

Revelation 22:1-11

"The Time Is At Hand"

The city of Rev 21-22 is breathtaking, beautiful & beyond description. The day is coming whereby for all who believe in the Lord J.C. there will be no more death, no more crying, no more sorrow & no more pain. All of the things associated w/sin; suffering, separation, the breakdown of the body will have passed away & all things will be made new. God will create a *new* heaven & a *new* earth; & a city called the New Jerusalem will descend out of heaven from God & the new creation will revolve around this city.

It's a city beyond our ability to comprehend, some 1400 miles in height, in breadth, & in length. There will be 12 gates in which are inscribed the names of the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel; 3 on the north, 3 on the south, 3 on the east & 3 on the west. Each gate will be crafted of one massive pearl. The city itself (along w/it's street) is constructed of pure gold, like clear glass. There's a wall that surrounds the city made of something like a beautifully cut diamond, it's over 200' high & it has 12 foundations bearing the names of the 12 apostles. Each foundation is a precious jewel & the illumination of the city comes from the Light of the World, even J.C. Himself, our risen Savior. But there's no temple *in* the city, for the entire city *is* a temple; it's like one massive Holy of Holies in which God Himself dwells & walks w/His people.

Now, in the 1st few Vs of Ch 22 we move from the outside to the inside of the city. So far we've seen mostly the minerals, the city is constructed of precious gems, pure gold & such. As for the inside, we see a city teeming w/life, it's organic & fresh, waters of life, the tree of life, a beautiful scene reminiscent perhaps of Eden. Let's look together.

Vs 1-2

We recall that one of the 7 angels who had the 7 bowls of the final 7 plagues had come to John & was giving to John a tour of this city, the New Jerusalem. Now that he's allowed him to survey the exterior, he gives him a glimpse of the interior; & he shows him a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal proceeding from the throne of God & of the Lamb.

Of course how could it be anything less than abundant or pure if it proceeds from God's throne? This water speaks to us of vitality, of permanence, of purity, of satisfaction & incorruption. As Peter said, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,*"¹

¹ The New King James Version, 1982 (1 Pe 1:3-4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

What a beautiful picture here of the wellspring of Living Water, everlasting life, undefiled & incorruptible flowing forth from the throne of God & of the Lamb. Notice they're a package deal; their throne is one. Even as Jesus said, *"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."*²

But it's hard to read of this water of life & not be reminded of the scene in John Ch 7. Perhaps you recall, it was during the Feast of Tabernacles, that feast which served as the commemoration of God's preservation of the nation of Israel during their 40 yrs in the wilderness after their deliverance from Egypt & prior to their entering the Promised Land. For 7 days the temple priests would march in procession w/water jugs on their shoulders down to the pool of Siloam there in the Kidron Valley. They would then fill those jugs & march back to the temple courtyard where thousands would be gathered to worship God. *& As the people would break forth in the Hallel Psalms the priests would pour the water from these jugs out on the pavement as a reminder of God's faithfulness to bring water from the rock in order to quench the thirst of their fathers in the wilderness who would've otherwise died w/out it.*

But on the last day, the great day of the feast, the priests didn't make the procession nor did they pour out any water on the pavement. *It was to signify God's faithfulness in keeping His promise to their fathers. He preserved them in the wilderness & brought them into the land, a well-watered land where they no longer needed water to gush miraculously from the rock.* It was on that day where we read, *"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"*³ Living water, not only flowing *into* but *out through* your life, Christ pouring *into* you, spilling *out* of you into the lives of those *around* you. But check it out, it goes on, *"But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."*⁴ So when Jesus was speaking of torrents of living water, gushing into & out through you it was a reference to the Person & power of the Holy Spirit who would fill all who believe.

Even so here in Rev 22 as we see "living waters" issuing forth from the throne of God, surely it's speaks to us not only of the pure work & power of the Holy Spirit that renews, refreshes & quenches our thirst currently, but He will continue to move in power throughout eternity.

² The New King James Version. 1982 (Re 3:21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. 1982 (Jn 7:37-38). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ The New King James Version. 1982 (Jn 7:39). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

As the psalmist said, *"There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;"*⁵

Ezekiel prophesies of a preview of this in the millennial kingdom, a foreshadowing *there* of what's fulfilled *here*. A river that will flow from under the threshold of the temple bringing life & vitality, trees on either side of the river. It will be beautiful & breathtaking I have no doubt, but it pales in comparison to what we're reading of here. This is a better river, w/better trees, notice.

Vs 2

Well this certainly stirs up questions doesn't it? It's hard to visualize in our minds eye exactly what this is going to look like. Will it be a river that runs (similar to a canal) down the center of the street w/a row of trees on either side? I suppose we won't know the landscape in detail till we get there but you can bet it will be breathtaking.

Of course when we read of the "Tree of Life" we can't help but be brought all the way back to the Garden of Eden can we? It was there in the garden that God had given man the right to partake of the fruit of this tree, but once man partook of the "forbidden fruit" the fruit of the knowledge of good & evil (& sin entered the equation), God forbade man to partake of this tree & live forever in his decrepit fallen state.

Now, back in Rev 2:7 Jesus promised (to all who overcome) the right restored to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. Here we find that fulfillment, which I suppose gives way to another question that some have; will we eat in heaven? It seems as though we will be *able* to, but we won't have to. We know that Jesus, in His resurrection body enjoyed eating w/His disciples, we know that we'll partake of what the bible calls "The Marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19). So it would seem as though eating will be a part of the heavenly experience ☺! Again it won't be necessary to sustain life, but the opportunity will be there. The tree of life will yield fruit every month, though we can't say dogmatically it would seem to be presumably for consumption.

Now here's an observation that I don't know that I've ever really noted about eternity before. Time will exist. Did you catch that there in Vs 2? How often does the tree yield fruit? "Every month", so evidently though we won't be bound *by* or subject *to* time (at least in the same way we are today), in some way heaven will *mark* time.

"The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

⁵ The New King James Version, 1982 [Ps 46:4-5], Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Again this invokes a question for which to be honest I can't provide a clear answer. If there's no more sickness, sorrow or pain, what's the worth of the medicinal value of the leaves & why do the nations need "healing"? The word "healing" here is the word from which our word "therapy" or "therapeutic" comes from. The idea is "health giving", meaning that in some way this tree (& the leaves thereon) will minister to & serve (in a healthy way) the nations.

We saw last week that the nations of those saved will walk in the light of this city & the kings of the earth will bring their glory & honor into it. In some way they will be blessed & benefit from partaking of these leaves. Perhaps in a manner different than those of us who dwell in the city proper, I don't know. We're told that as the church we will be made like Christ, that is our resurrection bodies will be like His. Does that mean that those who are saved who weren't part of the church will be raised in the same manner w/the same kind of body? I don't know... Again I'm not trying to create confusing concepts, where the bible is silent we do well to be silent. Some things we simply file in the "more information needed" file & those questions will be answered when we get there. But this much we do know, no more sin, no more sorrow, no more sickness.

Vs 3-5

Again we have a city marked not only by what *is* there, but by what's *not* there. No need for a lamp nor light of the sun for the Lord God gives them light, & there shall be no more curse.

The fallout of Adam's bomb back in the Garden of Eden is still felt to this day as the result of the curse that followed. Pain & sorrow in childbirth, friction/tension that exists between spouses, hard labor for man & even death; all the result of the fall.

Now even though the effects of the curse will be greatly mitigated through the perfect reign & righteous rule of Christ upon the earth during the millennial kingdom; Isaiah demonstrates (65:20) that it's plausible to fall under the effects of the curse even then. But in the new creation the curse will be no more forever. But rather the throne of God & of the Lamb shall be in it. Sounds like a beautiful exchange to me... The curse is gone & the throne of God will be present.

Sort of reminds me of the exchange God is seeking to offer to man even today. In Christ God offers healing to the brokenhearted, liberty to those bound in sin & transgression, Jesus came of give us, "...beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;"⁶

⁶ The New King James Version, 1982 (Is 61:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It blows my mind that people prefer to wallow in the mire, & to sulk in the spirit of heaviness when Jesus wants to give us new life...

But in the new creation there will be no more curse & we will serve Him & see His face. What will you do throughout eternity? You will serve the Lord. Not in an arduous, curse stained toil kind of way, but in a blessed, fruitful & glorious kind of way. Listen, don't balk at the idea of serving the Lord throughout eternity. It's not the worst thing that could happen to you, it's the *best* thing that could happen to you. You will reign as kings and priests unto your God.

Perhaps you recall when James & John were wanting to be seated on a pair of thrones next to the Lord in His kingdom, have the platform of prominence & prestige... Mark tells us, *"But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*⁷ Jesus was teaching us a lesson & that is this, the way up is down. The path to greatness is through humility & servant-hood.

Being called to serve God throughout eternity isn't a punishment; it's the highest of privileges! As F.B. Myer once said, "I used to think that God's gifts were on shelves one above the other; and that the taller we grew in Christian character the easier we could reach them. I now find that God's gifts are on shelves one beneath the other. It is not a question of growing taller but of stooping lower; that we have to go down, always down, to get His best gifts." Through humiliation comes exaltation...

How exactly will we serve Him? I have no idea, but heaven won't simply be idle leisure, it will be fruitful activity! Vs 5, We "shall reign forever & ever"; servant leadership at it's finest. What will we reign over? I have no idea, another one of those mind-blowing revelations to find out when we get there! God will identify w/you; you will see His face & His name will be on your forehead, & you will reign forever & ever. It's no mystery that we don't see everything as clear today as we will then. Paul said, *"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known."*⁸

⁷ The New King James Version. 1982 (Mk 10:42-45). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ The New King James Version. 1982 (1 Co 13:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Ultimately that's what will make heaven, heaven, being w/Jesus & seeing Him face to face, knowing Him intimately & dwelling w/Him throughout eternity.

The bible opens w/the account of "Paradise Lost", it closes w/the reality of "Paradise Regained"; & we glean this in the ideas of a river, a tree of life, the revocation of the curse, intimacy restored w/God, & dominion (that is reigning) resumed.

A perfect consummation, a perfect culmination of all things: Here's 7 points to paint a quick snapshot of heaven for you. No more curse = **1. Perfect Restoration**, God's Throne in our midst = **2. Perfect Administration**, our service to Him = **3. Perfect Subordination**, seeing His face = **4. Perfect Transformation**, His name on our foreheads = **5. Perfect Identification**, God's light = **6. Perfect Illumination**, Reigning forever = **7. Perfect Exultation**.

Doesn't that thrill your heart? Sounds too good to be true doesn't it? John was stunned as well, once again he had to be goaded to get to writing it down.

Vs 6-7

Hey, heaven is more than a destination, it's a *motivation!* The assurance of heaven ought not lull us into *complacency*, but rather we should be stirred to spiritual *activity*.

Jesus says, "I want to bless your life; here's how, through your willful obedience to the words of the prophecy of this book." **What does that mean? It means that prophecy gives us a word to keep, not just material for debate, discussions & interesting speculation. The main intent of prophecy is to lead us to trust the Lord & respond in obedience to His Word; we're to apply His truth to the way that we live.**

Now, what's the idea behind, "Behold, I am coming quickly!" Or, "Things which must take place 'shortly'." Understand that the word doesn't necessarily indicate a brief amount of time. The idea is more that of "suddenly". **In other words, right now we're in Rev Ch's 2-3 right? The age of the church, but once Ch takes place, once the rapture of the church happens, everything that we've studied throughout this book will commence & take place w/increasing rapidity & intensity until eternity unfolds.**

Jesus says, "It's going to happen quick". Imagine, rushing toward a cliff at top speed, just before you go careening off the edge to you turn & begin to run parallel to it. You're still right on the edge & should something trigger an unforeseen turn of events, you'll go off quick. **That's where we are in church history, running parallel to the edge & when it breaks loose, it'll happen quick, suddenly. That's why it behooves us to be ready...**

Vs 8-9

This is the 2nd time John has made this mistake along the way. Back in Ch 19 he did the same thing, though we certainly don't fault him for being overwhelmed we need to realize a couple of things & they are these. #1 Just because someone receives supernatural revelation, that's not of itself proof that they're correct in their doctrine, or in their practice. If the apostle John can receive this kind of revelation & still err in his practice how much more do we need to be subjecting a person or a ministry's practice to the scrutiny of the word of God?

This angel says, "Hey John, we're both players on the same team (along w/everyone else who keeps the word of God), don't worship me worship God." Which takes us to #2, This angel is very clear that angels are not to be worshiped, only God is deserving of worship. Yet it's interesting that J.W.'s purport that Jesus is actually Michael the Arc Angel & Mormons believe that Michael the Arc angel is actually Adam. Now Brigham Young (Mormon Patriarch) said that Adam was the god of this world & the only god w/which we have to do. Either way you've got the practice (ultimately) of worshiping angels. Yet angels (Heb 1) worship & serve Christ.

Now all throughout the gospels you find Jesus receiving worship. Now if only the Creator is worthy of worship, not creation (including angels) & yet we find Jesus receiving worship all throughout the gospels, He's either a sinful created creature, or the sinless Creator God... What does the bible say? *1 Tim 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh,"*⁹ John Ch 1, "In the beginning was the Word, & the Word was w/God & the word was God. He was in the beginning w/God. All things were made through Him & w/out Him nothing was made that was made..." Vs 14 & the Word became flesh & dwelt among us & we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace & truth... & of His fullness we have received, & grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses but grace & truth came through...wait for it... **J.C.**

Worship God, Jesus is God manifested in the flesh; the brightness of His glory & the express image of His Person.

Vs 10-11

It's amazing how many Pastors, Preachers & teachers avoid the book of Revelation because they say it's too complicated, too many interpretations, seal it up... But the word to John was "Don't seal it, open it, for the time is at hand."

⁹ The New King James Version, 1982 (1 Ti 3:16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now Daniel was told to seal his book until the time of the end, John is told, that time is now... Since the time of Christ forward we live in what the bible designates as the last days (Heb 1). The book of Revelation isn't meant to *conceal* it's meant to *reveal*. It's the *unveiling*, the *Revelation* of J.C.

Don't be afraid of the book of Revelation, dive into it! You'll be blessed for it. Now if you want to spiritualize everything, wonder if this means that, or that means the other thing, then certainly you'll be confused. But if you'll take it at face value even if you're understanding is unfruitful, then it says what it means & means what it says. It's only when you try to interpret everything as something else that you open Pandora's box of endless speculation & confusion. Just let it say what it says & you'll be fine.

But guys we're on the threshold, running parallel to the edge of the cliff. That's what Vs 11 is saying. It's not saying, "Well, I don't really care if you repent, just go on in sin if that's where you're at." That's contrary to the heart of God who commands all men everywhere to repent, turn from their sin & trust in Him.

What this is saying is that when Christ comes you will be resolved, locked in (if you will) to your current condition at that time. The unjust will remain in that place, the filthy will be filthy still & those who love God will be "locked in" & eternity will begin. Again it's the urgency to get right w/Christ today because the time is at hand. Christ could call His church home at any moment & you don't want to miss it. Amen? Amen.

If you're not certain you'll be in that # than I'm going to give that opportunity before we leave here to turn from your sin & trust in J.C. who loved you & gave Himself for you that you might receive God's gift of everlasting life in Him. Sin equals separation from God, in Christ we're reconciled to God through the blood of His cross.

Prayer Points:

Lord once again we're refreshed through the living water of Your word. The sweet fellowship of Your Spirit & we give You praise. Lord teach us to be those who keep the words of the prophecy of this book. We want to be doers of Your word, not hearers only deceiving ourselves. We want to decrease that You might increase in our lives. Have Your way in us...