

Revelation

Escape the Coming Wrath!

Lesson 22

Chapter 22

The Final Invitation!

1. Read verses 1-6.

In Revelation 22:1-5, we move inside the city to discover that it is like a beautiful garden, reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. There were four rivers in Eden (Gen. 2:10-14), but there is only one river in the heavenly city. Ezekiel saw a purifying river flowing from the temple, certainly a millennial scene (Ezek. 47); but this river will flow directly from God's throne, the very source of all purity. Man was prohibited from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and prevented from eating of the tree of life (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:22-24). But in the eternal home, man will have access to the tree of life. The river and the tree symbolize abundant life in the glorious city.¹⁰⁰

- (a) What did the angel reveal to John in verse 1?
- (b) What does the river symbolize (John 4:13-14; 7:37-38) and what is its source (John 14:6)?
- (c) Read Genesis 2:9, 14-15; and, 3:22-24. What was in the Garden of Eden and what do you think was its purpose?
- (d) What did John see on each side of the river? What will be its purpose?
- (e) Read Genesis 3:14 and 17-19. What did God do as a result of man's rebellion in the Garden?
- (f) Read Romans 8:20-21. According to verse 3 (Revelation 22) what will be removed from creation? How did Paul describe this in the Romans passage?

- (g) According to verses 3-5, describe the relationship between God and believers in the New Jerusalem?

The eternal capital city of heaven, the New Jerusalem, will be a place of indescribable, unimaginable beauty. From the center of it the brilliant glory of God will shine forth through the gold and precious stone to illuminate the new heaven and the new earth. But the most glorious reality of all will be that sinful rebels will be made righteous, enjoy intimate fellowship with God and the Lamb, serve Them, and reign with Them forever in sheer joy and incessant praise.¹⁰¹

- (h) What will no longer be needed on the “new earth?” Why (John 8:12; 9:5)?

- (i) What does the angel have to say about the words of God (Psalm 12:6; 18:30; Proverbs 30:5)?

The angel’s words reinforce an important truth: Everything John has seen in Revelation will come to pass. What the inspired apostle has written is not mystical; the Apocalypse is not a record of his bizarre dreams or the result of an overactive imagination. It is not an allegory from which readers can extract hidden meanings of their own concoction. It is an accurate description of events and persons yet to come. Verses 18 and 19 of this chapter give a sobering warning against tampering with Revelation: “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”

John affirmed the angel’s emphatic testimony to the truthfulness of what he had seen and heard, writing that the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. The God who moved the spirits of His spokesmen the prophets to inspire both the Old and New Testaments is the same God who sent His angel to show to His bondservants...the things which must soon take place (cf. Luke 1:70; II Peter 3:2). That is nothing short of a claim by John for the full and complete inspiration of Revelation. The prophecies recorded by those earlier biblical prophets were literally fulfilled, and those in Revelation will be also.

The exactness, detail, and precision with which earlier prophecies already fulfilled came to pass forms the pattern for those yet to be fulfilled. God’s prophetic record is perfect.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ MacArthur, 288.

¹⁰² Ibid. 292-293.

2. Read verses 7-11.

- (a) Who is speaking in verse 7 and what is His message?
- (b) What do you think it means to “keep” or “heed” the “words of the prophecy in this book?”
- (c) Read John 14:15, 21, 23; and, I John 5:2-3. Do you love Jesus? What will be the evidence of our love for the Lord?

The question arises as to what words in Revelation believers are called to heed [keep]. Before this command, there are no specific commands addressed to Christians in the portion of the Apocalypse covering future events (chaps. 4-22, though there are some addressed to the seven churches (chaps. 2-3). What does it mean, then, to heed the book of Revelation? It is a general command to long for Christ’s return and our eternal fellowship with Him. It calls on believers to desire heaven, to desire holiness, to desire to see Christ vindicated and triumphant over His enemies, to desire the end of the curse, and to desire the glories of Christ’s earthly kingdom and the new heaven and the new earth. After reading Revelation, Christians should love Christ more, long to see Him vindicated in His glory, live in light of the reality that they will one day see Him, disconnect themselves from the perishing world system, pursue heavenly realities, see to be made like Christ, hope for their resurrection bodies, and anticipate their eternal rewards. They should also understand the fearful judgment that awaits non-Christians, and call those sinners to repentance and saving faith in the Lord Jesus.¹⁰³

- (d) Read II Peter 3:11-14. How should we be living as we wait for the imminent return of Jesus?
- (e) What was John’s reaction upon hearing and seeing these things?
- (f) What mistake did he make which the angel corrected?
- (g) What instruction did the angel give to John in verse 10?

That the specific words of Revelation are not to be sealed up stresses again that there is no hidden, secret meaning apart from the normal sense of the text. If the truth is not clear in those words then this command is nonsense. If the plain, normal understanding

of the words of Revelation does not convey the meaning God intended its readers to grasp, then those words are sealed.

At the beginning of Revelation, John was commanded, “Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches” (1:11). The message of the Apocalypse, that Jesus will return bringing blessing for His own and horrifying judgment on the ungodly, is too critical not to spread. Thus, to fail to preach Revelation is not only foolish (cf. 1:13), but sinful. Any Christian who fails to learn its truths is forfeiting blessing; and preacher who fails to proclaim its truths is sinfully unfaithful to his mandate. Not to preach the book of Revelation is to fail to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ with the glory that is due Him. More than just a failure to teach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), it is outright disobedience to the command not to seal up the words of the Apocalypse. It robs believers of the end of the divine story of history in all its wonder and fullness. No one should preach who doesn’t rightly divide and proclaim this book.¹⁰⁴

- (h) What will happen to those who hear the words of this prophecy and continue to do wrong (Psalm 95:7-8; Hebrews 3:15; 10:26-27)?

- (i) What will happen to those who hear the words of this prophecy and pursue holiness (Philippians 1:6; Ephesians 5:26; Hebrews 10:14; I John 3:2-3, 9-10)?

3. Read verses 12-21.

- (a) Read Mark 13:32-37. The Lord says, “Behold, I am coming soon!” According to the Mark passage, we are to be alert and keeping watch. What does that mean to you?

- (b) When Jesus does return, who will be with Him (19:14; I Thessalonians 3:13)?

In these its concluding verses, the Bible comes full circle. It opened with the promise of a coming Savior, who would redeem His people from their sins. That promise, which came immediately after the Fall, is recorded in Genesis 3:15; “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” Just as the Bible opens with the promise of Christ’s first coming, so it ends with the promise of His second coming.¹⁰⁵

- (c) According to verse 14, who will have the right to the tree of life and be invited to enter the gates into the city?

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 297.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 302.

- (d) Read Isaiah 64:6; Zechariah 3:3; Psalm 51:7; Isaiah 1:18 and Titus 3:5. Jesus states, “Blessed are those who wash their robes.” What does He mean? Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb (Romans 3:25; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:22; I Peter 1:19)?
- (e) Who will be left outside?
- (f) Does this verse mean there is no hope for persons who have ever committed such sins? Read I Corinthians 6:9-11 for your answer.
- (g) How can Jesus be both the Root (ancestor) and the Offspring of David (Mark 12:35-37; II Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 132:11-12; Matthew 1:1; Romans 1:3)?
- (h) An invitation is given in verse 17.
1. What is the invitation?
 2. To whom is it extended?
 3. What two senses must be activated in order for a person to respond?
 4. What does it cost a person to drink from the water of life?
 5. How does a person drink from the water of life (John 4:13-14; 7:37-38)?
- (i) What does John write will happen to those who distort the Word of God by either adding to it or taking from it? Do you think this ever happens in the religion departments of our universities, or in our seminaries, or in the pulpits across our land?
- (j) Read Jeremiah 23:1. What one word does Jeremiah have to say to those who lead their flocks astray by distorting God’s Word?

- (k) What are Jesus' last words in the Bible?
- (l) What should be our response and hope (II Timothy 4:8b)?

For the glorious, comforting truth is that those who humble themselves and accept God's offer of salvation will find Him gracious. Fittingly, the last words of the Bible, the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen, are an expression of God's grace toward fallen humanity. The Lord of glory, as He promised in Scripture, offers heaven exclusively to those who, in light of His certain return, accept His gracious invitation and return to Him.¹⁰⁶

Three times in this closing chapter John wrote, "I [Christ] come quickly" (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20). But He has "delayed" His return for nearly 2,000 years! Yes, He has; and Peter tells us why: God wants to give this sinful world opportunity to repent and be saved (II Peter 3:1ff). In the meantime, the Spirit of God, through the church (the bride), calls for Jesus to come; for the bride wants to meet her Bridegroom and enter into her home. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

But believers ought also to invite lost sinners to trust Christ and drink the water of life. Indeed, when the church lives in expectance of Christ's return, such an attitude provokes ministry and evangelism as well as purity of heart. We want to tell others of the grace of God. A true understanding of Bible prophecy should both motivate us to obey God's Word and to share God's invitation with a lost world.

If our study of Revelation has been truly led by the Spirit, then we will join John in the Bible's last prayer:

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"
Are you ready?¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶

Ibid. 312.

¹⁰⁷

Wiersbe, 626.