

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 4TH-5TH, 2025 // REVELATION

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

In Revelation 21, John received a tour of the "New Jerusalem"—the dwelling place of God with His people for all eternity.

- This is usually what Christians mean when we speak of heaven, but this New Jerusalem isn't where we as Believers go now when we die (someday we'll be in this place, but not yet).
- 2 Cor. 5:8: To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (Paradise, Lk. 23:43).

To die in Christ now is to lose our body temporarily and go home to be with the Lord. Our bodies go to the grave awaiting the resurrection, and our souls go to be with Jesus.

- As John goes deeper into the heavenly city, it appears like a garden with a "river of the water of life" and the "tree of life." We're seeing a restoration of the paradise God created for humanity in Eden (Gen. 1-3).

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

- Now we see the restoration. Rebellion has ceased, the curse has been broken, Satan has been destroyed, and humanity is given complete access to God as Jesus rules forever on His throne!

The "river of living water" that flows from the throne of God is like the life-giving river that nourished the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:10).

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

The second landmark mentioned is the "tree of life" that appeared in Eden (Gen. 2:9, 3:22-24).

- 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 (v. 2). The word for "heal" (Therapeian) in the Greek can also mean "therapeutic."

- This simply means we will enjoy perfect health, energy, wellness, 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 (v. 3).
- Eden didn't have God's throne, but we will!

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

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

## QUESTIONS ABOUT HEAVEN...

- Will we still be ourselves and have our human bodies? What age will we be?
- Will we recognize our loved ones (will we still be married)?
- Will we have all our memories from Earth?
- Will we eat and drink in heaven?
- What will we spend our time doing?
- Will we have our deceased pets in heaven?

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

The glory of heaven fades, the vision of Revelation concludes, and John is back in Patmos.

- In this epilogue of Revelation, the main idea of the book gets repeated: this "must soon take place" (v. 6) and "I am coming soon" (v. 7).
- How soon is soon? This was written almost 2,000 years ago, but we must 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're 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.
- V. 7 reminds us that at the heart of Revelation are commands we must keep.

There are many commands in the book of Revelation, but most of them center around a few main ideas:

1. Overcome/conquer, persevere, and faithfully endure trials and tribulation (Rev. 2:10).
2. Return to your first love, keep careful watch over your spiritual lives, repent, and remember who Jesus is when you fall (Rev. 2:4-5).
3. Practice wisdom and discernment (Rev. 17:9).

We are reminded again about John's role in communicating this Revelation (v. 8). John is simply the messenger.

- Like John, we are told to relay what we've "heard and [seen]" (v. 8) to a world that desperately needs to know the seriousness of coming 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 who showed him the message.

- Don't we also do this? We make idols out of men and women 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..." (REVELATION 22:10-16)

The angel told John, "don't seal up the words of the prophecy of this book" (v. 10). Revelation is not meant to conceal truth, but to reveal it.

- Its message is intended to be proclaimed to produce obedience and worship because the time is near.
- The first part of v. 11 is a bit confusing because it almost sounds like the angel is instructing unrighteous people to not repent.

The truth 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 (v. 11b).

Now the speaker is Christ, and He proclaims, "I am coming soon...to repay each person according to his work" (v. 12).

- The eternal rewards for Believers will be based on their faithfulness in serving Christ in this life.
- The greater their faithfulness in this life, the greater will be their opportunity to serve in heaven (Matt. 25:14-30).

- This should cause us to want to serve more!

Jesus then calls those who "wash their robes" blessed, so that they "may enter the city by the gates" (v. 14).

- 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, and 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 they have already washed their robes initially in the Lamb's blood.

- 1 John 3:9 (ESV): "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.

Maturity and true growth in the Christian life means growth in humility and self-awareness (Matt. 5:3).

- As we grow, we become more aware of our own indwelling selfishness, sin, and need for God.
- As we grow, we get quicker in running to Jesus for washing when we sin and mess up.
- The beautiful thing about Jesus and His grace is that He will never turn us away.

V. 15 offers another list of those who will not be allowed entrance into "the city by the gates."

- Dogs (a symbolic term for impure persons, E.G. "male 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 any of these sins won't or can't be forgiven by God.

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" (v. 16), showing the fulfillment of OT prophecies and promises.
- Jesus is the "Bright Morning Star" (v. 16). This shows the night is almost over and fulfillment is at hand.

## THE END IS NEAR (REVELATION 22:17-21)

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

- The most "evangelistic" (seeking to convert others) verse in Revelation is v. 17.
- There are four invitations in v. 17 addressed to the world.
- The "Spirit and the bride" say, "Come!" to an unbelieving world, as they work together to make evangelism possible.

The "Spirit" is the Holy Spirit, who is responsible to "convict the world about 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 also extended to those who are "thirsty" and who desire the water of life.

- These are those who are aware of their own need for eternal life and who long for God.
- One of the sternest 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 the extra-biblical and speculative end-times teaching in 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 stern warning to any who would try to omit or even soften the message of coming judgment.

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

- This is HIS word and His Revelation!
- Jesus testifies boldly and concludes His last address to us in the Scriptures with, "Yes, I am coming soon," to which John responds, "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!"
- The cry of every heart that truly loves Christ is 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 who don't deserve anything but hell.
- Revelation is a testament to God's patience, love, forgiveness, and grace.

## THIS LIFE ON EARTH IS A TIME OF DECISION.

Decision 1: Will I honor God and place faith in His son Jesus Christ, or will I live my life as my own god?

- Jesus' identity has been clearly revealed to you in Revelation. You will either bow the knee to Him now willingly or acknowledge Him as Lord forcibly at the end of all things. Does your life honor Him?

Decision 2: Will I let God's truth from His Word guide my life and shape my actions, mindsets, and decisions, or will I follow the ways of the world?

- Revelation has shown us just how dark, wicked, and deceived the world will become. Are you letting the world's "truth" shape you?

Decision 3: Will I live my life wisely in light of eternity, or will I waste my life on the temporal pursuits of this world?

- God will reward His saints for living lives of faithfulness and stewarding what He's given them for His purposes. Are you ready to see Him?