



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

LESSON 16 – Epilogue

LESSON OBJECTIVE

The goal of this lesson is to understand the interpretation of chapter 22:6-21 of the Revelation, with particular emphasis on the final testimonies of the angel, Jesus, and John.

NOTES ON REVELATION 21

22:6 “And he said unto me, These sayings *are* faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.”

The remaining verses in the book are not really a part of the main body of the book. Recall from the divine outline in 1:19 that the third portion of the book would concern the “things which shall be hereafter.” That section formally ends with 22:5, and the remainder of the book serves as an epilogue or post-script, similar to the last verse in the epistle we call 1 John. These final verses will focus on three testimonies: that of the angel, that of Jesus, and that of John. The “he” that speaks here is the one of the seven angels that had the seven Vial Judgments (trace back the references to “he” in Revelation 22:1, 21:17, 21:10, 21:9). The angel looks back over the entire scope of the book and declares that they are faithful and true (recall that this is the name of Jesus in Revelation 19:11), that is, they will surely come to pass. God sent his angel (see Revelation 1:1) to tell his servants (and by application, us) what must shortly take place. Shortly does not necessarily mean soon, but can be understood to mean suddenly or quickly; in other words, when these events start, they will take place quickly. Even if the angel is saying the events are soon, this is not surprising, because from God’s perspective of time, these events will occur soon (recall 2 Peter 3:8). This verse represented testimony of the angel.

22:7 “Behold, I come quickly: blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”

This is the introduction to Jesus’ testimony. Jesus will say three times in this section that “I come quickly.” This promise never occurred in chapter 4 through 22:5 with regard to the Tribulation. The reason is that Jesus’ quick coming does not have to do with the Tribulation, but the Rapture, after which time the Tribulation events will begin. Jesus tells us that those who “keepeth” (hears and honors) the words of the Revelation are blessed or happy.

22:8 “And I John saw these things, and heard *them*. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.”

John falls down to worship the angel and is immediately told by the angel to stop. Recall that this happened before in Revelation 19:10. This tells us that even John may not fully comprehend everything he has seen, but he is faithful to write even this somewhat negative detail down for us accurately.

22:9 “Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.”

The angel tells John to stop worshipping him, because he is only an angel. The angel is a fellowservant of John, the prophets and those that heed the words of the book (that is us). There is no place for angel worship in the Scriptures. This verse begins the angel’s testimony.

22:10 “And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.”

The angel tells John not to seal up the words of the Revelation. In other words, because the events are “at hand,” they must be written and published. The angel tells John this because in Daniel 12:4, 9, the angel told Daniel to seal up the prophecy, because it was not yet time to give the information. From Daniel’s perspective, he was separated by a dispensation from the events of the prophecy (the intervening dispensation is what we often refer to as the Church Age). But from John’s perspective, there is no intervening dispensation; the next event on God’s prophetic calendar is the Rapture and then the events of this book shortly thereafter.

22:11 “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”

Here, the angel is looking to eternity future. Both Jesus and the angel have just said the events of this book are at hand. Once they come to pass, there will be no second chances. The sinner (unjust, filthy) that goes into the Lake of Fire will not change (“let him be unjust still” and “let him be filthy still”). But the righteous person will go into eternity and remain righteous (“let him be righteous still” and “let him be holy still”). In other words, those that spend eternity with God will never change and lose their righteousness or holiness, and those that spend eternity in the Lake of Fire will never repent and cease their wickedness.

22:12 “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

Now, Jesus begins his testimony. Your creed always determines your conduct. Jesus will judge every man according to his works, but those works, of course, flow from beliefs. In view of Jesus’ imminent return, we need to have right thinking and right conduct in accordance with that right thinking. Our right conduct will result in rewards. Key passages on rewards that will help to understand the implications of this verse are 2 Corinthians 5:10 and 1 Corinthians 3:8-15. Often, there is a misunderstanding of “rewards verses” which are taken as “loss of salvation” verses (see, e.g., Ephesians 4:17-5:5). We need to understand that the doctrine of rewards is prominent in the New Testament and recognize when it is rewards, rather than salvation, that is at issue, as in the Ephesians passage.

22:13 “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”

Jesus is the alpha and omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Jesus’ point, which is reiterated in his statements that he is “the beginning and the end” and the “first and the last,” is that he is the all in all, the alpha and omega and everything in between. In other words, Jesus is God (see Isaiah 44:6). This description of Jesus as God makes perfect sense in this book, because it is the bookend of the Bible (the other being Genesis), and He has brought it all to pass.

22:14 “Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

This is the seventh and final “Revelation beatitude,” the others being Revelation 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, and 22:7. Here, the blessing pronounced by Jesus is on those that are obedient to his commandments, which is the same group that loves God (1 John 5:3). They are blessed, because they will enjoy the New Jerusalem and all that is within it (including the tree of life, which by implication, means they enjoy eternal life). As indicated in the 22:12 note, the obedience in view results from right thinking, in particular, right thinking about who Jesus is. Since they are pictured as entering the City’s gates, the blessed include not only the City’s inhabitants, but all the inhabitants of the new creation (new earth) that enter the City.

22:15 “For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”

In contrast to the believers whose beliefs about Jesus motivate their obedience, unbelievers continue in rebellion to God. The dogs are unbelievers and perhaps false teachers (Philippians 3:2). “Sorcerers” refers to makers and users of drugs (Greek *pharmikea*). The reference to those that “loveth and maketh a lie” means those who pretend friendship but without integrity, because they have ulterior motives (they are opportunists and lie to get what they want from a person). The “loveth” here is *phileo* not *agape*; the former has the sense of emotional love, whereas the latter is volitional choice. Jesus’ point is that the sinners in eternity will have no part in the new earth, because they are in the Lake of Fire.

22:16 “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star.”

That Jesus is both the root and offspring of David indicates that he is eternal (see John 8:58). The reference to David reminds us of the many Old Testament prophecies concerning the permanence of David’s throne (recall the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7). Jesus is the promised Davidic king that will rule forever. That he is the “bright and morning star” probably indicates that he ushers in a new age. Note that Jesus’ message and this epistle are not to Christians at large, but specifically, Christians in “the churches,” which is a reference to the seven churches of chapters 2 and 3. It is a reasonable deduction from this statement that Jesus assumes the Christian to be a part of a local church, and therefore, he addresses his message to local churches with the understanding that by so doing, all those that should hear the message will hear the message.

22:17 “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

This is the testimony of John; he is repeating what he heard. The Holy Spirit and the bride (all New Testament saints) say “come,” an invitation to become a child of God; the idea of coming to the City, by implication, means becoming a child of God and therefore inheriting the right to come to the City. And those that hear and respond are told to look to others and say “come”. And the invitation is to go out to all that are thirsty to take of the water of life freely that flows out from the throne through the City (i.e., evangelize). A person can partake of the spiritual water today by accepting Jesus as personal savior and will in the future enjoy the water that flows through the City. The gift of salvation is free to “whosoever will.” This reminds us of Jesus telling the Samaritan woman, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water” (John 4:10). The point is that salvation has no cost attached to it (this is grace), it cannot be purchased or earned. It is available freely to

those that want it. They need only trust Jesus like the Samaritan woman. This verse is a real problem for those who would argue that salvation is not universally available.

22:18 “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:”

John gives a stern warning about altering the book of the Revelation to those that “heareth the words of the prophecy,” which I believe indicates hearing with understanding. For others, the warning about plagues would mean little. Those that would add to it will endure the plagues written herein. Since the plagues only occur in the Tribulation and only directly affect the unsaved in general, I think we are to understand John to be announcing a warning primarily about the unsaved to the saved. This may even be prophetic, an indication that in the Tribulation there will be those that tamper with the book, which is a sure sign that they are unsaved. Generally speaking, only the unsaved would tamper with God’s Word, but if a saved person insists on doing what the unsaved so readily do and tampers with the Word, he would be treated the same. I do not take this warning to mean that if someone tampered with the text in the second century that he would endure the plagues, although by application, those who tamper with the book will suffer temporal punishment, in fact, death. The future events of this book are consistently spoken of as being at hand, and so this verse is written as if those alive at the time of its writing might live to see the Tribulation. What we are to understand is the seriousness of altering the Word, and that such action will be met with temporal judgment from God. But what application does this verse have for believers? Although I think the unsaved are primarily in view, if a saved person insists on identifying himself with the unsaved by his conduct (here, specifically, by altering the book; recall Lot’s wife, who insisted on being identified with the cursed city), then he will suffer the same temporal judgment as the non-believer. The issue is temporal judgment, as God did to believers in Acts 5 and 1 Corinthians 11; the issue is not salvation (see Hebrews 10:26-39).

22:19 “And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from the things which are written in this book.*”

Some have tried to use this verse to teach that one can lose salvation by, among other things, altering the book of the Revelation. But that is not what it states in context. From the previous verse, which speaks of those guilty of altering the book as going through the Tribulation, we understand the warnings in verses 18 and 19 to be primarily about the unsaved. Those that would alter the book, in light of this warning, would do well to consider where they stand with God. Prophetically, John is likely telling us that unsaved people will come along and try to alter the book of the Revelation, and we are to understand from their actions that (1) they are unsaved and (2) their alterations are illegitimate. Note that the work translated “book” (of life) is, in the Greek, “tree.” So what is at risk is access to the tree of life, the holy city (New Jerusalem) and the “things which are written in this book,” that is, the blessings herein. The unsaved person will have no place in the new heaven and new earth. The warning to the saved person brazen enough to alter the book is a warning of loss of rewards (e.g., 2 John 7-8). That person does not lose salvation, but his access to the City is in some way limited. Note that those who want to take verses 18 and 19 as a warning of loss of salvation are not only going against the context here, but also against the great weight of Biblical authority for eternal security (e.g., John 10:25-31; Romans 11:28-29).

22:20 “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

Jesus repeats that he is coming quickly and John responds with an “Amen” (so be it). And John’s prayer is that Jesus would come. John looks forward to Jesus coming and the events to follow, namely the rapture and the establishment of Jesus' kingdom.

22:21 “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with you all. Amen.*”

This is John’s post-script to his readers (originally, the seven churches of chapters 2 and 3), much like the last verse in 1 John. This book is largely about encouragement to the readers, and consistently, John prays for the grace (unmerited favor) of Jesus to be with his readers. The final “Amen” refers back to the entire book. John says, in effect, it is all true and certain.

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, Tyndale House Publishers (1983)

RECOMMENDATION

It is highly recommended that each person taking this course read chapter 22 for this lesson in Henry M. Morris’ commentary.