

Revelation 22**(NIV) Eden Restored**

1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

John and the Angel

6 The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

7 "Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll."

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. 9 But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!"

10 Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. 11 Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy."

(NIV) Epilogue: Invitation and Warning

12 "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

14 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

A BEAUTIFUL SYMMETRY

There is a beautiful symmetry to chapter 22 of Revelation.

The last book of the Bible begins with the imagery of the first book. We are back to the tree of life, only this time, creation is corrected forever.

The themes are built on the prophets of the Old Testament, written when Israel was under persecution. Zechariah talks of the promise, "**there shall be no more curse**" (Zech. 14:11). God's name on His servant's forehead goes all the way back to Exodus 28:37, and of course, serves as a counterpoint to the mark of the beast.

The theme of God satisfying thirst is through the Old Testament and used by Jesus as early as the beatitudes (Matt. 5:6); those who thirst for righteousness.

Even the closing of the chapter with a blessing and a curse is standard protocol for a book of prophecy. The final words of God carry the warning from the first words of God:

Deuteronomy 4

2. "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

The Word of God is perfect and complete. It is not to be tampered with. And since it is based on all Scripture, merging the Old and New Testaments; the warning extends beyond this book to all of Scripture.

THE FUTURE IS THE RESTORATION & COMPLETION OF THE PAST

There is a sense of completion in the future promise. The river of life flows from the throne of God, the tree of life grows on both sides. Humanity had been removed from the original garden, to prevent them from touching the tree of life, now those welcomed in have open access. But it is not all mankind, only those who chose good in our knowledge of good and evil; the knowledge we stole, and which nearly destroyed us all.

The leaves of the tree are for *healing* (therapeia) of the nations. Since there is no disease in the new creation, we might wonder; healing for what? The scholar, Walvoord takes it to mean "health-giving" as opposed to "cure."

The name of God is on the foreheads of His people. Earlier imagery fits; the identity of God is on the forefront of their minds. It is first in their awareness and full in their understanding.

There is no need for light because of God's glory. As we gleaned from the last chapter, it is fair to say that we not only live *with* God, we live *IN* God.

Christ says "I am coming quickly!" (V. 7) The language in the original Greek (dei) can just as easily refer to immanency as opposed to immediacy. That's to say, the proclamation is not so much that Christ is returning at any minute, but rather; He is coming and there is nothing in the universe that can stop that return.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND MAN'S WILL ADDRESSED

In verse 7 Christ says He is coming quickly, and in verse 12 He repeats the statement. Sandwiched between these passage, there is an instruction that the book is not to be sealed. It is to be made accessible to all because "the time is at hand." (v. 10)

There is added this ominous statement in 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."

The words are a direct reference to the prophecy of Daniel, but as Daniel remained waiting, now they are fulfilled:

Daniel 12:

9. And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

10. "Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.

In roughly the same period, the prophet Ezekiel was told the same thing from God:

Ezekiel 3

27. "But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.' He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house.

Jesus echoed this same spiritual dynamic in His parable of Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man, now in hell implores Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his five living brothers, to which Abraham replies:

"If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'" (Luke 16:31)

Paul puts it this way in **1 Corinthians 1:**

18. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

19. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

There are a number of profound lessons in this spiritual dynamic:

1. God will not force anyone to choose for Him; but we can follow a progression in life where we will be incapable of choosing for God. It has to do with our human pride and sense of self-importance. We are too wise to need God; we are too sharp in our reasoning to believe in a God figure. ...It is not that God couldn't save even then, but we simply would never choose it.
2. There is a lesson of immediacy. When God comes, it will be a very quick and sudden event. There will be no time left to repent.
3. There is a mystery in why and how God moves certain hearts. If it wasn't for God's intervention, none of us, in our fallen natures would desire to choose Him. There is an uncomfortable thread throughout Scripture that says, God blinded them, or God gave them over. God is always in control, and yet we also have free will. So, the reality still exists that we are each writing our own destinies.

DANGER IN WORSHIPPING THE CREATED

In verse 8, for the second time, John feels compelled to worship the angel who is delivering the message and the angel says for the second time, "**you must not do that.**" There are a number of lessons we can take from this.

1. There are creations of God that are so awesome in themselves, that we will be tempted to worship the created rather than the Creator. Even the best of us have fallen to this temptation.
2. For all the profound imagery the angel explains, he is never more emphatic than he is about worshipping the created rather than the Creator. As soon as we worship what is created, we turn it from a good thing to an evil place. Just consider how we do that in the church today. We live in an age of celebrity preachers. We confuse traditions of church with the teachings of God. The church has to have certain programs, be governed in a certain way, follow certain traditions, or honor certain buildings. We do certain things in certain ways because, "That's the way we've always done that."; and we make that equal to Scripture itself. But here is a word from a fellow servant, as heavenly as he was, "You MUST NOT do that!"

TRANSITION TO THE PRESENT

Starting at verse 8, there is a transition from future vision to our present situation.

This morning we talked about the meaning of washing one's robe in verse 14, but we didn't talk about the tense. The original language speaks in the present active tense. -Not those who have washed, but those who are washing right now.

The city of God exists right now in the context that the Kingdom of God exists right now. The Kingdom of God is not so much a place as a state of being. Those who are in a relationship with Christ; those who are transformed in their thinking by what God teaches and in their natures by what the Holy Spirit does. Even in the ultimate expression of heaven and the New Jerusalem at the end; heaven is heaven, not simply because we will be WITH God, but actually be IN God.

There was nothing more contemptible to the eastern mind than the stray dogs that roamed the streets. The contemptible, the spiritually dead and rebellious are dogs outside this city. They exist right now, and in the end, exist in the imagery of Gehenna, hell, or the lake of burning sulfur.

BEAUTIFUL SYMMETRY

The vision concludes in the same theme of beautiful symmetry as it begins. There is a picture of fulfillment.

- An angel is mentioned in the same way the Revelation started.
- Jesus refers to Himself from the Old Testament promise as the Root (of Jesse), and the offspring of David. “The morning star” was a thing of exalted beauty throughout Scripture, from Numbers (Nu. 24:17) to 2 Peter (2 Pe. 1:19).

Imagine living in times before electricity. People endured the darkness with flickers of candles or lamps. The day could not begin until the light of the sun rose. Every day, while it was still dark, the planet Venus was a prominent star in the sky. It was a promise that light was about to come. That is how the prophecy of the Messiah’s birth was promised, and that is how Christ came the first time. That is how the church was formed, and now the church has become the married bride.

The church and the Spirit of God bid people who hear, to come right now. Those who hear, and those who thirst for righteousness are invited to come *right now*.

Then there is the traditional warning which contains the symmetry of perfect justice. If anyone adds to the words, the plagues will be added to them. If anyone takes away, their citizenship to God’s Kingdom will be taken away.

The vision ends with a final confirmation and two “amen’s”. The Hebraism “*amane*” meaning; *truth, so be it, it is trustworthy, it will firmly, surely, certainly be so*. The same confirmation that is given with the first giving of God’s Word back in Numbers (5:22) -Beautiful, fulfilled symmetry!

DISCUSSION

- WHY STRIKES YOU THE MOST FROM THIS CHAPTER?
- WHY DO YOU THINK GOD USES THE IMAGERY OF A TREE AND A RIVER FOR LIFE?
- WHAT WAYS MIGHT PEOPLE ADD OR TAKE AWAY FROM GOD’S WORD?
- DO YOU THINK THE WARNING REFERS TO ALL OF SCRIPTURE? WHY OR WHY NOT?
- WHAT EXAMPLES OF SYMMETRY AND FULFILLMENT DO YOU SEE?