

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 24, 2019 // BOOK OF REVELATION

A RIVER AND A GARDEN (22:1-5)

In Eden humanity rebelled, humanity was banished from paradise, pain and suffering were introduced, there was limited access to God, but a Savior was prophesied that would restore all of this (Gen. 3:15).

- Now we see the restoration- humanity is given complete access as Jesus rules! The "river of living water" that flows from the throne of God is similar to the life-giving river that nourished the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:10).

- Jesus also mentioned in Jn. 4:14 this concept of "living water."
- This river in the city symbolizes the constant flow of everlasting life from God to His people- all made possible for God's people by the atoning work of Jesus.

The 2nd landmark mentioned is the "tree of life" that appeared in Eden.

- Its appearance symbolizes the undoing of the curse that began in Eden.
- The tree will produce 12 kinds of fruit, yielding fruit each month.
- There are no "months" in heaven (no moon, 21:23), so this is simply emphasizing the infinite variety of pleasure that will fill heaven.

The leaves of the tree will "heal the nations" (vs. 2)- the word for "heal" (therapeian) in the Greek can also mean, "therapeutic".

- This means we will enjoy perfect health, energy, and excitement for all eternity.
- But the most profound blessings of this restored Eden will be that we have access to the throne of God (vs. 3).
- Eden didn't have God's throne- but we will!

The 3 greatest blessings of the New Jerusalem are found in vs. 4-5-

1. **Purpose**- we will be God's servants (vs. 3) and spend our time in faultless, active usefulness. Eternity will NEVER be boring!
2. **Intimacy**- we will see His face (vs. 4) and experience immediate, divine presence.
3. **Belonging/Reward**- His name will be on our forehead (vs. 4) showing we are eternally His.

"BLESSED IS THE ONE WHO KEEPS THE WORDS OF THE PROPHECY..." (22:6-9)

The glory of heaven fades and the vision of Revelation concludes, and now John is back in Patmos hearing, but not really seeing.

- In this epilogue of Revelation, the main idea of the book gets repeated, this "must soon take place" (vs. 6) and "I am coming soon" (vs. 7).
- How soon is soon? This was written almost 2,000 years ago, but we have to remember God's timing is different than our timing.

One of the main themes of the book of Revelation AND the teachings of Jesus (Matt. 25) is that we are to live ready for the day of return!

- We are to keep watch over our souls, obey His commands, and live lives of faithful service to Him as we spread the Gospel and love others.
- Vs. 7 reminds us that at the heart of Rev. are commands that we must keep.

There are many commands, but most of them center around a few main ideas.

1. **Overcome**, persevere, and faithfully endure trials and tribulation (Rev. 2:10)
2. **Return to your first love**, repent and remember who Jesus is when we fall (Rev. 2:4-5).
3. **Practice wisdom & discernment** (Rev. 17:9)

We are reminded that John's role in Revelation (vs. 8) is simply the messenger.

- Like John, we are told to relay what we've "heard and seen" (vs. 8) to a world that needs to know the seriousness of judgment and the hope of Christ.
- We are simply messengers- the message is never really about us at all.

John seems to understand that he's a messenger, but he gets a little confused and begins to worship the angel that showed him the message.

- Don't we also do this? We make idols out of people who are simply messengers!
- The angel corrects John and reminds him that he's simply a fellow servant to John, the prophets, and anyone who keeps the words of this book.

"THOSE WHO WASH THEIR ROBES..." (22:10-16)

The angel told John, "do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book" (vs. 10)- Revelation is not meant to conceal truth, but to reveal it to us.

- Its message is intended to be proclaimed to produce obedience and worship.
- The first part of vs. 11 is a bit confusing because it almost sounds like God is commanding unrighteous people to not repent.

The truth that this verse dramatically conveys is that a person's response to the proclamation of truth will fix their eternal destiny.

- Those who hear truth but continue to do wrong and be "filthy" will by that hardened response fix their eternal destiny in hell.
- On the other hand, those who continue to practice righteousness and keep themselves holy give evidence of genuine saving faith (vs. 11b).

Now the speaker is Christ, and He proclaims, "I am coming quickly..." (vs. 12).

- The reward for believers will be based on their faithfulness in serving Christ.
- The greater their faithfulness in this life, the greater their opportunity to serve.

Jesus then calls those who "wash their robes" blessed, so "they may enter the city..."

- A different form of the verb "wash" is used here than in Rev. 7:14.
- Rev. 7:14 used the past tense of the verb wash, indicating a one-time cleansing, referring to the forgiveness of sins we receive upon our conversion.

The verb in this verse is a present tense verb- those who "keep on washing" their robes.

- Those who continually pursue a life of holiness and confess and repent of their sins regularly demonstrate that they have already washed their robes initially.
- 1 John 3:9, "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning..."- if we've truly been regenerated we CAN'T stay in a place of sin.

Vs. 15 offers us another list of those who will not be allowed entrance "into the city..."

- Dogs (a symbolic term for impure persons, E.G. "males prostitutes", Deut. 23:17-18, those who distort the gospel, Phil. 3:2), sorcerers (drug users or practitioners of witchcraft), sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters, and liars.
- This is NOT saying that anyone who has done these sins can't be forgiven

It's saying that if a person's life is characterized by these sins, that person's lifestyle is a clear indication that they're unredeemed (regardless of what they may say!).

- Jesus is the "Root of David" (vs. 16)- this shows the fulfillment of OT prophecies
- Jesus is the "Bright Morning Star" (vs. 16)- this shows the night is almost over.

THE END IS NEAR (22:17-21)

In the final verses of the epilogue, John writes his own comments and warns & exhorts us.

- The most "evangelistic" (seeking to convert others) verse in Revelation is vs. 17.
- There are four invitations of vs. 17 addressed to the world.
- The "spirit and the bride" say, "come" to an unbelieving world, as these work together

The "spirit" is the Holy Spirit, who is responsible to, "convict the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8).

- The "bride" is the church, who is responsible to corporately and individually witness about the Bridegroom through her lifestyle and speech.
- Without the Spirit's witness, the bride is powerless.
- But without the bride's witness, the Spirit is voiceless.

The invitation is extended to those who are "thirsty" and who "desire the water of life".

- Those who are aware of their own need for eternal life and who long for God.
- One of the most stern warnings in all of scripture is found in vs. 18-19.
- If someone ADDS to the words of Revelation and distorts God's intentions, the fate mentioned in Revelation will be applied to them.

Think of all of the extra-Biblical and speculative end-times teaching the church today- this is a stern warning to not tamper with this book!

- If someone SUBTRACTS from these words, their share of the tree of life and the city will be taken from them.
- This is a warning to those trying to omit or soften the message of judgment.

The reason is that "he who testifies to these things" is not John, but Jesus.

- This is HIS word and His Revelation!
- This is the cry of those that loves Christ- for Him to return and make things right.

The book of Revelation begins and ends the same way- with "grace" (Rev. 1:4, 22:21).

- The most dominant theme of the entire Word of God is "grace"- the unmerited love and forgiveness of God the Father towards broken, unrighteous sinners
- Revelation is a testament to God's patience, love, forgiveness, and grace.

BLESSED IS THE ONE WHO KEEPS THESE WORDS...

- We come to Christ for cleansing, and we keep returning when we sin.
- We recognize the urgency of Christ's return, and we fight complacency in our own soul.
- We overcome hardship with patient endurance, knowing that someday it will all be worth it.
- We say, "Jesus come quickly!", and we live lives that display His grace and truth.