

Living Word Fellowship Church

An Expository Explanation of Revelation Chapter 22

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A. Chapter Introduction:

The entire Book of Revelation was delivered by Christ through His angel and is for the churches. Christ described Himself as the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star. Historically Christ comes from David (Matt. 1:1; cf. Isa. 11:1; Rev. 5:5). Prophetically His coming is like the morning star, the beginning of a bright new day. The Holy Spirit joined with the bride, the church, in extending an invitation to all who heed. Those who hear are encouraged to respond and also to extend the invitation to others. The wonderful promise is given that all those who are thirsty may come and will receive God's free gift. ^[1]

It is significant also that the Lamb is pictured on the throne (mentioned also in v. 3). This makes it clear that 1 Corinthians 15:24, which states that Christ "hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power," does not mean that Christ's reign on the throne will end but that it will change its character. Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords (cf. Rev. 17:14; 19:16) for all eternity. ^[2]

The awful curse of God that fell upon the earth and humanity in Genesis 3 is now reversed (22:3). God's bond servants can now perform what God wanted from his people from the beginning; God had created man to serve him for eternity (22:3). Nowhere in Scripture is there a description of the complete details of the believer's eternal state (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9), but John provides believers with a foretaste of the glories to come. Heaven is in reality a new heaven and earth; it is a beautiful place where believers will enjoy fellowship with Christ, rest, joy, service, and worship. ^[3]

This is the wonderful invitation extended to every generation up to the coming of Christ. Those who recognize their need and realize that Christ is the provider of salvation are exhorted to come while there is yet time before the judgment falls and it is too late. As the Scriptures make clear, the gift of eternal life (here called **the water of life**; cf. 22:1; John 7:37–39) is free. It has been paid for by the death of Christ on the cross and is extended to all who are willing to receive it in simple faith. ^[4]

In Revelation, you will find seven seals (Rev. 5:1), seven trumpets (Rev. 8:6), seven vials (Rev. 16:1), seven stars (Rev. 1:16), and seven lampstands (Rev. 1:12, 20). Other “sevens” in this book will be discussed as we study. ^[5]

This epilogue returns to the themes of the prologue (cf. 1:3) and serves as the conclusion of the book. The prophecy was authenticated by the angel (22:6), by Christ (22:7), and by John (22:8–9). John was commanded to leave the book unsealed, for the time was near when people would need understanding of what God was doing (22:10). Revelation 22:11 reveals that when Christ comes, there will be no further opportunities to change one’s destiny. The term “dogs” (22:15) refers to persons of lower character. Jesus himself speaks again in 22:16. He identifies himself as the “heir to David’s throne” (5:5), the one with whom God would fulfill Israel’s covenant promises (Luke 1:32–33). An invitation by the Spirit and the bride was given to all who would thirst for the water of life (22:17; cf. Isa. 55:1). They were offered the free gift of salvation. In 22:18–19 John warned against additions or subtractions from the prophecy (cf. Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6). The warning of 22:19 assumes that no genuine believer would tamper with the Scripture. For the third time in this chapter (22:7, 12, 20), the Lord said that he would come soon. John’s reply is also that of his readers, “Come, Lord Jesus.” ^[6]

B. Background Information:

John describes the New Jerusalem with characteristics of the garden of Eden or Paradise in early Judaism (*2 Bar.* 4:1–7; *1 Enoch* 90:33–36; *4 Ezra* 8:52; *T. Dan.* 5:12–13). **Water of life** alludes to Ezekiel 47:1–12 (cf. Rev. 22:2), and drawn together

with the **tree of life** makes the allusion to Eden complete (cf. 1QH 8:5–7). **Water ... coming from the throne.** This again alludes to Ezekiel's vision where a miraculous temple river flows east from the stored temple (Ezek. 47:1–12; Zech. 14:8). Genesis (2:10) recounts a river flowing out of Eden, which is likewise mentioned in later Judaism (T. Abr. [Rec B] 8:3; 3 Bar. 2:1). An abundance of water flowing from the temple is part of a prophetic description of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:8; cf. Ps. 46:5; 65:10) and its temple (Joel 3:18 [MT 4:18]; Ep. Arist. 89; Tacitus, Hist. 5.12). The water supply in the City of David, the Old City of Jerusalem, depended on two springs in the Southeast Hills, the Spring of the Steps (cf. 1 Kings 1:38; 2 Chron. 33:14; Sir. 48:17; Josephus, Ant. 7.14.4 §347) and the Well of Jacob (cf. Josh. 15:7; 18:16; 2 Sam. 17:7; 1 Kings 1:9; Aune, 1177). **Tree of life** is mentioned several times in Revelation (2:7; 22:2, 14, 19). In Pss. Sol. 14:3, the “trees of life” in Paradise are a metaphor for God's faithful people (cf. also 1QH 6:14–19; 10:25–26; Odes Sol. 11:16; 1 Enoch 25:4–6; Apoc. Mos. 9:3).^[7]

A river flowed from Eden that watered the garden (Gen. 2:10). After Eden was barred to humanity after the Fall, renewed access to its blessings formed part of Israel's prophetic hope. Joel declared that on the Day of the Lord a fountain would flow out of the Lord's house (Joel 3:18). Both Ezekiel and Zechariah saw waters of life flowing out of the eschatological Jerusalem (Ezek. 47:1–10; Zech. 14:8). The source of these living waters changed from a place to a person with the Incarnation. At the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus named himself as the source of the streams of living water and identified the Holy Spirit as the spiritual reality, for which living water was a metaphor (John 7:37–39). The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost was the deposit guaranteeing the church's future eschatological inheritance (cf. Eph. 1:13–14), which in Revelation is the restored Eden. That the source of the river is the throne of God and the Lamb suggests that “water of life” is also used as a metaphor for the Holy Spirit. Epistle of Barnabas 6:13 summarizes the imagery found here: “He made a second creation in the last days. And the Lord says: ‘Behold, I make the last things as the first.’ ”^[8]

The rivers of paradise in Genesis 2:10 and the waters of Jerusalem (Ps 46:4) may supply some of the background for the image here; the immediate allusion, however, is to the rivers of water flowing from the new Jerusalem's temple in Ezekiel 47:1–11 (cf. Joel 3:18; Zech 14:8). (Josephus *Antiquities* 1.1.3, 38, employed the Greek geographical concept of Oceanus and claimed that the garden in Eden was watered by one earth-encircling river that divided into four parts: Ganges, Euphrates, Tigris and Nile. Philo naturally identified the river with virtue, flowing forth from Eden, which was

wisdom—*Allegorical Interpretation* 1.19, 65. John might allude to the Spirit; cf. Jn 7:37–39.)^[9]

When Eve ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a curse came upon humanity and the created order (Gen. 3:1–19). The effects of that curse are at last reversed, and the victors are permitted unlimited access to the tree. John’s imagery comes directly from Ezekiel, who saw fruit trees lining the banks of the river flowing from the temple. These trees produced fruit monthly for food, and their leaves were for healing (Ezek. 47:12).^[10]

The removal of the curse is from Zechariah 14:11, and in this context it refers to the reversal of the curse in Eden (Gen 3:16–19).^[11]

In *4 Ezra* 2:18, the single tree of life likewise becomes twelve trees, each loaded with various fruits. The perpetual fruit-bearing in the new order epitomizes the transformation of the normal seasonal cycles of seedtime and harvest (Eccl. 3:2). It also symbolizes the ongoing renewal that exists in the eternal city. The healing provided for the nations takes away the mourning, crying, and pain experienced under the curse in the old earth (Rev. 21:4). The abundant fruit and medicinal leaves symbolize the completeness of Christ’s salvation for the victors.^[12]

Tree of Life (vs. 2, 14, 19): The tree of life was referred to in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:22, 24), where it was represented as perpetuating physical life forever. Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat of the fruit of this tree. Earlier in Revelation (2:7) the saints were promised the “right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”^[13]

Your brothers the prophets (22:9). Here the angel calls the prophets John’s brothers. John clearly regards himself as a prophet, for six times he calls his book a prophecy. In 10:11, he is told to prophesy in a ministry like other New Testament prophets (cf. 1 Cor. 14:29–32). Apostles and prophets were closely linked in the early church, since ministry was charismatic and functional (cf. Eph. 2:20; 3:5). Paul himself functioned in both

offices during his ministry (Acts 13:1; 1 Cor 1:1; Eph. 1:1). John likewise ministered among the seven churches as both an apostle and a prophet. ^[14]

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (22:13). Jesus promises that the reward for the victors for their faithful deeds will be distributed at his coming. He affirms his declarations here and in verse 16 by describing himself by five epithets, all previously introduced in the book. “Alpha and Omega” and “Beginning and End” are used as epithets of the Lord God (cf. 1:8; 21:6). Jesus can claim these same titles because he shares God’s nature. The meaning of the three epithets in verse 13 is synonymous: Jesus is the eternal One who spans all time. As “the Root and Offspring of David” (cf. 3:7; 5:5). Jesus is the king whose reign will never end; he is likewise the “bright Morning Star” promised to the victors in Thyatira (cf. 2:28). ^[15]

22:15. Outside are the dogs. *Dogs (hoi kynes)* in the Old Testament are normally associated with indiscriminate behavior, such as eating refuse, dead animals, and corpses (Exod. 22:31; 1 Kings 14:11; 2 Kings 9:10; Jer. 15:3; cf. Prov. 26:11). Israel’s unfaithful leaders are seen as lazy but ravenous dogs (Isa. 56:10). Later Judaism particularly associated dogs with an aggressive disregard for any semblance of moral decency or distinction between clean and unclean. Dogs can refer to pagans who do not know how to distinguish between the holy and profane (Exod. 22:31; *m. Ned.* 4.3; *m. Bek.* 5.6), including the sacred truths of God (4QMMT 61:1–62:10; Matt. 7:6; *Did* 9.5; *Tg. Ps.* 22:17; *1 Enoch* 90:4). Immoral persons (*hoi pornoi*) generally refers to fornicators, perhaps particularly male prostitutes, but can also refer to sexual promiscuity and homosexuality. Homosexual practices were prevalent in the Greco-Roman world (Lucian, *Dailogi meretricum* 5.2; *Amores* 28; Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 18), though roundly condemned among Jews (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:17; 1 Kings 14:23; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; cf. *Sib. Or.* 3:594–600). See Rom. 1:26–27. ^[16]

a) John’s use of “dog” and the description of those excluded from the temple-city in 21:27 as those “doing abomination” suggests that Deuteronomy is echoed here in 22:15, especially when it is recalled that the parallels in 21:8 and 27 are catalogs of sins associated with idolatry. ^[17]

22:16. “Root of David” comes from the “stem of Jesse” (David’s father) in Isaiah 11:1—the shoot that would spring up from the stump of David’s lineage, after his descendants had lost the throne.

a) And, as in 22:13, the self-ascription combines names attributed to him earlier in the book: “I am the root and offspring of David [5:5], the bright morning star [2:28].” The titles combine two OT prophecies (Num. 24:17 and Isa. 11:1, 10) concerning the messianic king’s triumph over his enemies at the end of time. That Jesus applies these names to himself in the present shows that he has already begun to fulfill these prophecies. This is confirmed by the use of these two prophetic names in relation to Jesus’ resurrection in 5:5–7 and 2:27b–28. The point here is that the messianic victory has been commenced and will be consummated by Jesus. ^[18]

^[1] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 989). Victor Books.

^[2] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 987). Victor Books.

^[3] Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [Tyndale concise Bible commentary](#) (p. 748). Tyndale House Publishers.

^[4] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 989). Victor Books.

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^[6] Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [Tyndale concise Bible commentary](#) (p. 748). Tyndale House Publishers.

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- [18] Beale, G. K. (1999). [The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text](#) (p. 1146). W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.