

REVELATION 22:1-21

PARADISE RESTORED

¹ And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

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.

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:

⁴ And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.

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. (Revelation 22:1–5)

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

“And he showed me” marks new aspects of the New Jerusalem that the angel will show John.

The first thing John sees is “a pure river of water of life.” The pure river is a symbol and probably a real river as well. As a symbol, the river represents the refreshment and sustenance that God provides through eternal life (cf. Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Ps. 36:9).

John described the river he saw as bright or clear as a crystal; it was a shimmering, sparkling stream of unpolluted water. This river proceeded from the throne that belonged to God and the Lamb. River as a symbol of life is common in biblical thought (Ps. 46:4; Ezek. 47:1-12; Zech. 14:8; John 4:10, 14).

B. 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. (Revelation 22:2)

The phrase “in the midst of the street” can either describe the location of the throne (22:1) or the location of the tree (22:2). Besides the river of water of life, John also saw the tree of life.

Several commentators take the “tree” (singular) as generic. They believe that John really saw not just one tree but many trees. The manuscript, however, supports the singular tree. When Adam and Eve fell, they lost their access to the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 2:9; 3:22-24).

The residents of the eternal city will have access to the Tree of Life. This tree is surrounded by water, which is the epitome of a fruitful tree (cf. Ps. 1:3; Jer. 17:8; Ezek. 19:10; 47:12).

This tree is perpetually rather than seasonally in fruit; it produces a new crop of fruit each month of the year. This is quite interesting – not just for the fruit, but that it produces a monthly fruit.

We also read that “the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.” The word “healing” [Gk: *therapeian*] means “health-giving.”

C. 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: (Revelation 22:3)

There will no more curse [Gk: *katanathema*], which is a compound word comprising *kata* and *anathema*. The word *anathema* means curse (1Cor. 16:22; Gal. 1:8-9).

The prefix *kata* is an intensifier. This curse probably hearkens back to the curse that God pronounced on the old creation at the Fall. God will have intimate fellowship with His people because this curse has now been lifted.

Believers will now serve God. The word “serve” [Gk: *latreuō*] denotes religious or priestly service (see Matt. 4:10; Phil. 3:3).

D. And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads. (Revelation 22:4)

God’s servants will see God’s face; we will enjoy personal, intimate fellowship with Him. We will be able to do this because we will be pure in heart, righteous, and holy then (cf. Ps. 11:7; 17:15; Matt. 5:8; 1 Cor. 13:12; Heb. 12:14).

Adam and Eve’s sin broke their fellowship with God, and they hid from Him (Gen. 3:8). Our ability to view God’s glory is limited now (Job 19:25-27; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 9:7), but then it will be unhindered (1 John 3:2).

The word “face” is an anthropomorphism. To see then does not mean sight or to behold with our eyes. Rather it means to be in the presence of.

Verse 4 also tells us that we will bear God’s name on our foreheads, denoting ownership.

E. 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. (Revelation 22:5)

John’s final point is that the glory of God will illuminate the whole new earth (21:23-25; cf. Zech. 14:6-7, 9).

John also adds that believers will reign with Him forever, not just in the millennial kingdom (20:4, 6). This is the fulfillment of God’s desire and command that man should rule over His creation (Gen. 1:26).

The term “for ever and ever” (see also 20:10) implies the continuation of time without end. In verse 2, we have the reference to months, which implies the sequence of events. There are also references to space (21:2, 3, 8, 10, 13-17, 24-27; 22:1-2).

EPILOGUE

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

⁷ Behold, I come quickly: blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

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 shewed me these things.

⁹ Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

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

¹¹ He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

¹² And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

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

¹⁴ Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

¹⁵ For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. (Revelation 22:6–15)

This final section consists of verbal exchanges between an angel and John, and between Jesus and John. Three emphases mark this epilogue. First, this prophecy is genuine (22:6-7, 8-9, 16, 18-19). Second, Jesus will return imminently (22:6-7, 10, 12, 20). Third, the unfit should beware, and the faithful should take heart (22:11-12, 15, 17-19).

Comparison between Revelation 1 and 22 (adapted from notes by Thomas Constable)		
	Revelation 1	Revelation 22
Origin of the prophecy: God and Jesus	1:1	22:6
Subject of the prophecy: coming events	1:1	22:6
Mediator of the prophecy: an angel	1:1	22:6, 8, 16
Writer of the prophecy: John	1:1, 4, 9	22:8
Genuineness of the prophecy: true prophecy	1:3	22:6, 7, 9, 10, 18-19
Vehicle of the prophecy: a prophet	1:1, 9-11	22:8, 9, 10
Addressees of the prophecy: bond-servants	1:1	22:6
Destination of the prophecy: churches	1:3, 11	22:16, 18

Blessing of the prophecy: for obedience	1:3	22:7, 12, 14
Warning of the prophecy: for unfaithfulness	1:7	22:11, 12, 18-19
Center of the prophecy: Christ	1:2, 5, 9	22:16, 18, 20
God of the prophecy: Alpha and Omega	1:17	22:13
Chief character of the prophecy: God	1:5, 7	22:12, 13, 16
Hope of the prophecy: soon return	1:3, 7	22:7, 10, 12, 20

A. Testimony of the Angel (Revelation 22:6-7)

1. And he said unto me, These sayings *are* faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. (Revelation 22:6)

“He” refers to the angel who had been revealing the new creation to John. The angel explains why these words are faithful and true. The purpose of this verse is to stress the authenticity of this revelation and to encourage anticipation of its fulfillment.

This statement reinforces a futuristic interpretation of Revelation. The book deals with events in the future. It also indicates that God intended the reader to understand this book.

2. Behold, I come quickly: blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. (Revelation 22:7)

Probably the angel relayed these words of Christ to John – “Behold, I come quickly.” The word “quickly” [Gk: *tachu*] means “soon.” The Second Coming is the great climactic event.

B. Testimony of John (22:8-11)

1. 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 shewed me these things. (Revelation 22:8)

From verses 8-11, we have John’s testimony of what he has seen and heard. John affirmed the angel’s words that the prophecy was genuine. He himself has heard and seen the things that he has recorded. John is an eyewitness of these things.

Apparently what he has seen and heard so astounded him that he responds by worshipping the angel who revealed them to him.

2. Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. (Revelation 22:9)

The angel stopped John for worshipping him (see 19:10). The angel presents himself as a fellow servant of John’s; they both served God. The angel says

that he also serves the other prophets as well as all believers who pay attention to what God has revealed in this book.

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

The angel tells John not to seal the book; in other words, to leave it open. John was not to close it because the fulfillment of the events predicted is near, and people need to be aware of them.

4. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. (Revelation 22:11)

The angel gives John this warning to unbelievers. There are four statements in verse 11 having to do with a person's justification, purity, righteousness and holiness.

This verse presents the hopelessness of the final state of unbelievers. When Christ comes, people will not be able to change their destiny. What they are then is what they will remain forever. People should not expect some second chance in the future but should make the decision about coming to God now in the light of what they have read in this book (Matt. 25:10; Luke 13:25; Heb. 9:27).

C. Testimony of Christ (22:12-20)

1. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. (Revelation 22:12)

Jesus Christ repeated His promise to return soon (22:7). The difference between verses 7 and 12 is that in verse 7, His words are accompanied by the promise of blessing. In verse 12, His words are accompanied by the promise of judgment.

2. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. (Revelation 22:13)

Our Lord Jesus Christ presents Himself with three titles that give assurance that He can and will fulfill His former promise to reward (see 1:4, 8, 17; 2:8; 21:6). All three titles describe our Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father.

Both are called the Alpha and Omega.

- Christ (22:13)
- God (22:13).

Both are known as the beginning and the end

- Christ (Revelation 1:8; 22:13; Heb. 12:2)
- God (21:6)

Both are known as “the first and the last”

- Christ (1:17; 2:8)
- Father (Isa. 44:6; 48:12).

3. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. (Revelation 22:14)
This is the final blessing in Revelation. It announces God’s favour on those who keep His Word.

The blessing is that they may have access to the Tree of Life, meaning that they will live forever in the new creation. They will also enter the New Jerusalem by its gates, meaning they will be able to enjoy intimate fellowship with God.

4. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. (Revelation 22:15)
Those who enter into the city will be blessed. Those who are left outside are cursed. Our Lord Jesus describes these people in several ways.

- Dogs – a metaphor for the morally impure (cf. Deut. 23:18; 2 Kings 8:13; Ps. 22:16, 20; Isa. 56:10; Matt. 7:6; 15:26; Mark 7:27; Phil 3:2-3).
- Sorcerers [Gk: *pharmakoi*]. It refers to one who practices magical arts.
- Whoremongers [Gk: *pornoi*]
- Murderers
- Idolaters
- Liars

5. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. (Revelation 22:16)

The phrase “I Jesus” appears only once in the New Testament. Here Jesus uses this phraseology to stress His role in producing this revelation and so to strengthen its authority.

“Mine angel” is the main angel who revealed this material to John (cf. v. 6). The angel gave the whole revelation – “these things” – to John, and from him to all the churches, not just the seven churches of Asia Minor.

Our Lord Jesus also identifies himself as “root and the offspring of David.” The word “root” [Gk: *rhiza*] means “source” or “origin.” The word “offspring” [Gk: *genos*] means “descendant.”

In other words, Jesus is the ancestor as well as the descendant of David. The implication is that our Lord Jesus will fulfil all the prophecies concerning David.

Our Lord Jesus also identifies Himself the “bright and morning star.” The appearance of the morning star heralds the dawn of a new day. Similarly, the

Lord's second coming will herald the dawn of a new day in history. The morning star is the brightest physical star in the sky.

6. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. (Revelation 22:17)

The Spirit here is the Holy Spirit. The bride is the church (not the new Jerusalem, which is presented as the bride in 21:2).

"Let him that heareth" refers to everyone who hears this book read in the churches, as was common in John's day. This includes readers today as well.

The bride responds with "Come."

In the second half of the verse, our Lord Jesus turns the invitation around. He says, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

He invites the thirsty to come to Him and take the water of life freely (21:6; Isa. 55:1; Matt. 5:6; John 6:35; 7:37). The one who is thirsty is the person who senses his need. And that need is met in Christ.

Unbelievers obviously need to take their first drink of this living water, which represents Christ and eternal life, but believers also need to keep slaking their thirst by coming to Him again and again.

7. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:18-19)

Verses 18 and 19 speak of the authority of this book, which is in the context refers specifically to Revelation.

Adding material to or deleting sections from the prophecies contained in this book will result in punishment from God. Specifically, God will visit the offender with the plagues written in this book.

Our Lord Jesus is saying that anyone who perverts the teaching of this book will experience judgment from God that is similar to the judgments that will come on unbelievers during the Tribulation. Jesus warned of plagues, not loss of salvation.

But the person takes away from the Bible, “God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book” (22:19).

The word “part” [Gk: *meros*] means “portion” and not the whole. This does not mean a loss of salvation. If the person who corrupts Revelation is an unbeliever, he does not belong to the new creation to begin with. If he is a believer, the part (share) lost, and that must mean some special privilege in the eternal state.

The phrase “if any man” means anyone. Anyone means all are vulnerable. The Book of Revelation opened with a blessing on all who obey its instructions (1:3), and it closes with a strong curse on all who disobey it.

8. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (Revelation 22:20)

Verse 20 is John’s response to what he has heard from our Lord Jesus. John quotes from our Lord Jesus – “Surely I come quickly.”

“He which testifieth these things...” refers to our Lord Jesus Christ.

To this blessed truth, John affirms with an Amen and a prayer.

D. Final Benediction (22:21)

²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen. (Revelation 22:21)

The final benediction is God's grace bestowed upon God's people. God's grace makes faith possible for the unbeliever, and faithfulness for the believer.

Surely I come quickly.
Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
(Revelation 22:20)