

The Book Of Revelation

*3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy,
and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near.
(Revelation 1:3. NRSV)*

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

Message 15

Revelation 21-22
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Introduction:

Good evening! Tonight we are concluding our walk through the Book of Revelation and we are looking at chapters 21-22. I am going to operate on the assumption that you did your homework and read Isaiah 65-66 and Ezekiel 40-48 because these two chapters in Revelation are lifted nearly wholesale from those chapters and we simply will not have time mention all of the parallels, rather we will only have time to mention where these accounts substantially differ. Let's jump into the text and divide it, by God's grace, as we go.

¹Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

Most of the eschatological schemes we have looked at understand the renewal of the earth to take place after Millennial Age. During the Millennial Age this present earth is greatly transformed and renewed under proper stewardship but now we have a completely renovated and redesigned universe fit for our eternal habitation. It contains "no sea" we are told. The sea was a symbol of chaos and death and separation and so symbolically, it has no place in the renewed universe which will emphasise order and life and unity.

²Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Here at the end of John's Apocalypse all of the images and symbols begin to coalesce and collide. The City is the Bride, the Bride is the City, the City is wearing a wedding dress, that sort

of thing. The key point is that she comes DOWN FROM HEAVEN. The eternal kingdom does not come UP OUT OF OUR EFFORTS, it, like every other grace, ultimately comes DOWN FROM HEAVEN. The city is the people and the place where the people live with God.

³And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.

This is really the climax of the whole Bible. The whole aim of the Bible has been to show how we get back to the place where we live with God. We started there, then the whole sin thing happened, now how do we get back? That has been the unifying storyline from the beginning hasn't it? Now we are back. We live with God again and we are his people. The Greek word translated as “tabernacle” is *skhnē* (skei-nei) and means more than tent it implies the very Presence of God as per Leviticus 26:11:

I will set My **tabernacle** among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. ¹²I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. (Leviticus 26:11-12. NKJV)

God will literally walk among us in the person of Jesus Christ and we shall be his people. Praise the Lord!

⁴And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

This is nothing less than the reversal of the curse. What fell on us because of sin is lifted from us by grace and enjoyed by us in the Presence of the Lord.

⁵Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”

This is a near quote from Isaiah 65:17 and this prophetic promise is carried forward if you will from Isaiah to John and it now becomes our present possession and certain hope.

⁶And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

This is an example of prophetic certainty when future events are spoken of as completed events. They are DONE in the sense that God has purposes and determined them and since God is all powerful and entirely Sovereign, then they are for all intents and purposes DONE. God will do it and so you will drink it.

⁷He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

Here the elect, saved person is simply “he who overcomes”; a rather pointed reminder that saving faith is persevering faith. The Bible does not have a category for “Backsliding Christians”.

⁸But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Persevering faith is now contrasted with its opposite. Cowardly, unbelieving, impure, unloving, immoral, drug addicted (Gk: *farmakoiv pharmakois*), pleasure loving, truth haters go to hell because that is the opposite of persevering faith. Everyone spends eternity with who they loved and what they longed for in the end.

⁹Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

The church is now the WIFE, not the bride. The eternal kingdom is about consummated intimacy.

¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

Again, images colliding as the WIFE is the CITY.

¹¹having the glory of God. Her light *was* like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

¹²Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

¹³three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

¹⁴Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The city is seen as established upon the Patriarchs and the Apostles; which is another way of saying, it contains all the elect people from the Old Covenant and New.

¹⁵And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.

¹⁶The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.

Again, much of this is lifted wholesale from Ezekiel with specific modification. The important thing to notice is that the city is a perfect cube. Now there is only one perfect cube in all the Bible, do you know what it is? The Holy of Holies. This is a way of saying that the whole city is the Holy Of Holies. Everyone in it enjoys total, complete and perfect intimacy with Jesus Christ. The enormous size of the city – 12000 stadia is about the distance from New York to Houston Texas – is meant to communicate that there is room for everyone. Perfect intimacy for ALL the people of God.

¹⁷Then he measured its wall: one hundred *and* forty-four cubits, *according* to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

¹⁸The construction of its wall was *of* jasper; and the city *was* pure gold, like clear glass.

¹⁹The foundations of the wall of the city *were* adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation *was* jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,

²⁰the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

The numbers here are obviously symbolical. 144 is 12x12 and thus these walls serve to mark off the total people of God, Old Covenant and New. The walls are obviously not for defence, they are quite ornate and besides, all their enemies are in the Lake of Fire. The stones mentioned are generally thought to be connected to the priestly breastplate and therefore we conclude that the walls represent sanctification and distinctiveness, not security and warfare.

²¹The twelve gates *were* twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city *was* pure gold, like transparent glass.

²²But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

Again, this is not a city with a temple, this is a city that IS A TEMPLE.

²³The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb *is* its light.

This may not mean that in the eternal kingdom there are no stars or moons, it is just that their light is not required. In the same way that when it is bright with noon day sun you cannot see the stars in the sky, yet they are still there, so perhaps the light coming from Christ and the Glory of God will be so bright that such stars and lesser lights will be invisible and unnecessary for illumination though still there in reality.

²⁴And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

We can only imagine how many people are being born and saved during the Millennial Age. Isaiah 65 speaks about extremely long life spans and remarkable fertility rates so we are not

surprised to notice the presence of nations and multitudes in the eternal kingdom. It is worth noting that even in the eternal kingdom when Christ is Lord over all we still have kings. Those of you who hate all forms of human authority may not enjoy heaven very much! There is leadership and order in the eternal kingdom so we had best get used to it here while we still have the chance. The verse implies also that there will be culture and commerce in the eternal kingdom and also taxes and tribute. The Bible's vision of eternity is not about people in white robes, floating on clouds playing harps. The souls of the martyrs waited like that but they didn't stay that way, indeed their cry was HOW LONG O LORD! They longed for vindication and they longed for RESURRECTION. They wanted bodies and they received them. Eternity is physical and bodily, there is commerce, there are countries, there is leadership, there is wealth production, there are taxes, there is tribute and there is WORSHIP – ALL OF THAT IS WORSHIP when done for the glory of God. Praise the Lord!

²⁵Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).

²⁶And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.

There is no conflict and no fear verse 25 is telling us. The word for honour there in verse 26 is the word for money or tribute. Nations are paying the king – they are worshipping with taxes and tithes.

²⁷But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. (Revelation 21:1-27, NKJV)

This is the eternal culture of the elect community. We see more of it in chapter 22:

¹And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

²In the middle of its 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.

Again all of this is lifted and modified only slightly from the Book of Ezekiel, I trust you've seen that and you appreciate these similarities. There are many similarities also with Genesis 1-2 which are no doubt meant to imply that the eternal kingdom is a return to the original purpose for humanity. This is how it was always meant to be! Life, health, intimacy, adequacy, culture, community and order! The trees here produce a monthly crop of life sustaining, wellness promoting fruit. Whether this is to be understood literally or figuratively hardly matters. The eternal kingdom is a place of abundance and HEALTH, praise the Lord!

³And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

⁴They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads.

⁵There 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.

We shall SEE GOD and we shall SERVE GOD; those are the twin promises offered here. In the Bible we are frequently reminded that no one can see God and live; well that was because of sin and our old creation bodies, now however, we DO SEE GOD and WE DO LIVE. We see him and we serve him and this condition carries on forever.

⁶Then he said to me, “These words *are* faithful and true.” And the Lord God of the ^fholy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.

Translators differ as to whether the word *takh-os* should be translated as “shortly” or “quickly”. One has the sense of soon and the other has the sense of “whenever it happens, it will come rapidly”. Either one is fine, particularly when we remember that the Lord reckons time differently than we do. These events are surely coming, they are not too far off and they will come quickly.

⁷“Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed *is* he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

The blessing is not for the one who hears it but for the one who keeps it. The Greek word actually means “guards it”.

⁸Now I, John, ^fsaw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

⁹Then he said to me, “See *that you do not do that*. ^fFor I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”

The angel here uses an interesting word to describe himself. He says that he is *sundoulov* (*sundoulos*) which means “fellow slave”. According to the angel, prophets and angels are comparable creatures in that they both handle messages from God. This honour extends not just to prophets proper but also all those who KEEP/GUARD the Word of God. Nevertheless, as exalted a thing as it is to handle the Word of God, it does not make such creatures God. Only God is God and only God is worshipped.

¹⁰And he said to me, “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

This is not a hidden message this is to be PUBLIC and will needed in the church IMMEDIATELY. This is an important verse for those who think most of the Book of Revelation is entirely future to its original recipients. Imagine being mailed a book that will be irrelevant to your concerns for 2000 years! No! As we have seen this Book is speaking to issues that were relevant and active all throughout the time period between Christ's ascension and return. There has been no season in the last 2000 years when this book hasn't been timely and relevant. All the more so with each passing day.

¹¹He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him ^fbe righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."

John is saying that people will be judged in the state they are found in at Christ's return; there will be no chance for a last second repentance.

¹²"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

Christ's first coming was a coming of grace, his second is a coming of justice.

¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* ^fBeginning and *the* End, the First and the Last."

¹⁴Blessed *are* those who ^fdo His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

There is an interesting textual variant here in verse 14. The NU text which is a composite text of a handful of very old manuscripts has "blessed are those who have washed their robes". The Byzantine text, which is a very old text and was for years the only Greek text used for translation purposes has "blessed are those who do/keep his commandments". Which is correct? What scholars think probably happened is that the original line was "blessed are those who have washed their robes" and that a translator, long, long ago, made some sort of margin note to explain that as meaning that they have kept the commandments and then a subsequent translator assumed that the note was part of the text and then long after that a subsequent translator saw that having both was redundant so he took one out. Thus you have confusion over which was original and some manuscript families went forward with one and others with the other. It doesn't matter anyway because the one explains the other. To wash your robe means to keep the commandments. Anyway, that little bit of Geek information was for free.

¹⁵^fBut outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

Again these things are contrasted to what real faith looks like and we've seen this sort of description before.

¹⁶“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.”

To be the root of David means that he is David's source or father, to be the offspring of David means he is David's son or grandson. How can you be both? Well you remember that Jesus asked this question about the Messiah to the Pharisees back in Matthew 22:

⁴¹While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

⁴²saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They said to Him, “*The Son of David.*”

⁴³He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘*Lord,*’ saying:

⁴⁴“*The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’*”^f

⁴⁵If David then calls Him ‘*Lord,*’ how is He his Son?”

⁴⁶And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore. (Matthew 22:41-46. NKJV)

The mystery is now revealed: Christ is the Alpha and Omega, he is the source of all things and therefore the root of David and he is also the Messiah in the line of David. He is also the NEW DAY, the Bright and Morning Star.

¹⁷And 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.

This is an important verse. There has been so much talk about being chosen that one might forget that we also choose. The gift of salvation is truly offered to all. The Spirit says come. The church says come. Any who hear the Word preached are hearing the call to come. Anyone who acknowledges the God shaped hole within them is feeling the call to come. So come! We hold two truths simultaneously. God is Sovereign and he calls, elects and saves by grace. And also we come, we respond, we desire and we determine. The Greek word translated there as “desires” is *qe/lwn* (*the-lown*) and it means “determining” or “desiring”. God elects, His call is effectual and it is simultaneously true that whosoever will may come. The truth is, most do not will. They will to rebel. They will to be God. They are given over to what they have chosen. God is Sovereign and God is Good. He does not force anyone to reject him or go to hell.

¹⁸^fFor I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, ^fGod will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

¹⁹and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God^f shall take away his part from the ^fBook of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

It is generally not a good idea to write new books of the Bible. Mormons and Islamists need to hear that. Mormons say: “Oh yes, we love the Bible and look! We wrote some more of it!” Muslims likewise say: “We love the Books of Moses and we love the Words of Jesus! Look! We have some even better books, come and see!” No thanks. Writing new books of the Bible is a good way to get your own name written out of some books that you don’t want to be written out of.

²⁰He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

²¹The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be [£]with you all. Amen. (Revelation 22:1-21. NKJV)

Let’s stop there and take some questions.