

Ministry of Grace

Revelation Chapter 22 - Speaker Notes

In the previous chapter we got a glimpse of what heaven might be like. By “heaven” I mean New Jerusalem. That is where those who believe in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ will spend eternity. But in chapter 21, the Apostle John only gave us a description of the external appearance of the city: 1,400 miles wide, 1,400 miles long, and 1,400 miles high, made of transparent gold, with walls of diamond and 12 gates of pearl, a city that shines with the brightness of the glory of God, a city guarded by 12 angels, a city aptly named “Jerusalem,” meaning “Dwelling place of Peace!”

Now, in this chapter, John gives us a glimpse of the inside of the city as it was shown to him by the angel. He describes it as having a river of life flowing down the middle of the street, with the Tree of Life growing on either side of the river. Only believers will be allowed in the city, all sinners will be excluded. There will be no night there and there will be no need of a lamp because the glory of God will light-up the entire city.

John closes this book with a caution that, not only is the Lord coming soon, but when He does, it will happen suddenly and speedily. There will be no time for second-thoughts about God. The fate of all people will be sealed in an instant. In his conclusion, John also warns against changing any of the words of this book and then recites the words of his Lord, “Surely, I am coming quickly.”

Revelation 22:1

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb

Inside the city, flowing out of God’s throne is the river of the water of life. In the previous chapter, we saw the reference to those who thirst being given to drink from the water of life. Now we see the water he talked about, the water whose source is God Himself! This river is as pure and clean as God, and it is as bright as crystal. Like other aspects of the city (walls of jewel studded diamond and the city built out of transparent gold) the river of life reflects Gods glory like a sparkling, shimmering crystal.

Do you remember what Jesus said to the woman of Samaria at the well?

If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. (John 4:10)

Revelation 22:2

through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the Tree of Life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

This verse has given rise to the belief that this is the Millennial city of Jerusalem, not the eternal New Jerusalem, because of two things. We are told here that the tree produces its fruits “each month,” implying that time is being measured. Some say that this must be a description of the millennial city since there is no time measurement in the eternal state. They base this on what the mighty angel in **Revelation 10:6** says, “... there should be time no longer.” However, as we pointed out in our study of that passage, a better translation of that passage is, “... there should be no more delay.” Notice that this particular passage occurs before the end of the tribulation. If the angel was announcing the cessation of time, then time would be stopped before the end of the tribulation and the millennium couldn’t be measured as 1,000 years because it occurred after the angel made his statement, thus disproving their claim that this is the millennial city

of Jerusalem. Others claim that the reference to months is an anthropomorphism implying “continually” rather than a specific reference to a measure of time.

Okay, let’s get off the subject for just a minute here and learn something about time in heaven. Let’s look at a few verses, starting with:

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. (Revelation 8:1)

This is describing an event in heaven, is it not? In God’s throne room. So, how long is that half an hour where the silence existed? We don’t know because of what Peter teaches us:

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (2 Peter 3:8)

Peter says that time is different with God, He doesn’t say it is nonexistent! Some believe that the one-half hour is measured from John’s earthly perspective, but we’re not told that. The truth is that we don’t know how long that silence lasted, but --- it was a period of time (in heaven)!

And, do you remember back in chapter 6, we learned about the souls under the altar (in Paradise)? They asked God,

O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth? (Revelation 6:10)

“How long” is a question of time, is it not? Yes, you may say but, again, they were talking about an earthly timeframe, not a heavenly one. Really? Here’s how God responded:

Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, (Revelation 6:11a)

Is not “a little longer” a reference to time? Who was supposed to wait “a little longer?” The martyrs. They are in Paradise, which is in the spiritual realm directly beneath God’s throne room. Therefore, “a little longer” is a heavenly measure of time.

Now, we learn that the Tree of Life in New Jerusalem produces its fruit monthly. A month is a measure of time, is it not? These verses lend credence to the notion that time is measured in God’s throne room (heaven) and it will also be measured in New Jerusalem.

The English words, “eternal” or “eternity” are translated most often from the Greek phrase, “unto the ages of the ages.” That, in itself is a measure of time. Therefore, it follows that “eternal” doesn’t mean “without time.” It means that time exists, but never ends!

Now, let’s get back on track.

The second reason that some claim that Revelation 22:2 must be referring to the millennial Jerusalem is the fact that the leaves of the Tree of Life are said to be for the “healing” of the nations. If this was New Jerusalem, there would be no need for healing, they say, because we were told in the previous chapter that, “... death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)” This implies that there will be no sickness in heaven, so what do they need healing for? The word “healing,” however, is taken from the Greek word *therapeian*, which in its root meaning signifies “to wait upon, to minister to, or to render voluntary service to.” Therefore, this word properly means that the leaves of the Tree of Life are for the service of the people. Apparently, these leaves will be desirable to eat just as the fruit is, and they will be available for all to partake of.

The next controversial portion of this verse is the description of where the Tree of Life is. This verse says, “through the middle of the street of the city... also on either side of the river” – I have seen explanations

of this verse in which the expositors go to great length to describe how the Tree of Life can be both in the middle of the river and on either side of the river. I agree with C.H. Spurgeon who had this to say about it:

The picture presented to the mind's eye would appear to be that of a wide street, with a river flowing down the center, like some of the broader canals of Holland, with trees growing on either side, all of them of the same kind, all called the Tree of Life. I do not know how we can make the figure out in any other way.

Not only was this Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden (from which Adam and Eve were denied access after the fall), but this tree is today in Paradise (**Revelation 2:7**), and will exist in abundance in New Jerusalem.

Clearly, John paints a picture of a city of "life." The Tree of Life is there in abundance, and the river there is a river of life, the source of which is the God of all creation, the one who gave mankind life in the first place and the one who grants us eternal life as a result of His mercy and grace. For this reason, I would call New Jerusalem "The City of Life."

Revelation 22:3

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

Literally, "And every curse will not be any longer ..." The curses that God placed on the earth, on the serpent, on Eve, and on Adam will no longer be in effect in the eternal state.

God's full essence will exist on His throne. Currently, this is true of God's throne room in heaven (see chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation). It appears that what is currently God's throne room will become New Jerusalem.

Revelation 22:4

They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

All residents of New Jerusalem will have full access to the presence of God without fear of condemnation or death. We will be able to behold Him in all his glory. And we will be eternally identified as God's possession, unlike those who are eternally in the Lake of Fire. Can you say, Hallelujah!

Revelation 22:5

And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Night is the time period when there is little or no light. This situation will never exist in New Jerusalem because God's glory will be there and it will shine throughout the entire city. Therefore, there will be no need for a lamp or the light of the sun. Take notice of the fact that we are told here that there will be no night in New Jerusalem. We are not told that there will be no night on the new earth. Finally, the fact that God's servants will reign with Him implies that there will be subjects to reign over but we are never told who these are.

Revelation 22:6, 7

And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place." "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

The angel who has been guiding John in this vision of New Jerusalem now assures John that this is not just a vision of some unreal city. He says that the words he has spoken to John are, “trustworthy and true.” “Trustworthy” is from *pistos*, which means “worthy of belief.” This expression is the same as what was spoken by God Himself in the previous chapter:

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Revelation 21:5)

The angel now tells John that he has been sent directly from God for a purpose. That purpose is to show God’s servants the things that will soon take place. This somewhat echoes the opening verse of Revelation:

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, (Revelation 1:1)

There are some who believe that the book of Revelation cannot be understood by us mere humans. They interpret the entire book allegorically and devise some incredible explanations for what God says are “true words that can be trusted.” This verse tells us that we can interpret this book literally, recognizing that some things are visions, not reality, and the rest is reality, not visions.

Jesus now tells us, “behold, I am coming soon.” The word “soon” is from *tachu*, which means “quickly, speedily, soon, or suddenly.” It is the base of our word tachometer, which is a device which measures speed of an engine. We will talk more about this word in verse 12.

Revelation 22:8, 9

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

Once again, John appears to be so overwhelmed that he is driven to his knees in worship and reverence. And, once again, the angel forbids John to worship him, identifying himself as a fellow servant and commanding him to worship God. This is similar to John’s experience after the judgment of Babylon:

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (Revelation 19:9, 10)

Revelation 22: 10

And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near."

John was told in **Revelation 1:19** to write the words of this revelation. He is now told not to seal up these things. A scroll that is sealed cannot be read until the seal is broken and the scroll unrolled. John’s writing is to be open to all. He is to proclaim this message to all who will read these words and heed the message.

John is now told that the time is near, but, “what time” is the angel talking about? It is the time in which all the things described in this book will occur. And, remember that it starts with the rapture of the church. The word “near” is from the Greek word *engus*, which means “near or close at hand.” This is known as the doctrine of imminence. It has been a reality for the church since the first century that the coming of our Lord can be at any moment. That does not make it less likely for Him to come at any time now in the twenty-first century; it makes it even more likely.

Revelation 22:11

Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

On first appearance this verse seems out of place. However, if you look at it in context of what John was just told, not to seal up the words, we can understand. The effect of hearing the truth of God's word is two-fold. On those who reject His word there is a continuation (perhaps an intensification) of their sinful ways, and on those who receive the word and believe it, there is a continuation (perhaps a growth) of righteousness and holiness. The other sense in which this verse can be taken is, in the eternal state he who rejected the truth will be eternally unrighteous and filthy, whereas he who accepts God's word will be eternally righteous and holy.

This is clearly contrasting those who reject the message with those who receive the message for "unjust" is the opposite of "righteous" and "filthy" is the opposite of "holy."

Revelation 22:12, 13

"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

We are now informed that the Lord is coming *tachu*. This Greek word means, "quickly, speedily, soon, or suddenly." In verse 6, we were told of the things, "... that must *tachu* take place." And in verse 7, we were also told, "And behold, I am coming *tachu*." Then, in verse 10, we were told, "the time is near." It's possible that we are being told on four occasions in this chapter that the coming of the Lord is going to happen soon. Based on what we are told in verse 11, however, it makes sense that what he means here is that the time of His coming is near, and when it happens it will happen quickly. In fact, it will happen so quickly, and without warning, that sinners will not have time for a change of heart. They won't have time to confess their sinfulness and accept Jesus as Savior. Then, to emphasize the speed of His coming and the fact that there won't be time to change one's ways, He says that He is bringing His recompense with Him.

The word, "recompense" is translated from the Greek word *misthos*, which refers to that which has been earned (either a reward or a punishment.) Therefore, it applies to those who reject God's message who will, as a result, be judged according to their unrighteousness and they will be paid by being cast into the Lake of Fire. It also applies to those who believe, accepting Christ's payment for their sins, who will be rewarded in the form of crowns for the things that have been done for God while in this earthly body.

In light of the fact that John is to proclaim the message contained in this book, the finalizing of unrighteousness through unbelief, as well as the finalizing of righteousness through faith, God now gives the final warning. Christ will return quickly to remove the righteous ones in the church at the rapture, and He will return just as quickly to judge the wicked ones at His second coming.

Revelation 22:14, 15

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the Tree of Life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

This seems to be a confirmation of what we have said about the previous verses. We need to be ready at all times because His coming will be sudden and will happen quickly. Those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are the ones who have washed their robes. White robes are a symbol of righteousness. This is not a righteousness that we have earned, rather a righteousness that is bestowed on us because we are children of the King.

The blessedness bestowed on the faithful will be the right to enter into the gates of the eternal city and partake of the Tree of Life. The unbelieving will be outside, in the Lake of Fire. Not only will we enjoy the fellowship of God in all His glory and holiness, but we will experience the total absence of anyone who practices wickedness, sinfulness, and deceit. No more will we lament that the wicked prosper. No more will we suffer from the actions of those who reject God. Not only will the curse be gone, those who are unrighteous will be gone as well. We will be enveloped in holiness.

Revelation 22:16

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

This same angel, before whom John has mistakenly fallen to worship on several occasions, is the messenger who Jesus sent specifically to John to deliver this message so that John can deliver it to the churches.

Jesus now announces Himself as the "root" and "descendant" of David. This is what Jesus claimed about Himself in His discourse with the Pharisees in [Matthew 22:41-46](#). Being the "root" and "descendant" of David is a Messianic claim from the words of the prophet Isaiah.

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
([Isaiah 11:1](#))

As we know, the darkest part of the night is just before the dawn. At certain times of the year the planet Venus appears as the brightest star in the sky just before the rising of the sun. It is a harbinger of the coming brightness of the sun and full illumination of the daytime. By Jesus claiming to be the bright and morning star, He is telling us that when things look the darkest, He will appear as our Messianic Savior.

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 desires take the water of life without price.

The word "Come" is translated from the Greek word *erchomai* which primarily means "to come," but it could also mean "to go." This word is in the imperative mood, implying a command, and it is expressed as a second-person singular verb. Therefore, it means "You (singular) come!" Thus, the message here is, don't just stand around and wait for something to happen. Take action now! This is more than just an invitation, as it has a sense of urgency. Now that the message has been declared; now that the judgments have been revealed; now that the true glory of our God and His eternal reward for all who would come to Him have been revealed, now that the message of the soon and sudden appearing of our Lord has been announced, the command delivered clearly to each and every individual is two-fold; "If you are not a believer and you are seeking the truth, come now before it is too late!" and "If you are a believer, don't wait, get busy partaking of the water of life, learn all you can and get busy sharing the Gospel message now!"

Revelation 22:18, 19

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the Tree of Life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

First of all, notice that Jesus declares this book to be prophecy. I would ask all those who claim that this book must be interpreted allegorically, "Is that how the following prophetic writings are to be interpreted?"

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14) Was the Messiah really going to be born of a virgin? That's impossible! This must be allegorical

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. (Micah 5:2) Would the Messiah really come from the lowly town of Bethlehem? Surely, he will come from Jerusalem! This must be allegorical.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:3-5) The Messiah, despised and rejected? The Messiah pierced, and crushed? This can't be talking about our Messiah, the conquering king! Surely this is metaphorical language.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9) The Messiah, humble and riding on a donkey? Surely, he will come as a conquering king riding on a white stallion, honored and praised! This must be metaphorical language.

These are just a few of the prophecies about Jesus. There are more than 400 prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. Revelation is a book of prophecy and these prophecies will all be fulfilled literally, not allegorically.

John now gives a warning to anyone who copies or quotes the contents of Holy Scripture. Clearly the warnings given here apply to the book of Revelation specifically, but they may also be interpreted as applying to the entirety of Holy Scripture, particularly when combined with other passages:

You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you. (Deuteronomy 4:2)

Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it. (Deuteronomy 12:32)

Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar. (Proverbs 30:5, 6)

Verses 18 and 19 contain an if-then clause regarding anyone who changes the words of this book. The grammatic structure of this clause in the original Greek indicates a third-class conditional statement. It is a condition that can possibly happen and is left up to time to determine whether or not it does. This could be translated as, "If anyone should add to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book"

Notice the play on words in these verses; "If anyone **should add** ... God **will add**..." and "if anyone **should take away** ... God **will take away** ..."

Revelation 22:20

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

The book of Revelation, and the Bible as a whole, close with a promise and an affirmation. Christ promises that He is coming quickly. This, again, is the word *tachu*, meaning "quickly, speedily, or with haste." It does not mean "soon" although that is how this verse is sometimes interpreted. Christ is promising us that when He comes, things will occur quickly; "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." (I Corinthians 15:52)

John's response to Christ's proclamation is a petition of affirmation. We should all have our gaze cast heavenward looking for the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Revelation 22:21

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

John's final parting comment is that God's grace will be showered upon all readers of this book. May we all read ... understand ... believe ... and testify!

So What?

We've just been introduced to the eternal dwelling place of those who have accepted the payment of the blood of Jesus for their sins. Jesus paid the ultimate price for your freedom with His own life-blood. In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul said:

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:7-8)

Did you notice that? “While you were still a sinner, Jesus died for you!” He didn't wait until you cleaned up your act before shedding His blood for you.

If you're a Christian, one who has accepted the fact that you are a sinner deserving of Hell, one who believes that the blood of Jesus has paid for your sins, one who believes that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is your Lord and Master, then you **will** spend eternity in New Jerusalem. You're a child of the King!

But - listen to this! If He is truly your **Lord**, your **Master**, then as your Lord and Master, He requires you to be obedient to his commands. No, I don't mean the 10 commandments, although they should be a compass guiding your life. I mean the two commands that He has given all Christians in what is known as the Great Commission. It's found in two of the gospel accounts, Mark's gospel and Matthew's gospel.

According to Mark:

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. (Mark 16:15)

And according to Matthew:

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Based on Greek grammar, each of these two passages contains a single command. Those two commands are, “proclaim the gospel” and “make disciples!” Every Christian is commanded to share the gospel message with those around them and every Christian is commanded to teach others about our God and what He has done for us.

Now - the hard question. Drum roll, please! Dum – da – dum.

Are you being obedient to your Lord, the one who shed His own blood (for you - a sinner) to guarantee that one day you will dwell with Him in New Jerusalem? When was the last time you shared the Gospel with anyone? When was the last time you taught someone the truth of the Gospel message?

OK, Stop!

Don't just gloss over those questions. Think carefully - and give yourself (and God) a truthful answer.

When was the last time you shared the Gospel truth with anyone? When was the last time you taught someone the truth of the Gospel message?

[Long Pause]

Look, He's given His all for you, surely you can risk a little embarrassment in order to speak the truth to someone, a truth that might save them from the fiery flames of Hell. No, I'm not implying that you need to go downtown and proclaim the Gospel on the street corner, although I'm sure it would please God if you did. I'm simply saying that you should have the greatest message in the world always on the tip of your tongue, ready to share with anyone at a moment's notice.

The day I wrote this, I was driving down the road and I saw a man jogging. Now that's not so unusual, is it? But this man was wearing a sandwich board sign. No, he wasn't selling sandwiches! He had two boards held on with a couple of straps over his shoulders so that one displayed on his front and the other on his back. Both sides had the same message, one was in English and the other was in Spanish. The English side said:

Be Ready, Jesus is coming. If you die, where will you go?

Now, admittedly, this isn't the Gospel message, but it is a provocative enough question to start a conversation, one that I'm sure this man was ready to have with anyone who might ask.

So, how about you? Will you pray about it? Will you ask God to show you how you can be better at sharing the Gospel message with the world around you? And – when He shows you, will you step out on faith and do it?

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