



We have finally arrived at the last chapter in the Bible--and it has such an inspiring end! John begins, "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 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. 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. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 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" (Rev. 22:1-5).

Notice the narrative *continues uninterrupted from chapter 21 to chapter 22*. As Ladd brings out, "The chapter and verse divisions of the Bible are a relatively modern invention and *do not always represent units of thought*. In the present instance, *the vision in the last chapter of Revelation is directly continuous with what has preceded*" (p. 286).

So what John describes here is a *continuation* of what the New Jerusalem looks like--*but now from the inside*. Note that it all fits with what Jesus had promised, "To him who *overcomes* I will grant to *sit with Me on My throne*, as I also overcame and *sat down with My Father on His throne*" (Rev. 3:21).

John is now shown *the throne room* of God the Father and Jesus Christ in the New Jerusalem. Christ, described as the Lamb, is sitting with God the Father on His throne. Remember, a throne in Bible times could be more like *a couch* than a solitary seat, where more than one person could sit there. As Barclay explains, "We will get the picture right if we remember that the eastern throne was *more like a couch than a single seat*. The victor in life will *share the throne* of the victorious Christ."

In this great hall, *the tree of life* and the *river of life* have a prominent place, similar to but in greater scale than Christ's throne with a river of life during the Millennium (Ez. 47:1-12; Zec. 14:8). It is a reminder of how God's Plan of Salvation will be totally fulfilled. As Mounce brings out, "In Genesis we were introduced to the tree of life planted in the middle of the garden (Gen. 2:9). To eat of its fruit was to live forever (Gen. 3:22); as a consequence of Adam's sin, therefore, the

first couple were banished from the Garden [of Eden] to work the ground cursed with thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:17-18).

"Now in Revelation, we see redeemed humanity back in the Garden, able *to eat* the bountiful fruit of the tree of life (22:1-2). The curse has been removed and God's people are again privileged to 'see His face' and serve Him. No greater good or more joyous truth could be imagined than eternal fellowship with God and the Lamb! Truly, the unimaginable blessings of Eden have been restored" (p. 398).

So this tree of life is not a decoration or a symbol, but has a practical use, for those redeemed will be able to literally eat of its fruit and be refreshed by its leaves. As Christ had promised to the Church, "To him who overcomes *I will give to eat from the tree of life*, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). We know God does not lie and that this is the literal truth. The word "healing" used here of the leaves of the tree of life, is in the Greek *therapeia*, where we get our word, "therapeutic." It is a broad term that can mean "health-giving," or "refreshing," since in the New Jerusalem there will no longer be pain, disease or sickness to be healed (Rev. 21:4).

Yes, as spirit beings, we will be able to eat, drink and enjoy of this, for it also says in Rev. 21:6 and 22:17 that we will "*take of the water of life freely*." That "water of life" is described in Rev. 22:2 as "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, *proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb*."

There are *two job descriptions* of what the saints will do in the New Jerusalem. First, they will have *direct access* to God the Father and Jesus Christ, now able to see God "face to face." This latter stage is the culmination of God's Plan, in which the resurrected saints will first see Christ "face to face" at His return. As 1 John 3:2 says, "...but we know that *when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*." So in this final stage, we will also see God the Father "face to face" when we are inside of the New Jerusalem, just as we had seen Jesus in this way.

Secondly, it says "His servants shall serve Him...and they shall reign forever and ever." It is quite telling that Ladd is puzzled by this statement, dismissing it: "The text does not say *who* they will reign over, *nor is it important*" (p. 289). With his Protestant perspective

of going to heaven and only gazing at God, he doesn't have a clue what this new headquarters in the Universe is all about. But, as Is. 9:7 says of Christ's reign, "Of the *increase* of His government and peace *there will be no end.*" Rom. 8:17-21 also states God will make us "*joint heirs* with Christ [meaning over the Universe]...For the earnest expectation of the [Universe] eagerly waits for the *revealing* of the sons of God." And 1 Cor. 2:9 adds, "*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*" So there is yet a lot of work to do in this great and marvelous Universe!

John continues, "Then the angel said to me, 'These words are true and can be trusted. And the Lord God, who gives his Spirit to the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must happen very soon.' 'Listen!' says Jesus. 'I am coming soon! Happy are those who *obey* the prophetic words in this book!' I, John, have heard and seen all these things. And when I finished hearing and seeing them, I fell down at the feet of the angel who had shown me these things, and I was about to worship him. But he said to me, 'Don't do it! I am a servant together with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all those who obey the words in this book. Worship God!'" (Rev. 22:6-9, GNB).

After John witnesses these vivid scenes of the New Jerusalem, the angel affirms all of it is *accurate and true*. Some might believe all of this is symbolic and not real, but note, this whole section is in *prose* or *narrative* and *not* poetry. For instance, no one doubts that the lake of fire is real and not symbolic, so why are the new heaven and the new earth supposedly symbolic? If they are, why does it say there won't be any waters on the earth, if it is not real? This is why the angel asserts all John has seen is genuine and will be experienced by God's people in the future. As support, the angel says it all comes from God, who has inspired His servants by His Spirit, giving *truthful accounts*. In fact, this "Spirit in the prophets" will later be personified as "the Spirit," which, with the Bride, says, "Come!" Mounce adds, "The words that relate the visions of things to come *are trustworthy and true*. They are worthy of belief because *they correspond to reality*" (p. 403).

Jesus then gives the *sixth* blessing in the book of Revelation, saying those who "obey" the teachings of

this book *shall be blessed*. So it is not enough to read it, but--to put it into action! As we will see, this includes keeping all of God's commandments.

John was so emotionally impacted by what he saw that he fell down to worship this angel. It was the second time, for in Rev. 19:10 he had already tried, but in both instances he is gently rebuked. The angel tells him to worship only God.

John then writes, "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. 'And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.' 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. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie" (Rev. 22:10-15).

The angel tells John not to "seal" this prophecy, for it is being revealed and not hidden, since he has been shown what will occur in the future. When this time arrives, it will come suddenly, and people will be judged according to their works and lifestyles.

As Mounce points out, "Mt. 24:42-44 counsels every generation to be on the alert for the return of the Son of man. An infallible timetable would do away with the attitude of urgent expectation that has been the hallmark of the Church throughout the centuries...The major thrust of the verse is that since the end time is now at hand, people are certain to reap the consequences of the kinds of lives they have led. The time arrives when change is impossible because character has already been determined by a lifetime of habitual action. The arrival of the end forecloses any possibility of alteration" (pp. 404, 406).

Christ returns to reign and to judge those alive at that time, and He will reward those who have been faithful. He then gives *the seventh blessing*, saying, "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." So keeping God's commandments is still, at the very end of the Bible, a *requirement* to have access to the tree of life

and to enter the New Jerusalem. This clearly shows the Ten Commandments have *not* “been done away”—and that includes keeping the Sabbath day.

Of course, this is not what false teachers (the antinomians) want to read, especially when Sunday and Easter were introduced in the second century. So it's not surprising that a *suspicious* alternative text appears later as a scribal gloss, saying instead: “Blessed are they *that wash their robes*.” In this way it removes teaching the need to keep God's Commandments. Yet, this other text is *not* found in the *Textus Receptus*, the basis for the New King James Bible. Besides, it's an awkward phrase, for it implies an *ongoing washing* action, whereas the rest of Revelation says we *have been washed* from our sins in His own blood (Rev. 1:5; 7:14). So it was something *done in the past*, while keeping God's commandments *is an ongoing action* and makes far more sense here. Clearly, Satan hated this verse.

In contrast with the saints' reward for obeying God's commandments, the incorrigibly wicked are remembered, for they won't be in the city, since they will have *already* been destroyed *in the lake of fire*, dying for a second and final time (Rev. 20:14-15).

The term “dogs” usually refers to male prostitutes. As Mounce says, “The term ‘dog’ is used in Scripture for various kinds of impure and malicious persons. In Dt. 23:17-18 the term designates a male cult prostitute...Charles says, according to an inscription in Astarte's temple at Larnaka, Cyprus, ‘dog’ was the technical term for a male prostitute” (p. 408).

John then writes, “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.’ 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” (Rev. 22:16-17).

Notice God or Christ can send an angel to speak on Their behalf as if he was Them. This would explain why it appears God the Father sometimes speaks from heaven but could instead be an angel speaking on His behalf, and this would agree with what Christ said, “You have *neither heard His voice at any time*, nor *seen His form*” (John 5:37). Christ then emphasizes His lineage with David and that His Coming will be like the bright planet Venus which appears just before the dawn, as in 2 Peter 1:18-19.

Regarding “the Spirit and the Bride saying ‘Come,’” the commentator Martin Kiddle says, “The Spirit [is] a *collective reference to the prophets, personifying* the gift that *distinguishes* them for their fellows” (p. 456). A. Robertson adds, “So now, ‘the prophets and the saints’ make a common plea to the Lord Jesus to ‘come’ as He has just said twice that He would do.”

John ends, “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; 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. He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (Rev. 22:18-21).

Now at the end of the Bible, there is a warning *not to add or take away* from this book, based on Deut. 4:2, “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God.” Unfortunately, in 1 Jn. 5:7 we have such a false verse, added centuries afterward. Mounce then says, “To lose one's share in the [book of life], tree of life and in the holy city is an awesome punishment” (p. 410).

There is now a great plea for Christ to come soon. It is similar to the Aramaic term *maranatha* in 1 Cor. 16:22, from *maran*, “our Lord,” and *atha*, “come.” Mounce adds, “At the very close of the book is the confession that the answers to the problems of life *do not lie* in peoples' ability to create a better world *but in the return* of the One whose sovereign power controls the course of human affairs. Redemptive history remains incomplete *until Christ returns*. It is *the final act* in the great drama of redemption that the Church waits with longing” (p. 410).

The book ends with a *benediction*, as epistles in John's day frequently did. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, Amen.” So it is with God's favor that all will be accomplished--and by having Christ live in us. It is a fitting end—as Herbert Armstrong once said to encourage us, “Brethren, I've looked at *the end of the Book* to see how it turns out—and *we win!* So let's be *faithful* to the end—for we will see in the end it will have been *well worth it!*”