, if we're truthful, we'll all admit that we've had this kind of thought at one time or another.

How wrong our thinking be? When the Lord comes, we will never wish that He had delayed His coming a little longer! Do desire the Lord's return!