

Chapter 22

Final Admonitions

- A. Let's begin our study on the final chapter of Revelation with a quote from Albert Baldinger out of his book *Preaching From Revelation: Timely Messages for Troubled Hearts*:

We have now traveled a long and rather difficult road which has brought us...to a "high mountain" where we are given a bird's-eye view of glory land. Back of us lie the ashes of extinct volcanoes, the debris of spent tornadoes, the wreckage of social earthquakes, the ruins of mystic Babylon and godless empires. Sin and evil and human passion have done their worst....The Lamb of God is everywhere triumphant. What more remains?

- B. The significance of Revelation 22 is not to be ignored.
- a. It contains the final words of the Bible, the last inspired words ever written.
 - b. It also seems disconnected from the rest of the Revelation...but it really isn't.
 - i. The voices of Jesus, John and an angelic messenger will blend – at times confusingly - but ultimately, the words spoken are from the Lord.
 - c. The verses in Revelation 22 are often repeats of thoughts found throughout other portions of the writing.

THE RIVER AND THE TREE OF LIFE (22:1-5)

- C. John's viewpoint moves from outside the city to inside to get a more detailed glimpse of what heaven may be like.
- D. Verse 1
- a. "a river of the water of life, clear as crystal"
 - i. A basic necessity for life is water
 - ii. We're told that Christ provides the "living water" we need spiritual to be sustained (John 4)
 - iii. Simply put, it appears we're seeing an image that God will continue to provide all we need in heaven.

- b. It also flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb
 - i. First, the source of the “living water” – Christ/God – is reconfirmed
 - ii. Second, this is the only place in the Revelation where the phrase “the throne of God and of the Lamb” is found – indicating that BOTH occupy the throne!

E. Verse 2

- a. While the English language seems “clear” in its expression of the river and the tree of life, the Greek text is actually more vague in regards to positioning.
- b. But the position of either is not what is important – we’re seeing that the “living water” of the “river of life” is what sustains the “tree of life” – again, images of God’s great provision!
 - i. Remember, the tree of life?
 1. Back in Genesis, it had been lost to mankind because of sin (Gen. 2:9; 3:6, 22-24)
 2. Subsequently a curse was placed on man because of sin (Gen. 3:16-19)
 3. We’re told flat out in verse 3 that the curse will be lifted; as a result, we see here that the tree of life will be restored.
 4. The tree also bore 12 kinds of fruit
 - a. “12” being a number of perfection gives us another indication of God’s perfect provision while in heaven
 5. The leaves were also a blessing – they provided “healing of the nations”
 - a. In heaven, without sin and its devastating consequences, the healing process – began upon the cross – will be completed.

F. Verse 3

- a. Not only will the curse be lifted, but the dwelling of God and man together again, as it was in the garden, will be realized.
- b. An important phrase here is “His servants shall serve him”
 - i. Heaven has always seemed to be pictured as a place full of activity
 - ii. The word translated “serve” is sometimes translated “worship”
 - iii. Other than praising God, it is unknown exactly what the citizens of heaven will be doing – but whatever it is, it will have meaning and purpose.

G. Verse 4

- a. At last, the people of God will be allowed to see the face of God

- i. On earth, no one has been allowed to see the face of God (Ex. 33:20,23)
- ii. In many respects, the essence of heaven is to be with God and Christ
- b. "and His name shall be on their foreheads"
 - i. Ownership – those in heaven belong to God; they are His people and He is their God!
 - ii. Likeness – to wear someone's name indicates relation, sameness, likeness.

H. Verse 5

- a. The first five verses end with two affirmations:
 - i. There will no longer be any night
 - 1. Night and darkness are not many people's "favorite time" of any given day
 - 2. It also seems that some of the worst things happen at night
 - ii. But there will be no need of light from a lamp or sun – God will be that light
 - 1. God will be all the light anyone will ever need in heaven
 - 2. Imagine the intensity of His glory!
- b. "And they shall reign forever and ever"
 - i. The "they" is in reference to the heavenly citizens
 - ii. They won't necessarily reign over others, but they will take their place and remain as part of the Royal Family.
 - iii. This is a promise that has been made time again (see 1:5,6; 5:10)

WORDS WHICH ARE FAITHFUL AND TRUE (22:6,7)

I. Verse 6

- a. "These words are faithful and true..."
 - i. Jesus has already been identified as "faithful and true" (3:14;19:11)
 - ii. As Jesus *is* the Word, it's only natural that the word of God be described as such
 - iii. What words specifically?
 - 1. Could be referring to the specific words of God here or all of Scripture as the words of God.
 - 2. Either way, the description fits.
- b. Why are these words faithful and true?
 - i. Because the words come from God, not men

- ii. Peter emphasized that “no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Peter 1:21)
- c. We also find here that God sent his angel to show his bond-servants the things which must soon take place.
 - i. Remember these same words appearing in chapter 1, verses 1 and 2
 - ii. Remember, even these things that have heavy prophetic imagery about the 2nd coming also would have brought comfort to 1st century Christians as representative that God is in control and that the wicked (i.e. – the Roman Empire) would suffer the wrath of God for their choice in sinning

J. Verse 7

- a. “Behold, I am coming quickly”
 - i. Three times in chapter 22 (verses 7, 12, and 20) is this spoken
 - ii. Again, the idea of the immediate punishment upon Rome and the prophesied 2nd coming blend here
 - 1. Regardless of the time, the wicked will be punished, and the righteous will overcome
- b. Note the end of this verse and compare it to 1:3 – blessed is the one who heeds the word of God!
 - i. This book, as with all of God’s word, is intended to change lives and challenge those who read/hear it!

JOHN AND THE ANGEL (22:8,9)

K. Verse 8

- a. “I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things...”
 - i. John wants the reader(s) to grasp the authenticity of this writing!
 - ii. John was highly respected within the church and the emphatic nature of this sentence would have lent further credence to it knowing it was not the result of an overactive imagination!
 - iii. John wrote precisely what he saw and what he heard from God!
- b. John, again, makes the same mistake he made in chapter 19 – he was overwhelmed and fell down at the feet of the angel!

- i. How many times have we made the same mistake – even though we should have learned the first time?!?

L. Verse 9

- a. And just as John repeated his mistake from chapter 19, the angel repeats his rebuke from 19:10 – “Do not do that!”
 - i. The sad irony is that later in church history, men turned their attention from simply worshipping God alone to worshipping angels and “saints” and other men and women of faith!
 - ii. Even since the time of Moses and the children of Israel has man been commanded to worship the one and true God ONLY!

DO NOT SEAL UP THE SCROLL (22:10,11)

M. Verse 7 emphasized the need for obedience...verses 10 and 11 suggest when we should obey.

N. Verse 10

- a. “the time is near”
 - i. The idea of urgency is a part of the very nature of Christianity.
 - ii. Even from the time of John the Baptist and Christ has the message that the “kingdom of heaven is at hand” been preached!
 - iii. Urgency is a key quality among God’s people!
- b. “Do not seal up the words”
 - i. Perhaps an emphasis on the fact that the message of God is to be spread and not closed like a book to be put away

O. Verse 11

- a. The words of verse 11 offer an odd bit of language for us to ponder...
- b. We can understand why God wants the holy and righteous to remain that way, buy why does he want the wrong and filthy to remain that way?
 - i. Perhaps the answer lies in understanding what the passage is not saying:
 1. It does not teach that, regardless of how man lives, he will go to heaven
 2. It is not intended as an encouragement to do wrong because the emphasis in the passage is on doing right.
 3. It does not teach that all who sin are hopeless cases, and that it is unnecessary to bother with them. (see the invitation in verse 17)

- ii. So what is the purpose of verse 11?
 - 1. Perhaps it's more a statement of fact rather than what appears to be the wish of God.
 - 2. In other words, since the surrounding verses seem to emphasize the fact that time is short, urgency is the order of the day, then the fact is that the ungodly did not change their lives in the time they had, so it is now too late (at the 2nd coming) to do so.
 - 3. The truth is, we don't know for sure.
- c. What we can walk away from verses 10 and 11 with is the idea that (as Paul so eloquently put it in 2 Cor. 6:2) "Today" is the day of salvation.
 - i. What are we/people waiting for?
 - ii. After all, one of three things could happen:
 - 1. Christ could come
 - 2. The person could die
 - 3. Or they might be so hardened by sin that they may never soften again in order to repent

I AM COMING QUICKLY (22:12-15)

P. Verse 12

- a. Revelation has several major themes running throughout:
 - i. Grace, obedience, deeds and the kind of life to lead
 - ii. It also stresses the reward for those that choose these things based in God and Christ
 - 1. The word "reward" literally translates "what is due"
- b. Jesus again says "I am coming quickly"

Q. Verse 13

- a. "...the Alpha and the Omega"
 - i. Similar designations found in chapter 1 (1:8,17) are found here again
 - ii. We are reminded of the omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence of God and Christ

R. Verse 14

- a. In verse 7, we have already been told that those who heed the teachings of the Word of God will be blessed.
- b. Here, the thought is expanded:
 - i. "wash their robes"
 - 1. Notice the thought conveyed is that humanity (we) must respond to the invitation – it is not one-sided
 - 2. The word "wash" in the original language is continual in thought
 - 3. We are charged to "walk in the light" of God's word everyday
 - 4. The KJV has an alternate reading: "Blessed are they that do his commandments."
 - a. The original phrases in Greek for "wash their robes" and "do his commandments" are very similar in appearance
 - b. While the textual evidence supports "wash their robes" the idea is essentially the same.
 - 5. This idea of washing one's robe is another affirmation of our need to submit to God – it is a choice we make!
 - ii. "the tree of life"
 - 1. To have a "right" to the tree of life, we must wash our robes, or submit to God.
 - 2. But we must never forget that we wash our robes in the blood of Jesus (see 7:14).
 - 3. It is God's grace and mercy that truly saves us – we do not "earn" salvation simply through works.
- c. This is the final beatitude of the seven in Revelation: 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14

S. Verse 15

- a. Verse 14 tells us who will be in the city, but verse 15 tells us who will not be there.
 - i. Dogs, sorcerers, immoral persons, murderers, idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying
 - ii. We shouldn't get the wrong idea – there are not evil men prowling outside the gates of heaven!
 - iii. "Outside" is simply in contrast to "inside"

- iv. In fact, 21:8 reminds us that they will be cast into the lake of fire, or as Matthew 8:12 has it, “outer darkness”
- v. Dogs?
 - 1. This is actually not an uncommon Biblical term
 - a. Deut. 23:18; Psalm 22:16, 20; Isaiah 56:10,11; Matthew 7:6; Phil. 3:2)
 - 2. The idea, of course, is not cute pups but snarling, mangy hounds!

THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE’S INVITATION (22:16,17)

T. Verse 16

- a. Here, the Lord tells John that “I have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches”
 - i. If there is ever any doubt as to whom this might be written to, this is a good confirmation of what is read back in chapter 1 (see verses 4 and 11)
- b. “I, Jesus”
 - i. Again, confirming what we knew to be true all the way back in 1:1 – this is the Revelation of Jesus Christ
 - ii. As he is central to this writing, it is no wonder the descriptions continue
 - 1. “the root and descendant of David”
 - a. Jesus is the source (“the root”) of the line of David in his divinity and he was a descendant of David in his humanity
 - 2. “the bright morning star”
 - a. The morning star is the bright light that shines in the sky shortly before dawn, usually near the horizon.
 - b. It declares the arrival of a new day
 - c. Jesus is our hope!

U. Verse 17

- a. The invitation is extended
 - i. The Spirit is, of course, the Holy Spirit – the inspiration for the writing of God’s word
 - ii. The bride is the church, those saved by the blood of Jesus

- iii. The Spirit (God) and the bride (the church) invite all to come to God and join in the blessings promised to the faithful.
 - iv. The great thing about this invitation – even the ones who hear it can pass it on!
- b. “without cost”
- i. A very overt reminder that the invitation is freely extended and salvation is freely offered.
 - ii. Truly, no one could afford what the water of life actually costs – but it does not matter.
 - iii. In order to accept the offer, one must “come” to the one who can wash away sins; in this way, we play a very active role in our own salvation!

TESTIMONY TO THE MESSAGE (22:18-21)

V. Verses 18,19

- a. The Bible is God’s word, not man’s. While God has given it to us, it originates with God.
- b. Because of this, we should respect that and not “add” or “take away” from God’s word. God said what He had to say – there is no need for man’s embellishment or editing.
 - i. Similar thoughts are found in Deut. 4:2 and Prov. 30:6
 - ii. Paul made this point when he warned against those who would distort the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9)
 - iii. Keep in mind that adding to and taking away from are treated equally by God.
- c. We are getting a real sense of closure here in these final words.
 - i. God in a final stroke is reminding mankind He is in control
 - ii. He is reminding mankind that it is He that blesses and punishes
 - iii. He is reminding mankind that all begins with Him and ends with Him

W. Verse 20

- a. A central thought in the final verses of Revelation is the 2nd coming of Christ
- b. Remember, this is the 3rd time in this chapter these words are uttered by Christ.
 - i. Perhaps a tri-fold reminder that time is short and urgency is desired.
 - ii. Also, again, these would have been words of comfort to 1st century Christians (as they should be to us) that the reward for the faithful will be great!
 - iii. Early Christians had an expression, “Maranatha” which means “Come, O Lord!”

1. It was an expression of faith that He will come and a prayer to hasten His coming!

c. John's response to this is simple, pointed and powerful – Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

X. Verse 21

a. John's ends the way he began – with a benediction of grace.

b. We are left with the final reminder that we are under the grace of God, and it is by that grace we find salvation and the beginning and end of hope and comfort.