

Revelation Chapter 22

An Interpretation

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Introduction:

1. We have come to the end of Revelation and the end of the Bible.
2. The story concludes with God winning over that rebel, the Devil.

(1) Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street.

Verse 1: In the beginning, a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden.

Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.

Genesis 2:10.

Here in Revelation, the story has come full circle, for this river is called the **water of life** and it is from the **throne**. The emphasis in this chapter is on **life**, while the focus before has been on God winning over the Devil.

We read about the coming fulfillment of Jesus' promise in John:

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)

While Satan had polluted the **waters** of earth with sin and

unrighteousness, absolute purity flows from the **throne of God**. This water satisfies all desires of the redeemed. Is there one long **street**? Or does the **street** stand for all of the streets?

Discussion: Is it important that we determine if one long street is meant or if the street stands for all streets?

(2) On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Verse 2: A street divided by a **river**. And on each side of **river** was **the tree of life**. That had been in Eden of old also.

Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2:9

The **tree of life** is the **tree** that gives **life**. Ezekiel saw something like this:

Fruit trees of all kinds will grow along both sides of the river. The leaves of these trees will never turn brown and fall, and there will always be fruit on their branches. There will be a new crop every month, for they are watered by the river flowing from the Temple. The fruit will be for food and the leaves for healing. Ezekiel 47:12

In Ezekiel's vision, there were multiple trees that recycled their fruit every month just like in our verse 2 here. What the river does for the thirsty, the trees do for the hungry. In Eden Adam and Eve were driven from the **tree** in the Garden, while here the saints have permanent access to the **tree** so they will live forever.

This is not 12 kinds of fruit (as in KJV) but twelve crops. There will be no sickness in the heavenly city because the **leaves of the tree** will bring **healing**.

Notice the **nations** are included, so clearly the church where Jews and Gentiles are combined is in John's view.

Discussion: What diseases and malfunctions of the body are covered in the healing that has been discussed?

(3) There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; (4) they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.

Verse 3: The serpent was **cursed**:

Then the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild. You will crawl on your belly, groveling in the dust as long as you live." Genesis 3:14.

Others were also **cursed**: Genesis 4:11; 12:3; 27:29 and those who violate the law of Moses: Deuteronomy 27: 16-26 and 28:15-68. Since the wicked were not allowed in this city, there will be no more **curse**.

Since the fall of man there has been sickness, suffering, sorrow, disappointment and death—distress in many forms. That will be no more in the New Jerusalem. All who enter will be healed of all infirmities and kept in a state of perfect health and happiness.

While Adam and Eve were separated from God because of their sin, the very **throne of God** will be in the heavenly city because sin has been eradicated. The throne will be among those who have served God in this life. Such fellowship! And such an opportunity to serve the Great Redeemer.

Verse 4: Their faith has now been turned to sight.

(5) And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

Verse 5: The days are endless and no **lighting** is needed. The glory of the **Lord** will supply the light and this will not be just a one-time event. It is **forever and ever**. There will be one eternal day in a state of perfection. The saints will reign like kings for all eternity.

The photograph of heaven is complete at this point in the chapter. Now we have the final warnings, admonitions and a benediction.

Discussion: What items or conditions in heaven do you find appealing?

(6) And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place.

Verse 6: John was told that this will be absolutely **true**. **God** himself had sent his **angel** to be sure John understood. **God** is affirming the authenticity of this and previous visions. His word is anchored in truth. This book came from the same **God** who revealed truth to the **prophets** of the past. While other books about the future were in circulation in John's day and even earlier, this one is spoken from the throne of **God**. Such uninspired books included the *Apocalypse of James*, the *Apocalypse of Methodius*, and the *Apocalypse of Stephen*.

(7) "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."

Verse 7: The word **behold** insists on the reader (or listener) paying close attention.

I am coming quickly presents some choices for a correct understanding. Was he coming soon? Or speedily? Or unexpectedly? Or is the idea of **coming soon** measured in terms of the passing of the ages of time. If so, it will no be multiplied centuries in the future following the fall of Satan.

Blessed: James Smith writes:

The ultimate purpose of giving the church the Book of

Revelation is to bless the lives of believers. *Blessed* means being in a state of contented joy. *Keeps (heeds)* is a participle referring to those who observe, protect and pass on something of value.

(8) I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

Verse 8: **John** adds his personal assurance that this message is truly from the God of heaven. Like before, he was so overwhelmed by the message that he was driven to **fall** and **worship**.

(9) But he said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God."

Verse 9: And again, the **worship** is rejected by the messenger delivering the words of the Lord. John is reminded that **prophets** like Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah were his brethren.

(10) And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near."

Verse 10: While **prophets** of the past were sometimes told to **seal** their books, John was **not** to **seal** this **book**. It was relevant right now. It would be useful for the Christians to whom it was addressed.

(11) "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy."

Verse 11: When Christ comes, there will be no change in the fate of the wicked. No second chance to correct their course.

On the other hand, the **righteous** will keep on being **righteous** and the **holy** will continue as before because this way of life is in their hearts and not just to achieve a certain status with the Lord.

(12) "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

Verse 12: Jesus is not speaking of salvation, but **reward**. While a believer will be saved, yet they may not be **rewarded** for much. This is how Matthew 16:27 can be true:

For the Son of Man will come with His angels in the glory of His Father and will judge all people according to their deeds.

This is how Romans 2:6 can be true:

He will judge everyone according to what they have done.

This is how Revelation 2:23 can be true:

'And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

There are minimalists among the believers who do very little and there are those who dedicate every breath to doing the work of God on earth. While we are not saved by works, we are saved to do good works. And we are rewarded based on our works.

Discussion: Try to describe a minimalist Christian.

(13) "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

Verse 13: Christ is speaking and again identifies himself with **the beginning** and **the end**. He stands outside of time as does the Father, making His identity unmistakable. Religions such as the *Jehovah Witnesses* believe that Jesus was the first person that God created. John is telling his readers that Jesus started all things and he will bring all things to a successful conclusion.

(14) Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

Verse 14: Another **blessing** is pronounced, this time on those who have **washed their robes** because they have **tree of life** rights and tickets to enter **the gates** of **the city** of God. No more sickness or insecurity.

(15) Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

Verse 15: A new list of seven classes of rejects is announced.

Dogs: Those who are unclean. They have not been cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Sorcerers, immoral persons, murderers, idolaters were each detailed in the previous chapter.

The class of liars is expanded to those **who love lies** and those who **practice lying**. It is clear that we must watch what we believe.

(16) "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

Verse 16: In verse 8 it was "I, John." Here it is **"I, Jesus."** He has sent his angel to make the unfolding events clear to the **churches**.

Jesus stresses His humanity. He is the **root** and **descendant of David**. He ties in with the genealogy of Israel's famous and much loved king. While he stressed his relationship with the Father in verse 13, now he stresses his relation with God's chosen people. He sits on **David's** throne, just as the angel promised to Mary.

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."
Luke 1:32-33.

Jesus is **the bright and morning star**, signaling that the night is over and true day has arrived and fulfilling the vague promise of Numbers 24:17:

I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth.

(17) The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

Verse 17: The Spirit invites through the bride, the church. The heavenly city is not just for a tight-knit band of believers. The invitation is out. Those who are invited are to invite yet others. There is satisfaction for the thirsty and healing for the afflicted.

(18) I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; (19) and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

Verse 18: God has a special punishment for those who add to or takes away from God's written Scripture. That person may have been saved, but he lost his access to the tree of life and the holy city.

(20) He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

(21) The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Verse 21: The entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation has been about the **grace of the Lord Jesus**.

In conclusion, this reading:

Many years ago I entered this wonderful temple called the Bible. I entered at the portico of Genesis, walked down through the Old Testament art gallery where the pictures of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Daniel hung on the wall.

I passed into the music room of Psalms, where the spirit swept the keyboard of nature and brought forth the dirge-like wail of the weeping prophet Jeremiah to the grand, impassioned strain of Isaiah, until it seemed that every reed and pipe in God's great organ of nature responded to the tuneful harp of David, the sweet singer of Israel.

I entered the chapel of Ecclesiastes, where the voice of the Preacher was heard, and into the conservatory of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley's sweet scented spices filled and perfumed my life.

I entered the business office of the Proverbs, then into the observatory room of the prophets, where I saw telescopes of various sizes, some pointing to far-off events, but all concentrated upon the bright and morning Star which was to rise above the moonlit hills of Judea for our salvation.

I entered the audience room of the King of Kings, and caught a vision of His glory from the standpoint of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; passed into the Acts of the apostles, where the Holy Spirit was doing His work in the formation of the infant church, then into the correspondence room, where sat Peter, Paul, James, John and Jude, penning their Epistles.

I stepped into the throne room of Revelation, where all towered into glittering peaks, and I got a vision of the King sitting upon His throne in all His glory, and I cried:

‘All hail the power of Jesus name.
Let Angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of all.’”