

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 5TH, 2025 // REVELATION

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

The same angel from Revelation 21:9 who took John on a tour of heaven is going to take John to see a "garden" in the city.

- It was in a garden that humanity rebelled, introducing pain and suffering. Humanity was banished and access to God was limited. But, in this new "garden" the prophesied Savior has restored all of this (Genesis 3:15-19).

LANDMARKS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

The first landmark John describes is the "river of the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb." This is similar to the life-giving river that flowed from Eden (Genesis 2:10) and was alluded to by Jesus in John 4:14.

- This river in the city symbolizes the constant flow of everlasting life from God to His people because of the atoning work of the Lamb.

"...WILL NEVER GET THIRSTY AGAIN..." (JOHN 4:14)

To those living in the dry intense heat of the East, there was probably nothing more desired than a pure crystal-clear river.

- Jesus' promise to the woman at the well is fulfilled (John 4:14) and this pure and abundant river coming from God's throne shows we will never want for anything again.

"THE TREE OF LIFE WAS ON EACH SIDE"

The second landmark John describes is the "tree of life" that appeared in Eden, showing that the curse of sin had been lifted.

- The tree will produce 12 kinds of fruit each month. Without a moon in heaven there will not be lunar cycles and months, so this is simply emphasizing the infinite variety of pleasure that will fill heaven.

WHY DO THE NATIONS NEED HEALING?

John says the "leaves of the tree are for healing the nations, and there will no longer be any curse."

- The Greek word used for healing (*therapeian*) is almost directly transliterated into the word, "therapeutic." In context, this is better understood as "health-giving," meaning we will enjoy perfect health, energy, and excitement for all eternity.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

The garden John is describing is very similar to the one in Eden but with one profound difference: the throne of God. We will have access to God and to the greatest blessings.

- Purpose:** we will serve God (v. 3).
- Intimacy:** we will get to see His face (v. 4).
- Belonging/reward:** His name will be on our foreheads (v. 4).

BLESSED... (REVELATION 22:6-9)

THE VISION STARTS TO FADE

Verses 6-21 are considered the epilogue of Revelation. John is back on the island of Patmos as the vision of the glory of Heaven fades and he is hearing, but not really seeing.

- The angel tells John, "These words are faithful and true" as the main idea of Revelation is repeated, this "must soon take place" and "I am coming soon."

HOW SOON?

The Greek word used for "quickly" or "soon" is not exactly the same as the word we use. The word used is better understood as "suddenly."

- Since we do not know the day and the hour that Jesus will return (Matthew 25), we are to be expectant, watching, and ready for His return.

WE LIVE OUT THESE THINGS

Jesus says, "Blessed is the one who keeps the words...of this book," reminding us we are to keep the words of this book and not merely use them for discussion and debate.

- Blessed are those who overcome, persevere, and faithfully endure trials and tribulations. Blessed are those who hold to who Jesus is and practice wisdom and discernment.

WE ARE MESSENGERS!

For a second time (Revelation 19:10), John is overwhelmed and bows down to worship an angel and is told to only worship God.

- The angel reminds John that he is a servant like him, the prophets, and all those who keep the words of this book. Like John, we are called to live and to teach the prophecies of Christ.

STAYING CLEAN (REVELATION 22:10-16)

"DON'T SEAL UP THE WORDS..."

Revelation is not meant to conceal the truth, but to reveal it to us. Twice we are told there are blessings that come when we read, study, and apply this book to our lives (Revelation 1:3; 22:7).

- The problem is not that we are slow to understand the principles of this book, but that we are slow to apply the principles of this book to our lives.

"LET THE FILTHY STILL BE FILTHY"

V. 11 shows there will be people who see the light and hear truth but will harden their hearts and long for darkness. God will ultimately allow them to be overcome by it (Romans 1:28).

- On the other hand, God will remain faithful to those who practice righteousness, keep themselves holy, and display evidence of genuine saving faith.

THERE IS URGENCY IN HIS WARNING

Jesus proclaims, "I am coming soon, and my reward is with me to repay each person according to his work."

- What we "do" provides the greatest indication of what we believe. We are not saved by our works, but those who are saved by grace through faith will get to work (James 2:18, 2:26; Titus 3:8; Ephesians 2:10).

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO WASH THEIR ROBES..."

A different form of the verb "wash" is used here than in Revelation 7:14. The "washing" in Revelation 7:14 was past tense, indicating a one-time cleansing. But here, we see the present tense of the verb means continual washing.

- This means we receive a one-time washing at salvation, but we must continue to pursue holiness through confession and repentance.

WILL OUR ACCESS BE GRANTED OR DENIED?

Jesus says that only those who "wash their robes" will enter the city, but "the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood" will stay outside the city.

- These sins will deny us access to Heaven if they characterize us. There is a difference between falling into sin and relenting to it.

THE MESSIAH REVEALED

Jesus says, "I have sent my angel to attest these things to you for the churches," essentially saying this book was not for an elite group of super Christians but for all Believers. The Messianic title of the "Root and descendent of David," shows He is both Creator and descendent of King David. The Messianic title of "Morning Star" shows that darkness is over and a new day has begun.

COMING SOON (REVELATION 22:17-21)

WORKING IN TANDEM

The "Spirit and the bride" work together to say to an unbelieving world, "Come!"

- In tandem, the Holy Spirit "will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment" (John 16:8), and the Bride, the Church, is responsible for corporately and individually witnessing about the Bridegroom through her lifestyle and speech.

THE INVITATION

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

- The invitation to "Come!" is for anyone who would recognize their own spiritual poverty (Matthew 5:3) and admit their inability to save themselves.

THE WARNING

If someone adds to the words of this book, the plagues of this book will apply to them. This means we are not to distort God's intentions with our personal convictions and speculations.

- If someone subtracts from this book, God will take away their share of the tree of life and the holy city. This means we are not to omit or soften the message of judgment.

THE END ECHOES THE BEGINNING

The most dominant theme of Revelation (1:4; 22:21) and the entire Bible is grace.

- Grace is the unmerited love and forgiveness of God the Father towards broken, unrighteous sinners (Romans 5:8). The Book of Revelation follows suit with all of Scripture as a testament to God's patience, love, forgiveness, and grace.

THE INVITATION

- Have we come to Christ for cleansing, accepting Him as our Savior?
- Are we continuing towards Him, through a relationship with Him, even when we sin?
- Have we recognized the urgency of Christ's return? Do we love Him enough to be obedient to Him and do we love others enough to share the truth that sets us free?