

# Revelation

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## Session 27 Total Restoration - Even so come Lord Jesus Revelation 22

- **The Street, the River, and the Trees**, 21:21b, 22:1-3. The prophetic background is Ezek. 47.
  - **The street**, like the city itself, 21:18b, is of **pure gold**, like transparent glass. It **leads to and proceeds from the throne** and, presumably, has side connections to the gates. God is now close and accessible, c.f. 4:2-5,
  - **The river** flows from the throne down the middle of the street. It is clear as crystal - pure, refreshing water. It is accessible to all and without limit. **The source of this river is the throne**, 21:6. **Again we have a picture of Eden restored**, but much more glorious, Gen. 2:10-14, c.f. Psalm 65 (a psalm of God's blessing as Creator and Saviour, with the river of God at the centre, v9).

**This is the river of life, flowing from the source of life**, Psalm 36:9-10. **It is the ultimate fulfilment of all human longings and desires**, Psalm 42:1-2, 46:4, 63:1-5, Isaiah chapters 12 and 35 (note the waters in 35:6-7 juxtaposed with the highway in v 8-10), Isaiah 55:1, and Jer. 2:13 (looking in the wrong place for the water of life).

**Prophetic visions pictured water flowing from the temple**, Ezekiel 47:1, Joel 3:18, **or in Jerusalem**, Zech 13:1.

In Jesus' lifetime this was associated with the Feast of Tabernacles and this was the setting for His proclamation in John 7:37-39. Jesus offered living water then and also on John 4:10-14. Again there are multiple applications that culminate in this river of life, it symbolizes the abundant life of the Holy Spirit indwelling God's people within the Holy City, 22:17.

- **The trees**, 22:2. The background prophecy is Ezekiel 47:7, 12. It also represents restored Eden, Gen. 2:8-9, 15-17 - **The Tree of Life is now becomes many trees, constantly fruitful and bearing many types of fruit**, Gal. 5:22-23. **Everything needed for life is available all the time -there is no physical or spiritual lack**, Prov. 3:18, 13:12.

**"Leaves for the healing of the nations". Pain, disease, hunger, war, destruction, and death banished**, 7:15-17, 21:4.

**National divisions were a divine creation in response to human sin**, Gen. 11:5-9, the one great sin of pride and rebellion against the Creator. It was **a counter balance against the quest for absolute power** and under the supervision of God, giving them their own space in which to discover who God is, Deut. 2: 4-5, 9, 18-19, 32:7-9, Amos 9:7, Acts 17:25-27.

**The quest to dominate and acquire more space has been irresistible**, resulting in war and all its attendant problems. This is demonstrated in all the great empires thrown up by the restless sea of the nations. This **false, imposed, unity is devil-inspired (the great beasts of Daniel etc.)**, **culminating in the last final attempt of the dragon and the beast of Revelation**.

**In the aftermath of Babel God promised to bless the nations through the descendents of Abraham**, Gen. 12:1-3, achieved at last by the Messiah through His first and second comings, to suffer and to reign. The Gospel of the Kingdom is to be preached to all nations before the end of time, Matt. 24:14. Israel would be scattered among all the nations but re-gathered before the end of the age, Deut. 30:1-5 Jer. 31:10, Ezek. 36:22-32, Luke 21:24.

**The redeemed from the nations are around the throne**, 5:9-10, 7:9-10. **Nations persist in the time of the Messianic kingdom**, 20:7-9, ruled with a rod of iron (imposed peace and righteousness), 2:26-27, 12:5, 19:15.

**The final healing comes at the very end**, after the final judgement when all who have opposed the rule of Jesus have been removed. Those remaining from the nations will bring their glory and honour into the New Jerusalem, 21:24-27 in willing worship and priestly service 22:3b, and **the age old conflicts and competition will be dissolved forever in the new citizenship and identity** that we partially enjoy in this life and is our ultimate aspiration, the one new man, the one holy temple, John 17:20-24, Eph. 2:14-22, Phil. 3:20-21, Heb. 11:8-16.

- **No longer any curse**, v3a. This was **the consequence of sin**, Gen. 3:14-19, 22-24. **Death was the ultimate expression of the curse**, 1Cor. 15:56; Deut. 30:19 contrasts "life and blessing" with "death and cursing". Deut. chapters 27-30 detail **the conditions for and consequences of blessing and cursing**, essentially worshipping/serving God as a redeemed royal priesthood, Deut. 30:16-17, 20, Exodus 19:3-6, or worshipping/serving other "gods", 30:17-18.

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**Under the Sinai Covenant, lawbreaking invoked the curse, Zech. 5:1-4, Gal. 3:13b; the Messiah Jesus removed the curse by dying on the cross, Gal. 3:13a but some of the practical consequences persist until the return of Jesus, Rom. 8:18-25, 1Cor. 15:25-26, Rev. 7:16-17, 21:4. Rev. 3 fulfils Zech. 14:11 where "destruction" is equivalent to "curse".**

- **The throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; His servants worship/serve Him, v3b.**

The throne is the source of life. It is also the focus of worship and service. The same Hebrew word (avad) covers both worship and service. Adam was commanded to tend (avad) and guard the garden, 2:12. Here in this garden city there is no danger against which to guard. Service by the priests was an act of worship and permitted on the Sabbath, Matt. 12:5. **Saints in the heavenly kingdom are priests, 5:10a, 1Peter 2:5, worshipping before the throne, 7:9-10, and serving Him day and night (unceasingly - there is no night), 7:15.**

- **They shall see His face, v4a.** This speaks of restored intimacy, lost as a consequence of disobedience Gen. 3:23-24. When Absalom was permitted to return to Jerusalem it meant nothing to him unless he could also see the king's face, 2Sam. 14:24, 32-33, reflecting **David's longing for the presence (face) of God Ps. 42:2.**

**The priestly prayer for Israel was the God's face would shine upon the people, Num. 6:25, c.f. 31:16.**

**Encountering God at close quarters was rare and hazardous, even for Moses, Ex. 33:17-23, and His face was concealed, usually by adopting the form of an angel or a man, climaxing in the incarnation, Gen. 18: 1-5, 16-17, 22, 32:24-30, Judges 13:17-23, John 1:14, 18, 14:9, 2Cor. 4:6.** Up to this point no one had seen God in this immediate way - it was impossible, 1Tim.6: 13-16. In the initial vision of Heaven God the Father is wrapped in light and could not otherwise be seen, 4: 2-5.

**Now His servants see His face, unmediated by anything between - ultimate privilege and intimacy.**

- **His Name shall be on their foreheads, v 4b, c.f. 3:12, 7:3, 14:1.** The mark of ownership and acceptance, and identity. They are saints - a holy people, c.f. Ex. 19:5, 28:36-38, 1Pet. 2:9. It fulfils the ancient promises, Isaiah, 56:5, 62:2, 65:13-19 (see v15-16).

- **There will no longer be night ... v5a.** This forms the second bracket to the section from 21:23-22:5 and re-emphasises the blessings that flow from the presence of God in the city, 21:22.

- **They shall reign forever and ever, v5b.** What began of earth, 5:10, 20:4, is now permanent. Human creatures were given dominion and responsibility for creation, Gen. 1:26-28, 2:15. This is restored and increased in the New Creation.

## **Application and Conclusion, v6-21.**

- **This section is in parallel with 1:1-8 (prologue and epilogue).**

What was introduced in the first section has, through the content of the visions, been completed; now the circle has turned and the original themes are re-introduced to form the conclusion - "His servants/slaves" 1:1/22:6, the source of the revelation 1:1/22:6, the focus of the revelation (things that must shortly take place - still future in our time frame) 1:1/22:6, blessing (for keeping His commandments), 1:3/22:7, the time is near 1:3, He is coming 1:7/I am coming quickly, 22:7, 12, 20, the Alpha and Omega ... 1:8/22:13.

- **Symbols from the messages to the churches reappear (see below).**

**Those messages had a pastoral and evangelistic purpose and the same applies here - Revelation is not mere information; it is a call to action and perseverance and faithfulness, in the light of the truths so graphically portrayed.**

**The whole of Revelation is the message of Jesus to the churches, 22:16a, not just chapters 2 and 3.** We need to take seriously the warning in v19.

- **The visions have fulfilled the purpose stated in 1:1 ; the angel, c.f. 21:9, reminds John of the reliability of those revelations - "faithful and true", v6. He is only the messenger, not the source. They are the words of the Lord God who also inspired the holy prophets, 2Tim. 3:16, 1Pet. 1:10-12, and He is faithful and true, 3:14, 19:9-11, 21:5.**

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- The angel has just conducted John through an amazing revelation of the Bride/Holy City Jerusalem. Previously this angel (or a very similar one 17:1c.f. 21:9) had shown John the character and fate of the harlot/Babylon and then introduced him to the Bride, also affirming the truth of the words that had been spoken, 19:9. **John had been so overwhelmed that he mistook the messenger for God Himself and began to offer worship, Now this is repeated, and with the same response,** 22:8-9. John appears disorientated and out of his depth (little wonder, but the angel again is swift to correct his mistake).
- **Jesus speaks personally on four occasions,** v7, 12-13, 16, and 20, and c.f. v6, (and perhaps also in 18-19). **Three of these contain the same urgent message "I am coming quickly"; it is a call to action,** v12.

## He reaffirms His identity:

- **The Alpha and Omega, The Beginning and the End, The First and the Last,** v13, c.f. 1:8, 11, 2:8. **The root of David,** Isaiah 11:10, 9:6-7, Psalm 110:1, Luke 20:41-44, Heb.1:6-13.
- **Jesus - His human name,** Matt. 1:21, Phil. 2:10-11. **The offspring of David,** 22:16, Psalm 89:33-37, Isaiah 9:6-7, Jer. 33:14-22, Luke 1:67-70, 18:38-39, Matt. 21:9, 15, Acts 2:25-36, 13:22-23, Rom. 1:3, Rev. 3:7, 5:5.
- **The Bright and Morning Star,** v16, 2:28, see Num. 24:17, Luke 1:78-79, Isaiah 9:2, 60:1-2, Malachi 4:2, Matt. 2:1-2.  
He pierced the darkness of the broken world and has shined in our hearts, John 1:4-10, 8:12, 2Cor. 4:6.
- **The words of the prophecy are left unsealed,** v10.  
**This is in contradistinction to the conclusion of the visions that Daniel received,** 12:4, 9. Daniel did not understand the meaning and significance of the things he saw and heard, v8. He wanted to know what would how it would all turn out, v8, but he did not need to know because he was not living in "The time of the end", v4, 9. He must simply trust in God and await "the end of days" when he would arise to receive his inheritance, v2, 13. The same applied to all who lived before "The Last Days", Joel 2:28-29, Acts 2:16-21, Heb. 11:39-40, 1Pet. 1:10-12.

## John lived at the beginning of "The Last Days".

**For the past 2000 years the time has been at hand,** v10, Luke 12:35-40, Rom. 13:11-14, 2Pet. 3:10-14, James 5:9. **Revelation is given for our understanding, not as a perplexing puzzle to solve.** It also has a practical purpose - a call to holiness, faithful perseverance, and obedience, as is the case with all NT teaching about the return of Jesus as Lord and King and Judge, v12.

- **A Universal invitation, "Come"** v17, Matt. 11:27-30, John 3:16, 10:9.  
**"Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb",** 19:9.  
**Now the Spirit and the Bride together give an open invitation for all to come.**  
The only conditions are thirst and desire, Isaiah 55:1-3a. What is on offer is the water of life, the Spirit poured out on us, in this lifetime, as a consequence of the work of Jesus, Lamb of God, John 1:29-34, 4:10, 13-14, 7:37-39, 19:28, 34, 20:22, and experienced in its fullness in the New Jerusalem - the river flowing from the throne, Rev. 22:1-2.
- **Two responses, two destinies,** v11-15 .
  - **Those who come, drink, receive life, and enter on a path of truth, holiness, and obedience,** v17, 12, 14.  
Even in this life they experience the blessedness of a life lived in obedience to and in relationship with God - true shalom, John 13:15-17, 15:9-11 (see the context 15:1-17). They will be welcomed by the angels at the open gates, 21:12, and have access to the tree of life (nourished and sustained by the life of God Himself), 2:7.  
**They become part of the Bride, issuing the invitation to others,** "Let him who hears say, "Come"", 22:17.
  - **Those who refuse the invitation and persist in their ungodly way of life,** v11, 15.  
**They have chosen a way of life and ultimately will be condemned to that way of life and its consequences both within time and in eternity.**

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There are examples in Scripture:

**Pharaoh hardened his heart**, Exodus 7:13, and a time came when **God confirmed him in his choice**, 9:12.

**Israel would not listen so God gave them over to their own stubborn heart**, Psalm 81:8-12, Hosea 4:16-17.

**Judah came to that place when Jeremiah was forbidden to pray for them** because they had crossed a line where judgement was passed and the exile was now inevitable, 14:11-12, 15:1-4.

**The leaders of Jerusalem hardened their hearts in opposition to Jesus and He decreed the destruction of the city**, Luke 13:34-35, .

**Roman civilization denied the Creator and God gave them up to evil and destructive practices and judgement**, Romans 1:18-32, c.f. Prov. 29:1.

**The Spirit issues the invitation from the Father**, John 6:44; **if we persistently refuse He may cease to call. They are excluded from the Heavenly City**, 22:16, 21:27, having had another destiny:21:8.

- **The testimony of Jesus**, v18-20a, c.f. 1:1-3. **This includes a warning and a sure promise.**

- **Do not add to or subtract from His revelation - through speculation or neglect or challenge to the wisdom of God with our preconceived ideas of Who He is or what He ought to do.**

The OT parallel is in Deut. 4:2, 12:32. We are not free to take what appeals to us and discard the rest - that repeats the original sin, placing us in the position of being "god".

**False teachers in the seven churches were adding**, both in terms of heresy and behaviour - the teaching of Balaam, 2:14, also referenced in Deut 4:3. They would be liable to experience the plague judgements described in Revelation - a call to repentance, c.f. 2:20-23.

**Subtraction is an even greater problem. Revelation is a vivid portrayal of the Creator God and the Lord Jesus.** If we refuse to receive this revelation of His creative power and redeeming work, and His absolute right to judge His own creatures, we exclude ourselves from His salvation and from the Holy City and the Tree of Life (His presence); (alt. reading Book of Life).

**The penalties are severe, suggesting that the sins are serious** - a radical denial of the message of Revelation rather than a sincere mistake in interpretation, c.f. Gal. 1:6-10.

- **"Surely I am coming quickly". This is not mere information**, c.f. 3:11, 16:15.

It is a **message of comfort** and encouragement to His beleaguered and persecuted people.

It is a **call to faithfulness and perseverance** and a warning against sin and heresy, as in the messages to the seven churches, with continuing application to the church in all the ages.

- **The heartfelt response**, v20b. **"Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus".**

**"Amen"** c.f.1:7 and also see 3:14, 5:14, 7:11-12 and 22:21.

**"Marana tha" is the Aramaic equivalent** used in 1Cor. 16:22. It is balanced there by the Gk rhyming word "Anathema" on those who do not love the Lord Jesus, c.f. Rev. 22:14-15.

**Is this your response to the testimony of Jesus in the book of Revelation?**

- **The final blessing**, v21. **"The grace of our Lord Jesus the Messiah be with (you) all, Amen"**, c.f. 1:4.

This is not a routine prayer to round things off and leave a comfortable feeling. If we are to stand fast and be overcomers in the midst of temptation and opposition and deceptive teachings, in the heat of the battle between the followers of the dragon and the followers of the Lamb we shall need super abundant supply of the grace of the Lord Jesus.

**This is a prayer for all who read, in keeping with the pastoral and evangelistic purposes of the book.**