

Revelation 22

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(1) *Revelation 22 is truly one of the great chapters of the Bible.* (a) With the completion of this chapter, the pen of inspiration was laid down never to be taken up again. John 14:26 and 16:13,

wherein the Lord promised to guide the apostles into all truth, had been literally fulfilled. (b) This chapter constitutes an appropriate climax to the book of Revelation, as well as to the sacred canon. Throughout the book victory is assured. Then, in Revelation 22 victory is achieved. Throughout the book victory is visualized. Then, in Revelation 22 victory is realized. The overcomers have now come over! The early disciples, and their predeceased brethren, could really sing, either on time's side or on the shores of the eternal city, "O Victory in Jesus."

(2) *Revelation (22) ends as it begins (1).* (a) Revelation 1:1 begins with the source or origin of the book; 22:6, 16 ends the book with the same affirmation. (b) Revelation 1:1 begins the book affirming that the things written in the book "must shortly come to pass"; 22:6, 10 ends the book by observing, "for the time is at hand" and "things which must shortly be done." (c) Revelation 1:2 begins, "who (John) bear record of the word of God"; 22:8 ends with, "and I John saw these things and heard them." (d) Revelation 1:3 begins with a beatitude wherein those who keep the words of the book are blessed; 22:14 ends the book with a beatitude wherein those who "do his commandments" are

blessed. (e) Revelation 1:5 begins the book discussing those who have been washed from their sins in the blood of Christ; 22:14 (ASV) ends the book with "blessed are they that wash their robes." (f) Revelation 1:4, 12 begins the book with the seven churches being addressed; 22:16 ends the book by observing that the angel was sent "to testify unto you these things in the churches." (g) Revelation 1:8 begins the book with "Alpha and Omega"; 22:13 ends the book with "Alpha and Omega." (h) Revelation 1:6, 7, 18 begins the book with a threefold use of "Amen"; 22:20, 21

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ends the book with a twofold use of "Amen." (i) Revelation 1:4 begins with "grace be unto you"; 22:21 ends with "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." What is the point? Revelation 22, indeed, constitutes a remarkable finality and climax to one of the most encouraging epistles found in the entire sacred scriptures.

(3) *An overview/analysis of Revelation 22.* The chapter has two main divisions: (a) verses 1-5 present additional information concerning the city of God, the discussion of which was beautifully begun in chapter

21; (b) verses 6-21 present the testimony of the Father (v. 6) the son (vs. 12-16), the angel (v. 6) and John (v. 8), to the validity of the epistle, along with promises (vs. 7, 12, 14, 20, 21), threats (vs. 15, 18, 19) and the great invitation (v. 17).

(4) *Plan of procedure.* Having observed the foregoing, we will now observe some of the salient emphases of this final chapter of divine revelation.

I. Revelation 22 Gives Us An Insight To Heaven, The City Of God

Verse 14 speaks of "the gates into the city" and verse 19 speaks of the "the holy city." But, what about this city?

(1) *What is in heaven:* (a) The "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (v. 1) is there. Being divine in origin, it proceeds "out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." In contradistinction to the polluted streams, rivers and seas of this world, it is "clear as crystal." Designed to provide and sustain life to the infinite, it is called the river of water "of life." (b) Too, in the city is "the tree of life" (v. 2). Sharing in the provision and sustaining of life it, too, is called "the tree of life." Its fruit is varied and borne regularly, indicating that our needs will be abundantly supplied. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations, suggesting that in the city of God all our ills will be cured. (c) Additionally, "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it" (v. 3). (d) Lastly, there will be the portico to the celestial city as is evidenced by verse 14 speaking of "the gates into the city." Chapter 21 tells us that there will be "twelve gates whereupon are written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel with each gate being made of pearl" (vs. 12, 21).

(2) *Who is in heaven:* Viewed positively, God is there (vs. 3, 5, 6), Jesus is there (vs. 13, 16) and his servants are there (v. 3). Concerning the latter, Romans

6:16-18 teaches us that we must obey from the heart that form of doctrine to become such servants. Negatively speaking, "without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie," as well as doctrinal apostates (vs. 15, 19).

(3) *What is absent in heaven:* "And there shall be no more curse" (v. 3). Ever since Eden, the earth has reeled beneath the curse placed therein and thereupon due to the sin of Adam and Eve. But, over there, said curse will have been removed. Consequently, there will be no more sorrow, suffering and death (Gen. 3:16-19).

(4) *What activity is in heaven:* Verse 3 instructs us that in the city of God "his servants shall serve him." The word translated "serve" (*latruo*) is sometimes rendered "worship" (Phil. 3:3; Heb. 10:2). Consequently, in heaven we will worship God to the fullest with all the imperfections of the flesh having been removed. Yes, in the fullest sense we will worship God "in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 29:2).

(5) *What is the duration of heaven:* "For ever and ever" is the reading of verse 5. The, "but the righteous into life eternal," of Matthew 25:46 will have been fulfilled.

(6) *What is the illumination of heaven:* We read in verse 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." Revelation 21:25 affirms, "For there shall be no night there."

(7) *What is the character of heaven:* John speaks of heaven as "the holy city" in verse 19. Notice the adjective "holy." Such was his affirmation also in Revelation 21:2. God (Ps. 99:9), Christ (Acts 3:14), the Spirit (Eph. 4:3) and the angels, the celestial servants (Matt. 25:31), are all holy. And, the redeemed of the earth who will enter in will be holy in character (I Thess. 3:13; Heb. 12:14). No wonder, then, heaven is spoken of as the "holy city."

Accordingly, as we often sing, "How beautiful heaven must be." No price is too high and no sacrifice is too great for us one day to hear, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21). Verily, "heaven will surely be worth it all."

II. Revelation 22 Stresses The Exclusive Object Of Our Worship

Though he had been rebuked for attempting to worship the angel in Revelation 19:10, John falls down before the angel to worship him in 22:8. Whereupon he is instructed, "See thou do it not...worship God" (v. 9). The first commandment of the decalogue forbade worshipping any other than Jehovah (Ex. 20:3-5). Jesus affirmed, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). To do otherwise is to become idolatrous and to forfeit one's inheritance in the kingdom (Gal. 5:19-21). Thusly, John exhorted, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (I Jn. 5:21). The folly of worshipping another than Jehovah can be seen at Carmel (I Kgs. 18:17-46), in Babylon (Dan. 5:18-21) and at Mars' hill (Acts 17:22-31). But, idolatry is so current. Back then the gods were *metal*; now, they are *mental*. But, what form does idolatry take: humanism—the worship of self; hedonism—the worship of pleasure; recreationalism—the worship of recreation; materialism—the worship of mammon; paternalism—the worship of parents; intellectualism—the worship of knowledge; paganism—the worship of images; satanism—the worship of satan. And, since we become like the God we worship (Ps. 115:8), how important is this present study!

III. Revelation 22 Gives Us A Beautiful And Comprehensive Portrayal of Christ

(1) Christ is called the Lamb. He is called the Lamb in verse 1 and verse 3. He was

the sacrificial Lamb and was offered to take away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29, 36). "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" is the reading of I Corinthians 5:7. At this juncture, a study of type and antetype would be extremely instructive.

(2) Christ is called the Alpha and Omega. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Rev. 22:13). As the Father has claimed this same appellation in Revelation 1:18 and 21:6, Jesus, by the use of the same, identifies himself as being unquestionably deity. Such an affirmation affirms his eternality; he has forever been and he will forever be.

(3) Christ is called Jesus. "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches," is how John pens the matter in Revelation 22:16. The name Jesus connotes salvation (Matt. 1:21). Accordingly,

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,
Sweetest name I know,
Fills my every longing
Keeps me singing as I go.

(4) Christ is called the root and offspring of David. Such is affirmed in verse 16. This is a reference to his human nature. Matthew's genealogical table begins, "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). In Christ the beautiful prophetic promise God made to David in II Samuel 7:12-14 is minutely fulfilled.

(5) Christ is called the bright and morning star. Centuries before, in a messianic prophecy, Numbers 24:17 had stated, "there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." As the morning star beckons the beginning of a new day, so Christ is the source of all life and light. Did he not affirm in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world"?

(6) Christ is called our Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 20 of our chapter calls him "Lord Jesus"; and, verse 21 amplifies by speaking

of him as "our Lord Jesus Christ." Lord signifies his sovereignty; Jesus signifies his saviourhood; Christ signifies his divine office as prophet, priest and king (Heb. 1:1-4).

IV. Revelation 22 Emphasizes The Importance Of Obedience

(1) *Verse 14.* The KJV reads, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Whereas this same verse is rendered in the ASV, "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they might have the right to come to the tree of life, and enter in by the gates into the city." Is there any conflict? Indeed not! For in obeying the commands of the Lord, we have our robes washed white (Rev. 1:5-6; 7:14; Acts 22:16; Eph. 5:25-27; Tit. 3:5).

(2) *Verse 9.* In this verse the angel states, "For I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophet, of them which keep the sayings of this book." Notice the statement, "of them which keep the sayings of this book." Here, again, obedience is stressed.

(3) *Verse 7.* In this verse we have one of the seven beatitudes of the epistle. We read, "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." Once more, obedience is stressed.

Based upon the emphasis on obedience as the divine scriptures are coming to a close, may we note the following:

(1) *Observation one.* The Bible is resplendent in its emphasis on the absolute necessity of obeying God. (Study such passages as I Sam. 15:22; Matt. 7:21; 7:24ff; Lk. 6:46; II Thess. 1:7-9; Rom 6:16-18; Jas. 1:22-25; I Pet. 1:22-23; I Pet. 4:17; Heb. 5:8-9).

(2) *Observation two.* We need to resolve to obey (a) without question (b) regardless of whether or not we can see the connection between the results to be obtained and the command given, (c) regardless of how

foolish it may seem to our limited understanding, (d) regardless of the cost, and (e) without reservation.

(3) *Observation three.* It is very interesting to observe that the book of Revelation, yea the entire sacred canon, ends with "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." And, this, in the context of repetitious emphasis on obedience (vs. 7, 9, 14). The point? Grace and obedience are not antithetical. Obedience is not legalism, dogmatism nor meritorious goodness.

V. Revelation 22 Accentuates The Immutability Of Divine Revelation

(1) *Alteration of divine revelation is strictly prohibited.* Verse 18 prohibits adding to what has been written, and verse 19 prohibits subtracting from what has been written. Irrespective of which is committed, the consequences are frightfully tragic. Revelation minus modification equals revelation. Whereas, revelation plus modification (either by addition or subtraction) equals a perverted gospel. Now, study Galatians 1:6-9.

(2) *With the prohibition just noted being at the close of the Bible, it is interesting to note that a similar prohibition appears in the beginning of the Bible in Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32, as well as in the middle of the Bible in Proverbs 30:5-6.*

VI. Revelation 22 Relates The Last Invitation

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

(1) *Some believe that this is an urging of the saints addressed to Christ.* In other words, the saints would be urging the Lord to "come quickly" in fulfillment of his promise. Whereupon, their enemies would be conquered, they would be avenged and the victory would be realized.

(2) *Then, it could so very well be that the invitation is being extended to the lost.* Accordingly, "the Spirit," and "the bride" (the church, Eph. 5:22-35; II Cor. 11:2) and "him that heareth" (individual Christians who have already heard and responded to the invitation) all mutually join in and exhort, "Come." An analysis of this invitation reveals the following: (a) man is away from God, (b) God desires man to return, (c) man can come, (d) man will be benefited by coming, (e) man is to do the coming and not God, and (f) the invitation is not limited.

Conclusion

As the book by which we will be judged (Rev. 20:12; Jn. 12:48) closes, let us rejoice in the victory that has been won, let us

long for the city of God that has been so beautifully described, let us more meaningfully worship the God whose we are, let us more deeply appreciate the Savior who has been beautifully portrayed, let us humbly submit in obedience to every facet of his will, let us never tamper with divine revelation, and let us joyfully and continuously extend the great invitation. Let us heed the warnings and rejoice in the promises.

Wendell Winkler, retired chairman of the Bible department at Faulkner University, continues to be one of the great preachers of our day. He resides in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Birthday Wishes

Adron Doran, one of our writers and a dear friend, reaches a significant milestone this year. On September 1, he will celebrate his 89th birthday. He was born in Graves County, Kentucky, on September 1, 1909, and, along with his wonderful helper Mignon, he has served in the Kentucky House of Representatives, including a term as speaker of the house, he has been a high school principal and a university president, but throughout all of his career, he has been a faithful and effective preacher of the gospel. Those who would like to send cards or congratulatory messages may address him at 111 Woodland Avenue, Lexington, KY 40502.