

# Even So, Come, Lord Jesus!

## Revelation 22

John continues his description of life in the New Jerusalem and the earth made new in the last chapter of his book—Revelation 22. In fact, there is no discernable break in the flow of thought from chapter 21 to chapter 22. There really is no good reason to consider these as separate chapters.

Today, we are used to having the Bible divided into chapters and verses. It certainly makes it easy to look up a particular place or wording in Scripture. However, when the books of the Bible were originally written, they did not contain chapter or verse references. They were written as a single piece of writing just as are most books today. So how did we come to have the chapters and verse divisions that we find so helpful and familiar?

It happened around 1227 when the archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langdon put them in place. There had been other chapter and verse divisions earlier, but Langdon's version eventually caught on. The Wycliffe English Bible (1382) was the first to use his chapter pattern. Since then, nearly all Bible translations have followed Langdon's divisions.

Bible scholars have pointed out that Langdon's choices are not always well thought out. (Some have suggested that he did his work while riding horseback and some of his awkward divisions were caused by his horse stumbling!). Be that as it may, at times, his chapter divisions divide content that obviously flows together. The division of Revelation 21 and 22 is certainly one of those instances. The content simply flows from one chapter to the next with no obvious break in the thought.

So let's pick up John's description of the New Jerusalem and life in the earth made new in chapter 22.

### **The River of Life and the Tree of Life**

John continues to tell us what the angel showed him in vision.

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of the street, and on either

side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:1, 2).

John is drawing here from the imagery of Ezekiel's prophecy. Ezekiel was shown a river flowing from the temple. He says,

Along the bank of this river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food. . . . They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine (Ezekiel 47:12).

The parallels are obvious, although there are some differences. This theme of a river of water of life flowing from God in blessings to His people is a common one in the Old Testament. The psalmist sings, "There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God" (Psalm 46:4). The prophet Joel prophesied, "It will come to pass in that day that . . . a fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD" (Joel 3:18). The prophet Zechariah wrote, "And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem. . . . And the LORD shall be King over all the earth" (Zechariah 14:8, 9).

This river of life flowing from God's throne also reminds us of Eden. Genesis says "A river went out of Eden to water the garden" (Genesis 2:10). The tree of life was in the Garden of Eden as well (verse 2). The New Earth is Eden restored. In the New Earth the tree of life is placed beside the river of life, and there is no "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" as there was in the original Eden (verse 2). The tree of life bears a different fruit each month, and its leaves have healing properties. The meaning of this imagery isn't clear, but the picture is one of a vibrant, wholesome life, free from illness of any kind. Given the fact that many of the redeemed will have gone through martyrdom, persecution, and severe trials of all kinds, there will be some healing that will need to take place in the earth made new. Perhaps this peaceful scene of the tree of life with its healing properties situated beside the river of the water of life is designed to depict a soothing environment in which those who have come out of great trials can find peace.

## **No More Curse**

And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: they need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever (Revelation 22:3-5).

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, the curse of sin fell on them, their descendants, and on the earth itself (Genesis 3). Now that curse has been lifted. Sin is no more.

The redeemed will “see His [God’s] face” (verse 4). The promise of Matthew 5:8 will come true—“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Even Moses, when he asked to see God, was told, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live” (Exodus 33:20). Only because the redeemed have on the robe of Christ’s righteousness can they now see God’s face. This is a rare privilege, indeed.

The redeemed have God’s name on their foreheads (verse 4). This is the seal of God presented in chapter 7 and is in contrast to the mark of the beast which its followers have on their foreheads (Revelation 13:16).

John repeats what he has said earlier (Revelation 21:23, 25 ) about there being no night in the New Jerusalem. When we remember that in John’s day (and for many centuries thereafter) when the sun went down, it became extremely dark, we can better understand how important it was to John that there would be no night in the New Jerusalem. In our modern world of electricity we can scarcely conceive of what nighttime meant to the world until fairly recent times. Artificial lighting was limited to candles, feeble lamps and lanterns, bonfires, etc. For John, it was a big deal that there would be no night in the city and that the Lord God would provide such light that there would be no need for the sun or moon!

## **The Time Is Near**

The Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things that must shortly take place. “Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” . . . And he[the angel] said to me, “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still” (Revelation 22:6-11).

In verse 7 Jesus is the One who is speaking. He repeats the blessing pronounced in Revelation 1:3 on those who keep “the words of the prophecy of this book.”

Notice that the angel tells John, “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand” (verse 10). At the close of Daniel’s book, the angel Gabriel tells him, “Shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end” (Daniel 12:4; cf. 9). Daniel lived in the sixth century before Christ. John is writing at the close of the first century after Christ. In Daniel’s day, the prophecy is to be sealed, but now “the time is at hand” (Revelation 22:10). Yet we are living almost two thousand years since John wrote. In what sense is the time “at hand?”

Ever since Jesus returned to heaven (Acts 1:9-11), His followers have expected His soon return. The apostle Paul told the Roman Christians “Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand” (Romans 13:11, 12). Jesus Himself tells John, “Behold, I am coming quickly!” (Revelation 22:7). William Miller was the leading preacher of the Advent Movement, the one who had first worked out from the prophecies of Daniel that Jesus would return to earth in 1844. When that failed to happen and the Advent people were so terribly disappointed, it is said that someone asked Miller if he had fastened on another date for Jesus to come. “Yes,” he replied, “tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow until He comes!”

That is the position all of Jesus’ true followers should take. We look for His coming tomorrow and tomorrow until He comes. And He has promised to come quickly.

Finally, there is the pronouncement “he who is unjust, let him be unjust still” and “he who is righteous, let him be righteous still” (verse 11). Of course, chronologically the eternal self-determination of each person has already taken place by the time of chapter 22. This pronouncement is a re-statement of the fact that each person makes his or her own choices until a

point is reached where there is no possibility of change. That self-selection is made evident at the Second Coming.

### **The Wonderful Invitation**

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.” Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. . . . “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.” And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come, whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:12-17).

Jesus repeats His promise to come quickly. His reward is with Him when He comes (Matthew 16:27). He repeats the description of Himself as the “Alpha and the Omega . . . the First and the Last” (see Revelation 1:11, 17). Jesus encompasses all things from the beginning to the end.

Then is extended the great, all-inclusive invitation to be an inhabitant of the Holy City, a citizen of the earth made new. “The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come, whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (verse 17). All are invited; all are welcome. The only requirement is that you thirst, that you desire to drink the water of life freely.

We find echoes of this great invitation in the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come and buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1). How could God make it any more clear? What more could He do to draw men and women to Himself and to eternal life in a world without sin?

### **Conclusion**

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book. He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly!’ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen (Revelation 22:18-21).

These verses contain a concluding statement common to many ancient writings—a sort of equivalent to our modern copyright notices in books. In John’s time, books were handwritten and copies were also made by hand. That is the literal meaning of the word, “manuscript.” It comes from two Latin words, *manus* (hand) and *scriptus* (to write). When copying a book it was easy to make a change accidentally. It was also easy to make changes on purpose. That is what is behind John’s warning against adding or taking away any of the words of his book. Similar “copyright” warnings appear in other Bible books (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5, 6).

The book of Revelation ends with yet another assurance that Jesus is coming soon (verse 20). From his heart, this apostle whom Jesus loved (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2) responds, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

John’s response finds an echoing chord in our own hearts. We, too, say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Come into my heart. Come into my life. Draw me into Your loving embrace so that I will live for You every day until You come to earth again and I can live with You in that glorious city on the earth made new.”

Our study of the book of Revelation tells us that the endtime will be a time of trial and difficulty for God’s people. As we draw closer to His coming, perilous times will increase until they may appear overwhelming. But can keep moving forward, hand-in-hand with Jesus, knowing that the bright city lies ahead. The worst of times is soon to become the best of times. “Even so, come, Lord, Jesus!”