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A0702 – January 14, 2007 – Rev 22:13-21 – Maranatha

Revelation 22:13 I am (1SPAI) the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

I am is the main verb. It's a present active indicative. Jesus is saying **I am** now these things. **I am the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.** All three of these descriptions point to the fact that "Jesus Christ is the beginning and source of all things as well as the goal and consummation of all, in a word, the eternal God.

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are the ones washing (*PAPart – see v 11*) their robes, in order that he will have right to the tree of life and may come (3PAAS) into the gates of the city.

There is a textual difficulty here. The majority of manuscripts and miniscules read "Blessed are the one's doing His commandments" and the minority read "Blessed are the one's washing their robes". I'm unsure which is original but probably one washed his robes by doing His commandments. This interpretation is confirmed by the letter to the believers at Sardis in Rev 3:1-6. Most of the believers at this church had soiled their garments by not doing good deeds while a minority of the believers had whitened their garments by doing good works. Fitting this interpretation is the idea that washing one's garments is done by maintaining fellowship by walking in the light and confessing known sin. One cannot do His commandments without maintaining fellowship. Others explain this phrase by saying it is a description of all who are saved. But this is problematic because it would be saying we save ourselves since we do the washing. And we don't save ourselves, God saves us. Another problem with this is it is a present participle. It should read, "Blessed are the one's *washing* their robes". It's an

ongoing activity. If the washing refers to salvation then one would have to continually be saving themselves. But that's not right. So, whatever the **washing** is it's an ongoing activity like doing the laundry. You have to keep doing the laundry your whole life through. Now, some people don't want to do their laundry because they're lazy. They just let everything get dirty. Other people keep after the laundry and keep things clean. That's the picture here of washing; these are active believers who continually wash their robes and stand in contrast to lazy believers who don't continually wash their robes. The text is singling out active believers who continually washed their robes. They are blessed and will be given two privileges or rewards in the new heaven and earth; **right to the tree of life** and **entrance through the gates** into the new Jerusalem. So, we really need to understand how we can be washing our robes now so we can enjoy these privileges in the future. Let's look at the word **washing**. The Greek word is *pluno*. It's only used three times in the NT. First, in Luke 5:2 it's used of washing fishing nets. This was a continual activity for fishermen. Second, it's used twice in the Book of Revelation. Once in Rev 7:14 where a great multitude of Tribulation martyrs have "washed their robes...in the blood of the Lamb". John sees them in heaven wearing "white robes". According to Rev 6:9-11 when the Tribulation martyrs arrive in heaven they receive a "white robe". Now, turn to Rev 7:13.

Revelation 7:13-14 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "My lord, you know." [don't ask me! Tell me! You know!] And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of [literally 'away from'] the great tribulation [that is, before the great tribulation begins so these are from the first half of the tribulation], and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

So, the elder answers his own questions; "who are they" and "where did they come from?" "Where did they come from?" They came away from the great tribulation. That is, they came off the earth before the great tribulation began. So, they came from earth to heaven during the first half of the tribulation. Second, "Who they are?" Now, there's no question that they are believers. John isn't wondering, "Are they believer's or not?" They are all in heaven. What he wants to know is "Who are these believers wearing white robes?" The reason he wants to know this is because he is Jewish and there is

a great multitude there from the nations and this is quite a surprise! So, he wants to know “Who are all these people?” And the elder answers “These are the one’s who...have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”. That is, these are believers from the first half of the Tribulation who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb and then they were martyred and taken to heaven.” See, people want to just say, oh, these are all the believers. That’s not what its saying. These are Tribulation martyrs. So, this is an *aorist of summation* giving us a summary of what these believers’ were doing on earth during the first half of the Tribulation before they were martyred. And what they were doing was washing their robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb. This was an ongoing activity for them on earth. Then they were martyred for their living witness of Jesus Christ and now they’re in heaven. Because they washed their robes on earth and made them white they are rewarded with “white robes”. Now, everyone wants to think that because they washed them and made them white in the blood of the Lamb this means justification but that’s not the issue here. Don’t forget that the blood of the Lamb is the basis of phase 1 of our salvation: justification (positional cleansing) as well as phase 2 of our salvation: sanctification (experiential cleansing). Most believers forget that the blood of Christ is the basis of our sanctification but the Bible clearly teaches this Turn to 1 John 1:6-7.

1 Jn 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; **1 Jn 1:7** but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Now, this passage has to do with the believer’s fellowship and an ongoing cleansing that takes place for the believer who walks in the light. This is not a justification passage. They are already believers being told to walk in the light so we can have fellowship with God and as long as we are doing that “the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” So, the point I want to make is that all cleansing is on the basis of the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God and that’s exactly what we have described in Rev 7:14. This is an experiential cleansing that believers who walk in the light enjoy. The martyrs were walking in the light during the first half of the Tribulation. When the light showed them their sin they confessed it and were

experientially cleansed from their sin by the blood of the Lamb. So, the picture of washing one's robes is a picture of maintaining fellowship. Remember, they were the one's who continually did this. They couldn't justify themselves but once they were justified they could confess their sins and that is what the martyrs did while on earth. So, washing one's robes is a picture of remaining in fellowship; remaining unsoiled by the sin of the world via confession. There is a similar picture in Rev 3:1-6 with the believer's from Sardis. Some of them had soiled their garments and some of them had whitened them. They soiled them by failing to do good deeds and others whitened them by doing good deeds. The prospect of good deeds presupposes being in fellowship. So, those who had not done good deeds were unworthy and those who had done good deeds were "worthy". So, what we have in Rev 22:14 is a distinct set of believers who did their laundry on earth; they maintained fellowship and did good deeds. For believers who live this kind of open life before God and follow it with good deeds there are two rewards promised; **right to the tree of life** and **entrance through the gates into the city**. You already know about the reward of **the tree of life** from previous weeks. Entrance through the **gates into the city** refers to the entry of an overcomer in a victory procession of a returning champion. The believer who fights the good fight of faith and overcomes will enter by the gates of the city.

So let's sum up verse 14 with a few words. First, it's the believers who do the washing and it's a continual activity. Second, it must therefore be maintaining fellowship by walking in the light, confessing known sin and doing good deeds. Obviously some believer's do their laundry and some believer's don't do their laundry. Some believers soil their garments and others whiten their garments. For the believer who does his laundry two rewards are promised; access to the tree of life and entrance into the city by the gates. As we've learned before these are rewards promised to the overcomers. Right to the tree of life is access to its choice fruits. Access to the tree of life through the gates portrays the victory procession of those who overcome. In the next verse we will see that there are some who are "outside" the gates of the city and do not enjoy these special privileges. The obvious reason is because they did not wash their robes, they did not maintain fellowship with the Lord by walking in the light, confessing known sin and doing good deeds.

Revelation 22:15 Outside the dogs and the sorcerers and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters and the loving ones (PAPart – see v 11) and the ones making lies.

Outside of where? Verse 14 closed with reference to the **gates of the city**. Therefore, contextually the **dogs** are outside the gates of the city but not outside the new heaven and earth. Many look at the word **dog** and immediately assign them to hell but the text assigns them a place **outside** the city. This would place them on the new earth but not in the new city. I know it's hard to imagine that some genuine believers could be called **dogs, sorcerers, fornicators**, etc...but it helps when we understand how the word **dog** is being used. A **dog** was a person one who spurned and perverted that which was given to him. Therefore, these believers spurned and perverted the spiritual assets Christ gave them. They did not use their spiritual assets to glorify God. So, any believer who spurns what Christ has given him is rightly characterized as a **dog**. Therefore they are assigned a place outside the city.

The list here is, first of all, very similar to the list in Rev 22:8, 1 Cor 6:9-10 and Gal 5:19-21. Each of these is a passage about “inheritance”. As we have learned there are two inheritances; a positional inheritance that is received on the basis of faith alone in Christ alone and an experiential inheritance that is received on the basis of good works as a reward (Col 3:24). This context and similar contexts all concern the experiential inheritance which must be earned and which some believers do not earn (1 Cor 3:15; Col 3:23-25). The list here is, second of all, a list of character. This is not saying these believers did these things one or two times. Rather their lives were characterized by one or more of the things listed here. They could be called a **fornicator** or **murderer** etc...Of course, this representative list is characteristic of a believer who does not wash his robes continually. He does not walk in the light but in the darkness. He is a believer who rationalizes his sin rather than admitting his sin. He is therefore a liar and the truth is not in him. Therefore there are eternal consequences for such a life. They spurned what Christ gave them and so they will be in the new heaven and earth but will not have access **to the tree of life** or **entry into the city by the gates**.

Revelation 22:16 I, Jesus, sent (1SAAI) My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am (1SPAI) the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.

I, Jesus, for He has been the speaker of these things, **sent My angel**, for He is the Lord of all the angels. **to testify** or **witness...to you these things**, that is, the complete contents of the Book of Revelation originated with God the Father and Jesus Christ mediated by an angel. All these things in Rev 1-22 are **for the churches**. This is significant for two reasons. First, because it implies that the things in this book can be understood. Second, because Christ wants us to know the future even when it extends beyond the Church age. Christ wants us to know about the details of the Tribulation, the Millennial Kingdom and the New Heaven and Earth. All these truths are vital parts of the Christian's armor which will shield him against the subtle schemes of the devil. God knows what the believer in the Church needs to know in order to be victorious and He has graciously revealed this to us in the Book of Revelation. Other books of the Bible outline various aspects of eschatological truth but none so comprehensively as the Book of Revelation. It is a gold mine of prophetic truth and gives true motivation to live a godly life by keeping the commandments in this book. If we don't there are eternal consequences. The final picture of the New Heaven and Earth with a new Jerusalem full of pleasures once enjoyed in the Garden of Eden is not just here for curiosities sake. It is here to motivate believers to live a godly life so they can partake of them in close proximity to the King and serve Him in greater capacity. While all who have faith alone in Christ alone will be present not all will enjoy the rewards promised to those who overcome. Thus, the means of attaining them are outlined for us in Rev 2-3 and the knowledge of Rev 4-22 is necessary for this attainment. Therefore, **these things are for the churches**. It's unfortunate that prophecy has fallen on hard times in many evangelical circles. This is due in large part to philosophies of uncertainty that have crept into our church. No one can know for sure so many say "Prophecy is not essential. Everything will pan out in the end." Yet the Bible proclaims on no uncertain terms what the future will be like. It can be known and should be known because it is essential to godly living. **these things are for the churches!**

Christ's self-identification as **the root and offspring of David** teaches that He is both the *ancestor* of David and the *descendant* of David. He came *before*

David and *after* David. How this can be is only resolved by the unique God-man. Christ can be *before* David in His deity and *after* David in His humanity. So, the phrase **root and offspring of David** emphasizes both His deity and humanity. He is called **root of David** because He provides divine stability and strength to the house of David (cf Rev 5:5). He is called the **offspring of David** because He was born of that house and is therefore the fulfillment of the Messianic promises made to the house of David. This alludes to the prophecy of

Isaiah 11:1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse [David's father], and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

This and other prophecies (e.g. 2 Sam 7:12-16) were clearly fulfilled in Jesus according to Luke 1:27; John 7:42; Romans 1:3; 2 Timothy 2:8; Revelation 22:16.

Lastly He identifies Himself as **the bright morning star**. In secular thought the **morning star** was the bright planet Venus which could be seen in the east before or at sunrise. For this reason it is sometimes called the "daystar". In the Bible the angels of God are called "morning stars" in Job 38:7 and Satan before his fall is called "star of the morning" in Isa 14:12. In each case it refers to a person or object so bright it can be seen even against a background of light. In Rev 2:28 the "morning star" is promised to the overcomer and here Christ identifies Himself as **the bright morning star**. Here is added the adjective **bright** to emphasize His illumination. He is the light of the world and no other light compares to Him. When He is enthroned in the new Jerusalem there will be no night because He will illumine it (21:23; 22:5). He is indeed the **bright morning star** which will arise in our hearts (2 Pt 1:19) and will outshine all other lights that may be present in the new heaven and new earth. What does it mean that Christ will give the morning star (i.e. Himself) to the overcomer? The Greek word "give" can mean "favor" or "privilege". Perhaps what is being referred to is greater privileges enjoyed by serving in close proximity to the morning star in the new Jerusalem.

Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say (3PPAI), 'Come'. And the one's hearing (PAPart) say (3SAAImp), 'Come'.

And the thirsty (PAPart), 'Come' (3SPMImp), the willing (PAPart) take (3SAAImp) water of life without cost."

Three times in this verse someone says **'Come'**. But who is speaking and who is asked or told to **'Come'**? First, **the Spirit and the bride say 'Come'**. This is the Spirit of God and the Church of God saying to Christ **'Come'**. This is the desire of the Spirit of God and the Church of God for Christ to come. The Spirit and the bride long for His presence. Second **the one's hearing say 'Come'**. This is the added plea of those who hear the Book of Revelation read in the general assembly. Our overall response to this book should be **'Come'** Lord Jesus. Finally, **the thirsty and the willing** are commanded to **'Come'** and **take of the water of life without cost**. This is an open invitation to salvation. The gospel is an open invitation. Not all hear it but all who do and are **thirsty** and **willing** should **'Come'**. They should come because it is free and quenches their spiritual thirst. Salvation is the only thing that quenches our thirst and comes **without cost** (to mankind). Here it is signified by **the water of life**. Jesus said, "whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:14). Physical thirst may be quenched by a cup of water but spiritual thirst is quenched only by the water of life that comes from Christ. He is the source of the water of life. No human philosophy can ever quench the spiritual thirst of fallen man. Only receiving Christ as savior can quench man's thirst. Receiving Him is as easy as taking a cool drink of water. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). Salvation is a free gift that comes from God on the basis of grace and through faith alone. There is no charge and there are no strings attached. If one is **thirsty** and if one is **willing** he may take freely of the **water of life**. This is the offer of eternal life which comes by faith alone in Christ alone apart from human merit. So, this verse asks for Christ to **'Come'** back and for sinners who are thirsty and willing to **'Come'** and drink freely of the water of life.

Revelation 22:18 I testify (1SPAI) to every one hearing the words of the prophecy of this scroll: whoever may add to this, God will add to him the plagues having been written (PerfPassPart) in this scroll,

Revelation 22:19 and if anyone may take away (3SAASubj) from the words of the scroll of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of lifeⁱ and from the holy city having been written (PerfPassPart) in this scroll.

Here we have “The so-called canonization formula in the passage—‘not add nor take away’—“ This formula “has been traced back to 2450 BC in Egypt.”ⁱⁱ Similar warnings against adding or taking away are found in the OT (Dt 4:2; 12:32). For example, Deuteronomy 4:2 “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.” Any addition or subtraction runs the risk of adding or subtracting God’s commandments. The penalties for adding or taking away are a bit enigmatic as Wiersbe said, “We may not be able to explain the penalties given, but we do know this: it is a dangerous thing to tamper with the Word of God. The one who guards the Word and obeys it will be blessed; the one who alters it will be disciplined in some way.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The first issue highlighted in verse 18 is who these warnings are addressed to. Verse 18 says they are issued to hearers and not to writers. Therefore, some have said the warnings are not for those who copy or translate the Bible but for those who hear the words and then add or subtract from them.^{iv} However, in my opinion this includes those who copy them. But the key concern seems to be that if a person alters the words of this scroll it renders the commands in the scroll impossible to obey (Rev 1:3; 22:7) and that leads to penalties.

It is often wondered whether these words refer to the whole Bible, the NT only or the Book of Revelation. Strictly speaking, a literal translation of these verses indicates it refers to the Scroll of Revelation. Our English translations say **this book** which in our language could refer to the whole Bible but the Greek says **this scroll**. Revelation was a single scroll penned by John the Apostle. Further, verse 19 uses the phrase **scroll of this prophecy**. The NT books were written by apostles and prophets but none except Revelation can be categorized as **prophecy**. At the beginning of the book Revelation is called “prophecy” (1:3). So, this warning is against adding or taking away words from the Book of Revelation.

However, in a broader sense these words do signal the end of prophetic revelation. God chose to reveal the entire course of future history in the Book of Revelation. There is no need for additional prophetic revelation. “Any type of prophetic utterance would intrude into the domain of this coverage and constitute either an addition to or subtraction from Revelation’s content. So, the final book of the Bible is also the concluding product of NT prophecy. It also marks the close of the NT canon since the prophetic gift was the divinely chosen means for communicating the inspired book of the canon.”^v

Verse 18 addresses those who hear and add.^{vi} If an individual heard and then added words then **God will add to him the plagues written in this scroll**. The plagues written in this scroll have to be at the very least the bowl judgments since they are also called “plagues” in Rev 15:1; 21:9 (also the sixth and seventh Trumpets or second and third Woes). But this assumes that the person who hears and adds is living in the future seven-year Tribulation. Everyone that has died to date is therefore excluded from this judgment. Further, the bowl judgments show perfect discrimination (cf 16:2ff). That is, they come only upon unbelievers (i.e. those who have the mark of the beast). This perfect discrimination mirrors several of the Exodus plagues which came only on the Egyptians (e.g. Exod 8:22-23). Thus, only someone living in the Tribulation, hearing the words, adding to the words and having the mark of the beast could receive this judgment of God. Without doubt there will be attempts at prophetic revelation by the false prophet during the Tribulation. These should not be listened to. There may also be attempts to alter these words during the Tribulation so as to render the hearers incapable of following God’s commandments. No doubt it is a serious thing for a hearer of these words to add to these words because then he is subject to the horrors of the bowl judgments.

Verse 19 warns any hearer of the words of Revelation against taking away any words of Revelation. Again, the warning is limited to those who hear. If someone takes away any words then **God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city**. This warning seems to be directed toward believers since **the tree of life** (Rev 2:7) and **the holy city** (Rev 21:7) are rewards for the overcomers. Further, no mention is made of Tribulation plagues falling on them. Instead, the rewards of the **tree of life** and **holy city** are retracted.

In conclusion three things can be said about these verses. First, judgment is added to those who add and rewards are taken away from those who take away. Second, the penalties are severe because adding or taking away from the words of Revelation render the commandments incapable of being followed. Third, the scroll of Revelation is the end of prophecy since it outlines the entire course of prophetic events. It is therefore the final book in the canon of Scripture.

Revelation 22:20 He who is testifying (PAPart) to these things says, “Yes, I come (1SPMI) quickly. Amen, Come (2SPMImp) Lord Jesus.”

Verse 20 gives a final testimony from the **Lord Jesus**. He is the one **who is testifying to these things**. He responds to the Spirit and the bride and hearers who asked Him to ‘**Come**’ with the words “**Yes, I come quickly**”. There is a desire on both sides for Christ to come so the consummation of our redemption can take place. John responds to Christ with an **Amen** which means “truly, truly” and with the admonition **Come Lord Jesus**. These words are the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic *Maranatha* found in 1 Cor 16:22. This Aramaic word was the “watchword” of Christians in the 1st century. It was the word used commonly among Christians and served as a reminder that Christ could come at-any-moment.

Revelation 22:21 The grace of the Lord Jesus with all.

The prophecy closes with a benediction found in many NT books, **The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all**. All of Paul’s letters end with a note of “grace” except Titus (Rom 16:24; 1 Cor 16:24; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 6:18; Eph 6:24; Phil 4:23; Col 4:18; 1 Thess 5:28; 2 Thess 3:18; 1 Tim 6:21; 2 Tim 4:22; Philemon 25) as well as the Book of Hebrews (13:25). Here John uses a similar formula. It is by **the grace of the Lord Jesus** that we are saved through faith and it is by **the grace of the Lord Jesus** that we stand firm in the faith.

In conclusion, the scroll of Revelation begins and ends with its main theme; the coming of Jesus Christ. He comes to discipline believers who do not obey, He comes to rescue believers of the Church Age, He comes to judge the earth-dwellers in the Tribulation, He comes to reign in His Kingdom, He comes to

live among His saints. As a note of finality we might also say, “Maranatha, Our Lord Come!”

ⁱ The reading “book of life” has *no* Greek mss. support here! The last six verses were missing in Erasmus’ Greek copy of Revelation so he translated these verses back from the Latin Vulgate.

ⁱⁱ Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible Commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) (Re 22:6). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Re 22:6

^{iv} Wiersbe said, “It was customary in ancient days for writers to put this kind of warning at the close of their books, because the people who copied them for public distribution might be tempted to tamper with the material.”

^v Thomas, Robert, *Revelation 8-22*, 517.

^{vi} John’s warning was not addressed to a writer, but to the hearer, the believer in the congregation where this book was read aloud.

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