



Revelation - Chapter Twenty Two

IX Revelation 21:1-22:7 - All things new (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Twenty Two

In this final chapter of Revelation, scripture reveals that there will no longer be anything accursed. God and the Lamb will be with their servants and they will worship them. They will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads and they will reign forever with him.

The message is clear: be ready, Christ is coming soon and blessed is anyone who keeps the words of this prophecy. John is then told not to seal up the words of this prophecy because Jesus has sent his angel to John to testify to him about these things for the churches.

The letter concludes with a warning telling all who hear the words of this prophecy that if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are also described in this book.

IX.c Revelation 22:1-7 - The River of Life

John is shown that the source of the water of life is the throne of God and Jesus. It flows through the city centre, providing the necessary sustenance for the tree of life that is on each of its banks. The tree provides twelve different fruits, one each month, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.

John is reassured that what he has seen throughout all that is written in this book will come to pass soon, and that those who keep to the words of this prophecy will indeed be blessed.

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 ² 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.

Revelation 22:1-2

The river of the water of life and the tree of life recall the Garden of Eden before the fall into sin (Genesis 2:8-10), and Ezekiel's vision of a future glorious temple (Ezekiel 47:1-12). Here, the source of living water is the throne of God and of the Lamb. The imagery is similar to that in Solomon's love poem: <<*A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed. Your channel is an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all chief spices – a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon*>> (Song 4:12-15).

Refreshment and life flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb: <<*On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter*>> (Zechariah 14:8), carried by the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had promised: <<*Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life'*>> (John 4:13-14). It was also foretold by the prophets: <<*For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring*>> (Isaiah 44:3), and: <<*I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances*>> (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

Living believers and martyrs taste this life-giving water even now in this present age (7:17 and v.17 of this chapter), but its fullness awaits the new heaven and earth. This ever-flowing river gives a picture of an unending stream of abundant blessings and joy. The tree of life, once banned to guilty humanity (Genesis 3:22-24), will satisfy the city's residents year-round (2:7).

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. This is the fulfilment of an OT prophecy: <<*On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing*>> (Ezekiel 47:12). This healing of the nations will have been completed in the destruction of death (20:14).

³ Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; ⁴ they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

Revelation 22:3-4

Nothing accursed will be found there any more. Earth was cursed because of Adam's sin: <<*And to the man he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, "You*

shall not eat of it”, cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life>> (Genesis 3:17). Guilt, strife, struggle for survival, sickness, sorrow, and death resulted. In the consummated new creation no such woes will remain (21:4). The throne of God and of the Lamb will make the entire city a temple (21:22) in which his servants will worship him as his priests.

Moses could not see the Lord’s face and live, as recorded in Exodus 33:20-23 and 34:29-35, but when the Spirit has completed their sanctification, God’s redeemed people will see his face. It will be the greatest blessing of the age to come, as God looks upon his people with favour and delight.

That his name will be on their foreheads indicates that God has sealed them as his protected property through history’s turmoil and trials (3:11-12, 7:2-8 and 14:1).

⁵ And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

Revelation 22:5

Since night has been banished (21:25), God’s servants will bask in light from the Lord God of radiant glory and truth, who *<<dwells in unapproachable light>>* (1 Timothy 6:16b). In union with Jesus their king, believers will not only worship as priests but also reign as kings over the new earth for ever and ever (5:10).

⁶ And he said to me, ‘These words are trustworthy and true, for the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.’ ⁷ ‘See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.’

Revelation 22:6-7

These words are trustworthy and true. The unique truth and trustworthiness of the revealed words of God are underscored seven times in the last two chapters of Revelation, as indicated first in 21:5, repeated in v.6, v.7, v.9 and v.10; and then in the solemn warning in v.18 and v.19 to anyone who *<<takes away from the words of this book>>*. It is clear that this is not just a reference to the current words but to the entire prophecy and, indeed, to all of Scripture, which Paul confirms as trustworthy: *<<All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work>>* (2 Timothy 3:15-17). This is supported by the fact that what immediately follows: The God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.

The centrality, authority, sufficiency and eternity of the words of God are foundational to all of Scripture, from the first words of Genesis to the last words of Revelation, as seen, e.g. ‘Then God said’ in Genesis 1:3; ‘Then God spoke all these words’ in Exodus 20:1; ‘Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart’ in Deuteronomy 6:6; ‘The promises of the Lord are promises that are pure’ in Psalm 12:6a; ‘the word of our God will stand for ever’ in Isaiah 40:8; ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every

word that comes from the mouth of God' in Matthew 4:4b; 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away' in Matthew 24:35; 'These are my words that I spoke to you' in Luke 24:44b; 'In the beginning was the Word' in John 1:1a; 'You have the words of eternal life' in John 6:68b; and 'but the word of the Lord endures for ever' in 1 Peter 1:25a.

See, I am coming soon! This is affirmation that Jesus' Second Coming is a promise that will be fulfilled. He repeats this in v.12 and is commented on there.

Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. This is a timeless promise for believers in every age. Blessed here echoes the first blessed and is the sixth of seven benedictions throughout the book of Revelation. Refer to the comments made on 1:3 and the supplementary material on the web site.

X. Revelation 22:8-21 - Epilogue and Benediction

John's epilogue repeats the themes of his prologue by reaffirming the transmission and trustworthiness of the book, pronouncing a blessing on those who keep its words, and promising the imminent return of Jesus. It also affirms that the Godhead and no one or nothing else is to be worshipped.

⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; ⁹ but he said to me, 'You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!'

Revelation 22:8-9

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. John takes ownership of this prophecy as a valid testimony to the truth of what he had been shown and had heard, just as he did at the end of his Gospel account: <<*This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true*>> (John 21:24).

Human beings must not worship even the angels who inflict the last plagues (15:1 and 21:9), for they are fellow-servants. God alone must be worshipped. Since the Lamb is rightly worshipped (5:8-14), he is God.

Angel worship was something that came into Judaism during the Maccabean era when some of their fighters tried to invoke the unnamed angel that earlier in the days of Hezekiah had destroyed the army of Sennacherib. It is something that was also seen in parts of the Diaspora and even spread to early Christianity. Hence Paul warned against it in his letter to the church in Colossæ: <<*Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking*>> (Colossians 2:18).

I am a fellow-servant with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. The angel not only affirms his position with John and the great prophets of old, but with all who believe in Jesus and keep his Word. It again recognises John as a prophet.

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

Revelation 22:10

Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book. John must not imitate Daniel, whose visions concerned events in a remote future: <<*But you, Daniel, keep the words secret and the book sealed until the time of the end. Many shall be running back and forth, and evil shall increase*>> (Daniel 12:4).

The time is near for the fulfilment of John’s visions because the dragon was already defeated at the Cross. The end will consummate the spiritual conflict in which the 1st Century churches were engaged, as is the church today: <<*Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news’*>> (Mark 1:14-15), and: <<*These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come*>> (1 Corinthians 10:11).

¹¹ Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.’

Revelation 22:11

Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy. Patterns of behaviour, whether controlled by unbelief or by faith, will eventually be irreversible: <<*Many shall be purified, cleansed, and refined, but the wicked shall continue to act wickedly. None of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand*>> (Daniel 12:10).

¹² ‘See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work.

Revelation 22:12

See, I am coming soon. The early church expected the Second Coming to occur within the lifetime of many who had followed Jesus on earth, and it was right that they had that expectation, for it seems to be God’s intention that each generation of believers lives in a state of readiness for the great day. However, soon in God’s language may not be the same as it is for humans as the apostle had stated: <<*But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day*>> (2 Peter 3:8).

My reward is with me. As the Divine Warrior of Isaiah 62:10-63:6, Christ will come to repay each one for what he or she has done, rewarding faithful servants and punishing every evildoer. Reward, Greek *misthos*, also means wages or recompense, and indicates degrees of reward for believers and punishment for unbelievers: <<*That slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted, will receive a severe beating. But one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating. From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be*>>

demanded>> (Luke 12:47-48), and: <<If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire>> (1 Corinthians 3:14-15).

¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.'

Revelation 22:13

The Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Eternal life and lordship characterise God and his Christ (1:8), who is coming soon. Refer also to the comments made on 21:6.

¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practises falsehood.

Revelation 22:14-15

Blessed. The last of the seven benedictions in Revelation is for those who wash their robes in the conscience-cleansing blood of the Lamb (7:14), and: <<*For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!*>> (Hebrews 9:13-14). Refer also to the comments made on 1:3 and the supplementary material on the web site.

They have access to the tree of life within God's city. Outside the gates, perhaps in eternal torment, will be everyone else who was not reconciled to God by faith in Jesus as their hope for salvation. These are probably the same people referred to in 21:27.

¹⁶ 'It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.'

Revelation 22:16

It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. As the letter draws to its conclusion, the reader is left in no doubt as to who is the divine author and object of this prophecy.

I am the root and the descendant of David. Jesus is both David's son and his Lord, the source of his royalty (5:5), and: <<*A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots*>> (Isaiah 11:1), and: <<*While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he said, 'How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? David himself, by the Holy Spirit, declared, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.'" David himself calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?' And the large crowd was listening to him with delight*>> (Mark 12:35-37).

The bright morning star. This is the ruler whom Balaam foresaw arising from Israel to conquer the nations: <<*I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near – a star shall come out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the borderlands of Moab, and the territory of all the Shethites*>> (Numbers 24:17).

- ¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’
And let everyone who hears say, ‘Come.’
And let everyone who is thirsty come.
Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.

Revelation 22:17

The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ The church and the Godhead are now united for all eternity, with the Spirit allowing the bride to jointly make the invitation to anyone who wishes to accept the gift.

Let everyone who hears or is thirsty is not a reference to universalism. God may desire that all should be saved: <<*The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance*>> (2 Peter 3:9), but this book, and indeed much of Scripture, does reveal the certainty of eternal separation from God for those who have opposed him and not sought repentance through Jesus.

In v.20, Come is a prayer addressed to Jesus, who promises to come soon. Here it is an invitation to the spiritually thirsty, to take the water of life as a gift, for it is freely provided by God’s grace (21:6).

- ¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book; ¹⁹ if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person’s share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

- ²⁰ The one who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

- ²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.

Revelation 22:18-21

I warn is the same verb as testifies. Jesus bears witness that no mere human may add to or take away from God’s words without incurring the plagues described in this book and forfeiting its blessings, a share in the tree of life and in the holy city. Moses had warned against adding to or subtracting from the Lord’s commands: <<*You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you*>> (Deuteronomy 4:2), and: <<*You must diligently observe everything that I command you; do not add to it or take anything*

from it>> (Deuteronomy 12:32). A prophet who spoke without God's authorisation deserved death: <<But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak – that prophet shall die.' You may say to yourself, 'How can we recognise a word that the Lord has not spoken?' If a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; do not be frightened by it>> (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

When Jesus testifies once more, Surely I am coming soon, his church responds, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! echoing the early prayer of the Aramaic-speaking church, *marana tha* - 'Our Lord, come!'. Paul concluded one of his letters with a similar sentiment: <<*Let anyone be accursed who has no love for the Lord. Our Lord, come!*>> (1 Corinthians 16:22).

In his very last letter from his prison in Rome, Paul showed the confidence he had in Jesus as his own death approached: <<*From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing*>> (2 Timothy 4:8). It seems right that the church should long for the return of Christ but they should also consider that, with each passing generation, more souls are being brought into his Kingdom. Ultimately, it will be God's decision when he allows Jesus to return: <<*But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father*>> (Matthew 24:36).

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen. This final benediction in the NT bestows the greatest of all blessings, the Lord's grace. It is reminiscent of Paul's call for a blessing from the entire Godhead: <<*May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all*>> (2 Corinthians 13:14 NIV).