

Chapter 22

In reality, the first 18 verses should be combined into chapter 21 as they continue to speak of the city that John saw coming down out of heaven. That should be recognised for context.

The River of Life

22 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. ³ And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

Pouring forth from the Throne of God in, one assumes, a palace of some kind, comes a river of living water. The water of life that will sustain the people comes constantly from God himself. Furthermore, there are trees that wonderful fruits regularly, so those who live in the city need never leave it. John is, again, drawing on his knowledge of walled city life and sieges to point these things out, as the most difficult thing to get in a siege are food and water. The implication here is that, even when Satan makes his attack in Chapter 19, there is no fear of hunger or thirst; not only because the people live with God, but because the city itself is alive. The fact that the trees produce fruit at regular intervals, one tree per month for a year, reenforces the conclusion that time will simply plod along as normal.

The leaves of these trees are said to be “*for the healing of the nations*”, not for the healing of human ailments but to remove the divisions between nations. Differences of language, prejudice and territorial concerns will blow away like the leaves in autumn when God renews the world. Similarly, nations will not have any resort to cursing or any other types of divisions, for they live in the presence of God himself.

What is clear is that he will be literally and eternally present with them. “*They shall see His face*”. This is possibly the most impressive promise made in the Bible. Moses did not see God’s face when he was conversing with him, and Christ had to be shielded from God’s face when he was on the cross by a thick, black cloud. Since the fall of Adam and Eve this has been a literal impossibility, but now the promise is that we would be able to sit in God’s presence and look upon him. Even the angels avoid looking at God’s face, yet it will be our privilege.

The Time Is Near

⁶ Then he said to me, "These words *are* faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.

⁷ "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed *is* he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

The angel again tells John that he can trust what he is seeing and the promises he is hearing, but he adds an authority. What the Angel has shown John has been sent to him by the same Lord God that sent the prophets of old that John and those he is writing to knew and trusted. But the angel adds an element of urgency to this. He quotes Christ's own words to stipulate that these things will have to come to pass shortly.

⁸ Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

⁹ Then he said to me, "See *that you do not do that*. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

John tries to worship his advising angel, who immediately stops him. The angel is not worthy of worship; he is a guide not God. He informs John that he is simply a servant of God, the same as the other humans, prophets and all those who keep the words of the book. Instead, John is instructed to "**Worship God.**" The doctrines held in a great many churches of worshiping angels and saints would do well to read these words.

¹⁰ And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. ¹¹ He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."

Jesus Testifies to the Churches

¹² "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last."

The angel instructs John, juxtaposed to Daniel, not to shut the words of the book up, but rather spread them widely. Let everyone make their choice now. Not tomorrow, but now.

This has always been taken, as it was intended, as a call to prepare oneself for the imminent close of probation. These words are suggested as the declaration from the throne that will be made when that momentous time comes. But in context, John also includes it as a call to make a decision owing to the shortness of life. As we established in Chapter 1, if this is the John whom wrote the gospel, he was most certainly in the twilight of his years and is starting to feel his age. The dead can make no future choices, and they must, instead, have made the choice while they have the chance to do so. Either John draws on, or Jesus reiterates, his authority as Creator to remind the reader that time is one of his creations too.

¹⁴ Blessed *are* those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

John now takes a moment to give his own counsel, quoting from Jesus for authority but giving his own advice. Blessings are to those who keep the commandments of Jesus, indicating that, even at this early stage, threats to them are arising. Those who do what God wants them to, are promised a place in that Holy City. But those who do not keep those commandments, who choose not to follow Christ, are left outside with the dregs and scoundrels.

Jesus steps back in to again assure that he has sent his angel to make these writings to the seven churches to whom they are addressed. John has scribed down and delivered that message. And again, Jesus uses another way of identifying himself as the paradoxical creator. He stipulates that he is both "[the Root and the Offspring of David](#)"; both David's father and son. He created David and is a descendant of David, which is an impressive feat.

John concludes God's words themselves with an assurance that "[\(w\)hoever desires](#)" may "[take the water of life freely](#)." Nobody who wishes to follow Him and change their lives would be turned away, rather they are all begged to "[Come!](#)" Salvation is extended to all; it must simply be accepted.

A Warning

[18](#) For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; [19](#) and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

John now puts his own words on the line. He, as author of the book, pronounces the curse of all the evils written in it should anyone make any changes or adds anything to it. His language has been precisely chosen and the curse is not due to pride of authorship, but because of the precision of what he is writing. If we remember the circumstances of John's imprisonment on Patmos, he could not come out and expressly attack the Roman Empire, as it was then, but needed to be somewhat careful about the language he used to make his points clear. To that end, John himself declares that the language and styles of his book must be protected, and it is the only book that contains such a curse. As the reader of this analysis will recognise the disparity between the text and its meaning, this curse is a necessary one; for how much more difficult would understanding this book be if parts were missing.

I Am Coming Quickly

[20](#) He who testifies to these things says, "[Surely I am coming quickly](#)."

[Amen](#). Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

Finally, like all good writings to churches from Apostles, John completes with a benediction we all look forward to. May Christ return quickly and may we be able to rest in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ until all the things contained in this book are accomplished. Amen.