

Revelation 22: The Invitation of the Lamb

Revelation 22:1-5

22 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve (manner of) fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him; 4 and they shall see his face; and his name (shall be) on their foreheads. 5 And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

The river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Jesus used this imagery during his earthly ministry, where he presented it as a promise to those who followed him. In John 4:10-14, Jesus encountered the woman at the well and during the conversation John recorded in verse 10:

10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

The woman asked a question that focuses on the origin of living water, and Jesus answered her in John 4:10-14:

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, 'Give me to drink;' you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water."

11 The woman said unto him, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: when then have you that living water? 12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, "Every one that drinks of this water shall thirst again: 14 but whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.

Therefore, the river of the water of life is the metaphoric equivalent to eternal life. Jesus spoke once again on the subject in John 7:37-38:

37 Now on the last day, the great (day) of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. 38 He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water.

The metaphor not only confirms eternal life but also makes the water of eternal life flow from within the true believers. John concluded in verse 39:

39 But this spoke he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet (given); because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The very spirit of God flows from within Christians.

That the river flows down the middle of the great street of the city illustrates centrality of eternal life to the very nature of the Holy City. On each side of the river grows the tree of life, a metaphor for eternal life from the beginning where Moses recorded in Genesis 2:9:

9 And out of the ground made Jehovah God to grow every tree that is pleasant 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.

The tree was lost and eternal life with it when man sinned. Genesis 3:22-24 records:

22 And Jehovah God said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, unless he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: 23 therefore Jehovah God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from where he was taken. 24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

The story of man has come full circle; the tree and with it eternal life are his once more. In writing to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:7, the Lord called the tree of life, the paradise of God:

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

God has restored the paradise of the Garden of Eden in the Holy City, the bride, the wife, the church of the Lord. The tree bears fruit continuously, making it always available. The leaves heal the wounds of the nations. *No longer will be any curse* refers to the curse placed on man and woman when they sinned Genesis 3:16-24:

22 And Jehovah God said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: 23 therefore Jehovah God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. 24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

The servants of God will serve him before his throne in the city. They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads. God will give them light. And they will reign with him for ever and ever.

With these words of the angel, what purpose the angel came for was complete. The words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophecy had sent his angel to provide the revelation. The completion of the revelation of God must soon take place. This verse reiterates the statement of Revelation 1:1-2 and signifies that when John is finished there will be no other revelation:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, (even) the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified (it) by his angel unto his servant John; 2 who bore witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, (even) of all things that he saw.

The last episode of the Lord's revelation is the Lord's promise to come again.

The Coming of Jesus

Revelation 22:7-14

7 "And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."
8 And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things. 9 And he said unto me, "See that you do it not: I am a fellow-servant with you and with your brethren the prophets, and with them that keep the words of this book: worship God." 10 And he said unto me, "Seal not up the words of the prophecy of

this book; for the time is at hand. 11 He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still. 12 Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. 14 Blessed are they that wash their robes that they may have the right (to come) to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.

Great controversy surrounds this passage. Some say it is the Lord coming to reign a thousand years on this physical earth; some say it is speaking of his coming at the destruction of Jerusalem. These notes have resisted these notions in favor of dealing straightforwardly with the text and the context. There is not energy enough, nor time enough, to deal with contrary and imaginary points of view.

As Jesus speaks, he begins with the exclamatory, “Behold!” The Lord repeats the statement in verse 12. This passage begins a predictive prophecy of his return. Up to this point, the revelation has been speaking forth to reveal God’s mystery, hidden from the foundation of the world. However, in many cases, the disciples and later Christians struggled to understand the when and how of the Lord’s return. In all cases, it is impending, and it remains so to all who live this short life on earth—a life described in James 4:14:

14 whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For you are a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away.

The Lord’s disciples raised the question of when he would come in Matthew 24:2:

2 But he answered and said unto them: “See you not all these things? Truly, I say unto you, ‘There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.’”

In response, they asked the Lord two questions in Matthew 24:3:

3 And as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, “Tell us, when shall these things be? And what (shall be) the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?”

Christ answered the first question about the destruction of the temple, and then in verse 30 began the answer to the second question, what (shall be) the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

In answer to this second question that described the event in verses 30-31:

30 and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

In verse 36-39, he described the uncertain but impending nature of his coming:

36 But of that day and hour knows no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. 37 And as (were) the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. 38 For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, 39 and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man.

In verses 42-44, he made this impending nature of his coming eminent for all who should ever live:

2 Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord comes. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. 44 Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that you think not the Son of man comes.

In this context, it does not seem unusual that the Lord said at the end of the revelation, “Behold, I come quickly!” A central theme of the revelation is to have your garments clean and be ready. Other passages that deal with the second coming are just as urgent. In 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, Paul wrote:

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; 17 then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Paul again portrayed the Lord’s coming in 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 with an unmistakable suddenness that makes it eminent to all:

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

If the Lord is coming soon, how much more so ought we to keep the words of the prophecy in this book.

Once again, John is so startled that he falls down to worship the angel (See notes on Revelation 19:10). Again, John is told that the angel is a like-servant with John, his brothers, and the prophets. “Worship God!” is the angels command.

The angel told John that he was not to seal up the words of the prophecy of the book even though the revelation is complete because the time is near. The condition of man is to continue until the Lord comes, as illustrated by the statement in Revelation 22:11-12:

11 He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still.

12 Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is.

The Lord exclaims for the second time, “Behold! I come quickly!” When the Lord does come, his reward is with him, and all will receive according to what they have done. Paul had written almost these same words in 2 Corinthians 5:10:

10 For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things (done) in the body, according to what he has done, whether (it be) good or bad.

His power to judge is certain for he is Alpha and Omega, the First and Last, the Beginning and End. These are all phrases that he used of himself in the first three chapters of the Revelation.

Those that have washed their clothes will have the right to the tree of life and entrance through the gates of the city. Clean clothes have stood for righteous acts of the saints.

Revelation 22:15-16

15 Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loves and makes a lie. 16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

Outside the city are dogs who are the sorcerers, and the fornicators, the murderers, the idolaters, and every one that loves and makes a lie. Jesus concludes with his authenticity and genealogy. He is the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star. His testimony is for the churches.

The Invitation and Warning

Revelation 22:17-21

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that hears, let him say, Come. And he that is thirsty, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely. 18 I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: 19 and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

20 He who testifies these things says, "Yes: I come quickly" Amen: come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen.

The spirit and the bride extend the invitation. The spirit with the word of God, his sword and the bride, the church, with her testimony of Jesus say, "Come!" Let those who hear the gospel say, "Come!" Let whoever is thirsty take the free gift of the water of life. This fitting conclusion to Christ's invitation reflects Paul's inspired truth written in Romans 6:20-23:

For when you were servants of sin, you were free in regard of righteousness. 21 What fruit then had you at that time in the things whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now being made free from sin and becoming servants to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The warning in verses 18 and 19 may be only of this book, commonly thought of as John's Revelation, or they may be of the entire revelation of God from the beginning to the end. The context favors John's book. However, the Bible is replete with warnings against adding to or taking away from any of the scriptures. Paul wrote in Galatians 1:6-9:

6 I marvel that you are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; 7 which is not another (gospel) only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. 9 As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preaches unto you any gospel other than that which you received, let him be anathema.

If anyone adds, to him will be added the plagues of this book. If anyone takes away, God will take away his share of the tree of life and in the holy city. John's revelation ends with the most awe-inspiring and elegant words imaginable.

"Yes, I come quickly."

"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen.