

# FINAL REVELATIONS AND EXHORTATIONS IN REVELATION 22

## THE JOYS OF THE ETERNAL STATE

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### The River of the Water of Life

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**Revelation 22:1** ~ Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,

- This crystal-clear celestial river flows out of the throne and right through the middle of the New Jerusalem
- This is the same river spoken of in Ps 46:4-5 ~ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, The holy dwelling places of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.
- It will be like the beautiful river that watered the Garden of Eden
- Some question whether this will be a literal river
- Regardless, the symbolism is clear: Because this river flows down from the throne of God, it reflects His thirst-quenching, all-satisfying nature
- “[I]ts presence in the city simply means that fullness of life will be the experience of all those who inhabit it.”<sup>1</sup>
- Its flow symbolizes the flow of everlasting life from God to His people
- This reference to a river should not be confused with the rivers in the millennial kingdom

**Ezekiel 47:1** ~ Then he brought me back to the door of the house; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced east. And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar.

**Zechariah 14:8** ~ And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.

- However, the millennial streams anticipate the future river in the New Jerusalem

### The Tree of Life

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**Revelation 22:2** ~ in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

- The tree of life is another assurance of the fullness of life in the eternal state
- It is located “on either side of the river,” indicating perhaps that there are a row of trees on either side of the river; thus, “tree” would be collective
- This tree of life likely is related to the similar tree in the Garden of Eden mentioned in Genesis:

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Ryrie, *Revelation*, 171.

**Genesis 2:9** ~ Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**Genesis 3:22** ~ Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—

**Genesis 3:24** ~ So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

- The tree of life in the Garden of Eden was in the center of the garden
- It was a real tree with special properties to sustain eternal life, thus making physical death an impossibility if Adam and Eve had eaten of it
- But God, in His mercy, drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden to prevent them from being sustained by the tree of life, and thus live forever in their sinful and cursed condition
- The tree yields fruit constantly – it’s the “Fruit of the Month Tree”
- It likely symbolizes the blessings of eternal life
- Since there is no time in the eternal state, the use of the term “month” is likely a way to express the joy of eternity using terms we are familiar with
- “The intimation of this passage is that while it is not necessary for believers in the eternal state to sustain life in any way by physical means, they can enjoy that which the tree provides.”<sup>2</sup>
- We will likely eat in heaven, but not out of necessity but rather for enjoyment
- Its leaves are for the “healing of the nations”
- “healing” = *therapeia* = the English word “therapy, therapeutic”
- Since there will be no curse in the eternal state (v. 3), this healing does not refer to the curing of illnesses
- It may refer to the fact that the leaves of the tree enhance the quality of life and promote spiritual blessings/health
- “Rather than specifically meaning ‘healing,’ it should be understood as ‘health-giving,’ as the word in its root meaning has the idea of serving or ministering. In other words, the leaves of the tree promote the enjoyment of life in the new Jerusalem, and are not for correcting ills which do not exist.”<sup>3</sup>

## The Throne of God

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**Revelation 22:3** ~ There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him;

- The curse which came upon all creation as a result of Adam and Eve’s sin (Gen 3:16-19) will be entirely reversed and erased forever in the eternal state
- This is what all creation has been longing for since the fall in Genesis 3

**Romans 8:18-21** ~ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God

- All creation presently agonizes under the effect of sin’s curse

<sup>2</sup> John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 331.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

- But in the eternal state, it will be set free from the effects of the curse
- “There shall be no pollution or deformity or offensive defect of any kind, seen in any person or thing; but everyone shall be perfectly pure and perfectly lovely in heaven. That blessed world shall be perfectly bright, without any darkness, perfectly fair, without any spot; perfectly clear, without any cloud. No moral or natural defect shall ever enter there; and there nothing will be seen that is sinful or weak or foolish.”<sup>4</sup>
- The “throne of God and of the Lamb” will be there (cf. Rev 21:22-23; 22:1)
- God’s presence will dwell in the New Jerusalem
- We will be given the wonderful privilege to “serve Him” for all eternity
- “This is a picture of blessedness in service rather than of arduous toil.”<sup>5</sup>
- “Paradise is not only the absence of evil but the privilege of serving God in His presence forever.”<sup>6</sup>

## The Blessing of Fellowship

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**Revelation 22:4-5** ~ they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. 5 And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

- We will get to see “His face,” referring to the fact that we will have immediate access to the glory of God
- This is not something unglorified humans can do

**Exodus 33:20-23** ~ But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!” 21 Then the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; 22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. 23 “Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.”

**John 1:18** ~ No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

**1 Timothy 6:16** ~ who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

**1 John 4:12** ~ No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

- That’s what makes this promise so astounding...when we are perfect and righteous, we will be able to endure the blazing, glorious light from God’s presence without being consumed
- We will have an unhindered view of God’s glory with intimate, unbroken fellowship with Him
- We will actually see God with our physical eyes (not just spiritual eyes) in the eternal state
- God’s greatest gift to us is Himself, so our longing for eternity is really a longing for God
- To see God will be our greatest joy and we will be able to behold his face for all eternity
- This is the supreme joy of the city of God, and what we were made for

**Psalms 27:4** ~ One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord

**Psalms 63:1** ~ O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Heaven – A World of Love*

<sup>5</sup> Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 331.

<sup>6</sup> Ryrie, *Revelation*, 171.

- That “His name will be on their foreheads” indicates that we will personally belong to God
- There will be no need for a “lamp” or the “sun” because the glory of God will illuminate the eternal state
- We will “reign forever and ever” with Him

## THE EPILOGUE

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### The Certainty of the Blessed Hope

**Revelation 22:6-7** ~ And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”; and 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. 7 “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”

- “These words are faithful and true” points to the veracity of the prophecies given in this book
- All that God has promised in Revelation will come to pass just as many OT prophecies have come to pass
- “What the inspire 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.”<sup>7</sup>
- The promise of Christ, “I am coming quickly,” occurs 3 times in this epilogue (vv. 7, 12, 20)
- This is a promise of Christ’s imminent return, namely that it could happen at any time
- The church has always held to the fact that Christ could return (in the Rapture) at any moment:

**1 Corinthians 1:7** ~ so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

**1 Corinthians 16:22** ~ If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha.

**Philippians 3:20** ~ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

**1 Thessalonians 1:9-10** ~ For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

**1 Thessalonians 4:15** ~ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

**James 5:9** ~ Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

**1 Peter 4:7** ~ The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

- Blessings come to all those who long for His return and “heed the words of the prophecy of this book”
- Since there are no commands given in chapters 4-22, what does it mean 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.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> John MacArthur, *Revelation 12-22*, 292.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 295.

## The Response of the Apostle John

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**Revelation 22:8-9** ~ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. 9 But he said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God.”

- John’s response to these revelations was one of worship
- But he was told not to worship the angel because he is simply a “fellow servant”
- Instead he should “worship God” alone

## The Command of the Messenger Angel

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**Revelation 22:10-11** ~ And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. 11 “Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.”

- John is commanded to not seal the sayings of the prophecies but rather to proclaim them
- The specific “words” of Revelation are not to be sealed up – that means that there is no hidden, secret meaning apart from the normal sense of the text
- The message of Revelation is not to be hidden but rather spread and proclaimed in order to produce obedience and worship
- The reason for this is that “the time is near,” namely the end is near because of the imminent return of Christ
- As such, the contents of Revelation should be proclaimed as it reveals facts and events relating to the second coming of Christ
- Some view the command in v. 11 as strange
- “The point here is not to condone what is evil, but to point out that if people do not heed this prophecy, they will continue in their wickedness. On the other hand, those who do heed the prophecy will continue to do what is right.”<sup>9</sup>
- In other words, people’s response to the proclamation of the truth (specifically what is contained in Revelation) will fix their eternal destinies
- “Preaching Revelation draws the line. Its truths will melt the hearts of the repentant and harden the hearts of the unrepentant. Those same truths thus become either an instrument of salvation, or an instrument of damnation.”<sup>10</sup>
- This shows the importance of studying, teaching, preaching and obeying Revelation and the seriousness of ignoring it

## The Reward of the Coming Savior

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**Revelation 22:12** ~ “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

- This is the second time the words “I am coming quickly” occur
- This time it is accompanied with a promise to grant rewards
- Although salvation is entirely of grace, rewards are based on works (cf. 1 Cor 3:11-15; 2 Cor 5:10-11)

<sup>9</sup> Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 988–989). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>10</sup> MacArthur, *Revelation 12-22*, 298.

- The rewards believers enjoy in heaven will be capacities for serving God such that the greater their faithfulness in this life, the greater will be their opportunity to serve in heaven (cf. Matt 25:14-30)
- The reality that Jesus could return at any moment ought to motivate us to a life of holiness, obedience, and faithfulness

## The Majesty of the Eternal Christ

**Revelation 22:13-16** ~ “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, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. 16 “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

- In v. 13, Christ describes Himself using 3 parallel phrases: Alpha and Omega...first and last...beginning and the end
- Christ is the beginning and source of all things as well as the goal all things
- He is eternal God
- Verse 14 constitutes the 7<sup>th</sup> and last beatitude in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7)
- “blessed are those who wash their robes” – this symbolizes that they have been forgiven of their sins by the blood of Christ
- By contrast, the wicked (v. 15) will be excluded from the heavenly city
- They are described as “dogs...sorcerers (*pharmakos*)...immoral persons ( *pornos*)...murders...idolaters... everyone who loves and practices lying”
- It is not all who have ever committed one of these sins who will be excluded from heaven; rather, it is those who habitually practice such sins who will be cast into the lake of fire
- This is the third such description of the wicked in this passage (note that lying is mentioned in each passage)

**Revelation 21:8** ~ “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

**Revelation 21:27** ~ and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

- Jesus further describes Himself as “the root and descendent of David”
- “That phrase sums up the biblical teaching on Christ’s two natures; only the God-man can be both David’s ancestor and his descendant. In his deity, Christ is David’s root...in His humanity, He is David’s descendant.”<sup>11</sup>
- Christ also describes Himself as “the bright morning star”
- He is the bright light who will remove the darkness of sin and herald the dawn of God’s kingdom
- To call someone a “star” is to exalt the person

**Numbers 24:17** ~ “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; **A star shall come forth from Jacob**, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth.

- Also, it is interesting to note that this is the first time the word “church” has occurred since the letters to the churches in Rev 2-3

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 307.

## The Invitation of the Holy Spirit

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**Revelation 22:17** ~ The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

- Three times the invitation to “come” is given in this verse
- This is an urgent appeal to receive Christ and accept the grace of His forgiveness because the day will arrive when it will be too late to come

**Isaiah 55:1-2** ~ “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. 2 “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance.

## The Warning Against Changing Scripture

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**Revelation 22:18-21** ~ 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; 19 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. 20 He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

- Revelation closes with a warning against altering Scripture, a similar warning given previously

**Deuteronomy 4:2** ~ “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

**Proverbs 30:6** ~ Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

- A warning about adding to Scripture is given in v. 18
- A person who does so will experience the plagues written in it
- A warning about adding to Scripture is given in v. 18
- A person who does so will be kept from entering the new heaven and earth
- There is a play on words in these warnings: Those who add to Scripture will have plagues added to them; those who take away from Scripture will have the blessings of heaven taken away from them
- These are serious warnings against ignoring, perverting, or tampering with the message of the book
- It is significant that the last book of the Bible closes with an affirmation of its truthfulness and a warning against altering it
- The third reference to the imminent return of Christ occurs in v. 20