

Revelation Chapter 22

Revelation chapter 22 contains God's Last Message to Humankind. (Rev. 22:6-9), takes us back to the early part of this book, when the faithful and true witness told us that He would send His angel to convey His message concerning the things that must come to pass.

Here at the close of the Bible we are reintroduced to the tree of life, which has not been mentioned in the Bible (since Genesis 3), where Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. Paradise is restored in the eternal state. All that was lost in the fall is redeemed by the Lamb. The leaves of this tree will be used to heal the relationships of the nations toward each other so that we might live equitably and fairly in eternity.

The picture of eternal life in these verses indicates that we will be busy serving God for all eternity. We will both serve Him (verse 3), and reign with Him (verse 5). Since He is an infinite God, we can be sure He will have infinite things for us to do as we reign there forever. The phrase, "they shall see his face," means that, as believers, we will be granted an audience with the King on a regular basis.

Verses 1-2: These verses depict the abundant life and continuous blessing of the New Jerusalem. One "river", containing "water of life" (compare 7:17; 21:6; 22:17), comes from God's "throne" and waters the entire city (compare similar millennial blessings (in Ezek. 47:1-2; Joel 3:18; Zech. 14:8). The "tree of life" pictures eternal sustenance and immortality (compare verse 14; Gen. 2:9; 3:22). Both the variety and abundance of "fruit" are emphasized. The "healing of the nations" may indicate physical healing during the Millennium (compare Ezek. 47:12), or (figuratively), the blessings of God in the eternal state.

Revelation 22:1 "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

"Pure River of Water of life." In one final glimpse into the future, John sees this river flowing from the throne of God. It is the source of eternal life that emanates from God. Even in heaven, we will drink water and eat food, probably not out of necessity for our health, but because of the pleasure and fellowship it will give us. This is symbolic of eternal life.

This river is unlike any on earth because no hydrological cycle exists. Water of life symbolizes the continual flow of eternal life from God's throne to heaven's inhabitants (see note on 21:6).

Jesus told the woman at the well if she drank of the water He gave her, she would never thirst again (John 4:14). This is the "water" He was talking about here. This "water" possessed life giving powers. The Source is the Father and the Lamb. This "water" springs up into everlasting life. In our day of pollutions, it is hard to visualize water this clear. When the soldier pierced Jesus' side, water and blood gushed forth (John 19:34). This is the water of life.

Just like everything else in the New Jerusalem, the river was clear as crystal so that it could reflect the glory of God as it cascades down from the throne of God and of the Lamb in a dazzling, sparkling never ending flow of everlasting life from God's throne to His people.

Revelation 22:2 "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, [was there] the tree of life, which bare twelve [manner of] fruits, [and] yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree [were] for the healing of the nations."

A symbol of both eternal life and continual blessing (see note on Gen. 2:9). The tree bears 12 fruits, one for each month, and is symbolic of the abundant variety in heaven. The English word "therapeutic" comes from the Greek word translated "healing". The leaves somehow enrich heavenly life, making it full and satisfying.

The tree of life was present in the garden of Eden, but Adam and Eve did not eat of it. It was in the center of the garden. I believe this tree is Jesus. When we partake of Him, we have life. The tree bears twelve kinds of fruit that yields its fruit every month suggesting the infinite variety that will fill heaven. This tree offers perpetual life and health as well as food.

Monthly, since time exists no more, emphasizes the expression of the joyous provision of eternity using familiar terms of time.

Nations: meaning the people that are in heaven. Sickness will no longer be, so the healing doesn't imply illness. The leaves therefore will be to promote general health or another way of stating that would be: life in heaven will be fully energized, rich and exciting continuously.

The scripture also doesn't tell us if we will eat the leaves or the fruit. Angels ate food on earth with Abraham and Sarah as did Jesus after the resurrection with his disciples. Perhaps the saints in heaven will eat for enjoyment and not out of necessity.

"Verses 3-5: The effects of the post-Edenic "curse" (compare Gen. 3:14-19), will be totally gone forever. God's saints will "serve him" (compare 7:15), and "reign" with Him "for ever" (compare Dan. 7:18, 27). The greatest blessing of eternity is that "they shall see his face" (compare Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14). Though this is now impossible for an unglorified human being (compare Exodus 33:20), it will occur in the eternal state. The "name" of God "in their foreheads" shows ownership and consecration (compare 3:12; 13:16; Exodus 28:36-38). Since in the New Jerusalem God is always present, His glory makes all other sources of "light" unnecessary (compare 21:23; Isa. 60:19-20; Zech. 14:7).

Revelation 22:3 "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:"

"There shall be no more curse": The curse on humanity and the earth because of Adam and Eve's disobedience (Gen. 3:16-19), will be finished. God will never have to judge sin again, since it will never exist in the new heaven and new earth.

The one associated with the curse, the old serpent, has been thrown into the lake of fire. The curse of the land is gone. God would not be present here if there was anything cursed left.

The effects of the post-Edenic curse will be totally gone forever. There will be no more curse. God's saints will serve him (Rev. 7:15), and reign with Him forever (Dan 7:18-27).

The picture of eternal life in these verses indicates that we will be busy serving God for all eternity. We will both serve Him (verse 3), and reign with Him (verse 5). Since He is an infinite God, we can be sure He will have infinite things for us to do as we reign there forever. The phrase, "they shall see his face" means that, as believers, we will be granted an audience with the King on a regular basis.

“His servants shall serve him”: This involves the entire revelation which John has just related (see note on 1:1).

Here we see the "throne of God" and on his right hand is "the Lamb". These "servants" that shall serve him are us. We Christians have been bought and paid for with the blood of the Lamb. We will be with the Lamb and the Father, but we will not be their equal. We will be their servants.

Revelation 22:4 "And they shall see his face; and his name [shall be] in their foreheads."

“See his face”: No unglorified human could see God’s face and live (Exodus 33:20-23). But the residents of heaven can look on God’s face without harm because they are now holy (compare John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 3:2).

The greatest blessing of eternity is that they shall see his face (Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14). Though this is now impossible for an unglorified human being (Exodus 33:20), it will occur in the eternal state. The name of God in their foreheads shows ownership and consecration (Rev. 3:12; 13:16; Exodus 28:36-38).

Throughout the Bible, we have been taught that you could not look upon the face of God and live. Even Moses, who was so close to God, wanted to see God, and God told him no. He put His hand over Moses and passed by him, and Moses saw his back side (Exodus 33:22). There we will be in his presence all the time and can look in his face anytime we want to. We are sealed with the Lamb's seal.

The saints in New Jerusalem will see God's face. Being perfectly holy and righteous, they'll be able to endure the blazing, glorious light from God's presence without being consumed. That was impossible for mortal men.

Revelation 22:5 "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

Since in the New Jerusalem God is always present, His glory makes all other sources of light unnecessary (Rev. 21:23; Isaiah 60:19-20; Zech. 14:7).

We have talked so much about our Lord Jesus being the Light. He is the source of all Light. When the Light is on full power, you certainly do not need a candle. The sun has no more purpose any more either. This presence of this Light is all they need. This Kingdom has no end. It is for all of eternity.

“They shall reign”: Heaven’s citizens are more than servants (see note on 3:21).

As a final word describing the saint's heavenly experience, they are told it once again that it will never end. They shall reign forever and forever.

(Verses 6 to 9), takes us back to the early part of this book, when the faithful and true witness told us that He would send His angel to convey His message concerning the things that must come to pass. Christ speaks the sixth blessing (beatitude), to those who treat the prophesies of this book as “faithful and true”, and then live accordingly.

Revelation 22:6 "And he said unto me, These sayings [are] faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done."

“His servants”: The members of the 7 churches of Asia Minor who received this letter (1:11), and then all believers who have read, or will read it since.

“The things which must shortly be done: This involves the entire revelation which John has just related (see note on 1:1).

(Verses 6-21), form a conclusion or summary to the book. They emphasize two themes:

- (1) The authenticity of the book as a revelation from God; and
- (2) The imminence of the return of Christ.

These sayings refer to the entire Book of Revelation. They are authenticated as genuine by the angel whom God sent to give them through John to His servants. That is, the members of the churches (Rev. 1:3, 11).

Here is just a reassurance that all of this is not to be taken lightly. This is the absolute truth. The prophets such as Daniel, Ezekiel, and Isaiah (to name just a few), have all spoken of this special time in history. We even read this (in Matthew chapter 24; Luke chapters 21 and 22). It is the same information, regardless of who pens it, because the author is God.

The angel's words reinforce an important truth: Everything John saw in Revelation will come to pass. John's words are not mystical and the Apocalypse is not a record of his bizarre dreams or the result of an over active imagination. Further it is not an allegory (a form of translation), from which readers can find hidden meanings of their own concoction. It is an accurate description of events and persons that are yet to come.

Revelation 22:7 "Behold, I come quickly: blessed [is] he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

This is Jesus speaking when He says, "Behold, I come quickly". Jesus' return is imminent (see note on 3:11).

"Blessed is he that keepeth the saying of the prophecy of this book" (Rev. 1:3). This is referring to the reading of the Book of Revelation. But how in the world can you keep the sayings, if you don't know what these sayings are? Most people avoid Revelation like the plague, but if we must keep the sayings, then we must read and understand what they are. I believe this book also means the entire Bible.

Believers are called to guard or protect the book of Revelation. To defend against detractors who deny its relevance, against those critics who deny its veracity and authority as well as against confused interpreters who obscure its meaning. They are called to not only guard Scripture, but also to obey it.

You might ask, what does it mean to obey the book of Revelation? Think of it as a general command to long for Christ's return and our eternal fellowship with Him. It calls believers to desire heaven, to desire holiness, to desire to see Christ vindicated and for Him to triumph 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.

To see God's face, to see an end of the Babylonian Harlot and the corrupt commercial and political system, to look forward to a life of peace and happiness.

Thus, the purpose of Revelation is not to provide entertainment and to merely satisfy the curiosity of believers about the future, but to reveal the glory of God's Son and call believers to live godly, obedient lives in light of His soon return.

Verses 8-11: "John" certifies that he has actually seen and "heard" everything that he has written in the book. He again makes the mistake of worshiping the messenger ("angel"), of God rather than "God" Himself (compare 19:10). Angels are simply "fellow servants" of God (compare Psalm 103:20; Dan. 7:10; Heb. 1:14). In contrast with Daniel, who was told to "seal" up his book of prophecy (since the end was still in the distant future (compare Dan. 12:4, 9, 13), John is told to leave his book open ("Seal not"). The Messiah has come, His return is imminent, and thus "the time is at hand". Verse 11 is not a command, but rather a statement of fact and a warning. Character tends to become fixed and unchangeable, determined by a lifetime of habitual action. The arrival of the end will prevent any change of destiny. When Christ returns, the deliberate choice of each person will have fixed his eternal fate.

Revelation 22:8 "And I John saw these things, and heard [them]. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things."

“Heard and seen”: John resumes speaking for the first time since chapter 1 and confirms the veracity of the revelation with his own eyewitness testimony, the basis of any reliable witness.

Several times in Revelation, we see John overwhelmed by the presence and the power this angel shows him. He, being overcome by the magnitude of it all, starts to worship this angel. Some people have false doctrine centered on angel worship. We must not worship angels. They are created beings. We must worship the Creator. We are warned over and over not to worship angels. John is told several times in Revelation not to worship this angel (see note on 19:10).

Revelation 22:9 "Then saith he unto me, See [thou do it] not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God."

The angel quickly reminds the apostle that he too, was a created being by his declaration. Not only his, but also of John's brethren the prophets, and of all believers that are defined here as "Them which keep the sayings of this book."

Then the angel commands John to worship God as God alone is the only acceptable Person to worship. The bible forbids the worship of anyone else including angels, saints, the Virgin Mary or any other created being.

Revelation 22:10 "And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand."

“Seal not the sayings of the prophecy” (compare 10:11). Previous prophecies were sealed up (Dan. 8:26; 12:4-10). These prophecies are to be proclaimed so they can produce obedience and worship.

The command not to seal this prophetic message is quite different than what the Lord told Daniel;

Dan 12:4 "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end".

“The time is at hand”: This refers to imminency, which means that the end is next.

The reason for the difference in the instructions is simply stated, "the time is at hand." Until the death and resurrection of Christ, the time for this prophecy had not come. Since Jesus already opened the seven seals prophetically (Rev. chapters 5 and 6), to reveal the future, it is only appropriate that the entire book remain open for us to read as well.

In contrast with Daniel, who was told to "seal" up his book of prophecy (since the end was still in the distant future), but here John is told to leave his book open (Seal not). The Messiah had come, His second coming is imminent, and thus now the time is at hand.

The reason for the difference in the instructions is that one lived after the time of Christ's crucifixion, the other before. In John's day, it was possible to see the unfolding of the events prophesied; in Daniel's day they were a long way off.

Revelation Chapter 22 Questions

1. Where did this clear as crystal river come from?
2. Who is the source of this water?
3. When Jesus was pierced, what two things poured out?
4. What was on each side of the river?
5. What were the leaves for?
6. What does the fruit and twelve months mean?
7. Who is this tree?
8. What two things does this tree offer?
9. Whose throne shall be in it?
10. Who is associated with the curse?
11. We are bought and paid for with what?
12. When can we see God's face?
13. Who did God let see his back side?
14. Why is there no need of a candle?
15. How long does the kingdom last?
16. Why are the prophets mentioned here?
17. Where, besides Revelation, do we read about the end?
18. Who are blessed in verse 7?
19. If we are to keep the sayings, what must we do?
20. Who did John fall down before?
21. Why was this wrong?

22. What kind of doctrine is the worship of angels?
23. Why was John not to seal this prophecy?