

## Revelation 22 – The Return To Paradise

NOTE: The beginning of chapter 22 probably is a continuation of chapter 21 – the new creation language here is a further description of the New Jerusalem which is the re-made paradise (Greek for garden) in Eden.

### I. The Paradise of God is Restored (1-5)

#### A. The Description of the Restored Creation (1-2)

##### 1. The River of Life (1-2a)

a. Possible that the genitive is attributive (meaning “living water” rather than “water of life”)

i. This draws our minds to Christ’s words about living water (John 4)

b. References To the Old Testament Prophets

i. Allusion to Ezekiel’s Perfect Eschatological Temple

- Ezekiel 47:1 - Then he brought me back to the door of the temple, and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar.
- Ezekiel 47:6-7 - Then he led me back to the bank of the river. As I went back, I saw on the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other.
- Ezekiel 47:12 - And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”
- Notice that in the Ezekiel passage, the river flows from the eschatological temple, but in Revelation 22:1 – the river flows from the throne of God.
- Why? - And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. – Revelation 21:22

ii. Allusion to Zechariah 14:8 - On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the

western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter.

- c. Reference to Genesis Garden
  - i. Genesis 2:10 - A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden...
  - ii. Each section of the new creation makes reference to the reestablishment of the perfection of Eden
- d. A Question of Punctuation
  - i. Some translations place a period at the end of verse 1, which means "through the middle of the street" describes the tree of life (which means the text says – through the middle of the street and on either side was a tree of life)
  - ii. Other translations place the end of the sentence after "through the middle of the street of the city" – meaning that the river itself runs through the middle of the city

## 2. The Tree of Life (2b)

- a. Reference again to Ezekiel's prophecy of the perfected temple (See Eze. 47:12 above)
  - i. Because of this quote from Ezekiel, some see many trees of life represented here in Revelation (on either side of the river) (also see Eze. 47:7 above)
  - ii. John may be using the singular "tree of life" to emphasize the connection to Genesis
- b. Reference to The Garden of Eden
  - i. Man was exiled from paradise and forbidden to eat of the tree of life
    - Gen. 3:22- Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—"
    - Gen. 3:24 - He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.
  - ii. Revelation 22 – shows the restoration of what was lost in Genesis
    - The nations are healed by taking of the tree of life

- They are able to access the tree of life because they no longer bear the sin of Adam – Christ has taken their sin

### iii. Question of Interpretation

- Some believe the tree of life and the healing leaves must be continually eaten by the nations in the new creation in order to live forever
- This doesn't follow from the description of the new creation – there is no more death or sickness to be healed from
- The tree of life here is the symbol of the return of man to the physical presence of God – the restoration from the fall of Adam.
- 12 manner of fruits – we have seen the number twelve symbolize fulfillment association with God's people all through Revelation. There is no warrant to depart from that understanding now.

## B. The Perfection of Creation is Restored (3a)

### 1. The Curse of the Fall is Removed

- a. Reference to Zech. 14:11 - People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.
- b. Although some translations of Zechariah say “there will no longer be destruction” the LXX which John exclusively quotes in Revelation says “curse” – *anathema*
- c. Fellowship and communion with God which was lost at the fall has been restored

### 2. God's Presence is With His People

- a. God's throne will be present with his people in perfect communion as in the garden of Eden
- b. Notice that both God (i.e Father) and the Lamb are said to sit on a singular throne – also that his servants will serve Him (singular)

## C. The Description of the Glorified Believers (3b-5)

### 1. God's People Will Serve in His Presence (3b-4)

- a. His people will serve (*latreuo*) Him
  - i. This is the joy of the regenerated heart
  - ii. The word can include either worship and/or service depending on the context
- iii. The idea is that all His people are priests to God
  - Rev. 1:6 - and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father

- Rev 5:10 - You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."
- Rev. 20:6 - but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

b. His People Will See His Face

- i. Exodus 33:20 - But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"
- ii. Fulfillment of Psalm 11:7 - For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; The upright will behold His face.
- iii. In the Tabernacle / Temple, only the High Priest could go into the immediate presence of God, and then only once a year on the day of atonement – and only with a proper blood sacrifice – As priests, we will always be with the Lord by the sacrifice of Jesus

c. His People Will Have His Name On Their Foreheads

- i. The picture of the high priest in the Old Testament. Exodus 28:36-38 - You shall also make a plate of pure gold and shall engrave on it, like the engravings of a seal, 'Holy to the Lord.' You shall fasten it on a blue cord, and it shall be on the turban; it shall be at the front of the turban. It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall take away the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel consecrate, with regard to all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.
- ii. Promised in Rev. 3:12 - He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God,
- iii. We also saw a foretaste in the 144,000 of Rev. 7 that had the seal of the Lamb on their foreheads

2. God's People Will Live in God's Light (5a)

- a. Fulfillment of Isa. 60:19-20 - No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the Lord for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory. "Your sun will no longer set, Nor will your moon wane; For you will have the Lord for an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be over.

- b. Possible that light will truly be from God as in the beginning of Creation. Light was created on the first day but the sun and moon weren't created until the fourth day.
    - c. The point is that creation has returned to the pre-fall state
  - 3. God's People Will Reign Forever (5b)
    - a. This is the fulfillment of Dan. 7
    - b. Dan. 7:18 - But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.'
    - c. Dan. 7:27 - Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'
- II. The Purpose of God is Being Fulfilled (6-11) (Epilogue – hard to categorize)
  - A. The Purpose of the Prophecy (6-7)
    - 1. The Prophecy is True (6a)
      - a. All the words of the book (the visions) are declared to be true
      - b. They are given by the God who spoke to the Old Testament prophets
        - i. We have seen this throughout the Revelation – extensively quoting the OT prophets
        - ii. This is the fulfillment to which the entire OT was looking
    - 2. The Prophecy is Immanent (6b)
      - a. The events were to begin “soon” as this book was read in the churches of the first century.
      - b. Once again “it is necessary” to “soon” take place – these harken back to Daniel – The same thing we saw at the very beginning of Revelation.
      - c. The events of Revelation were inaugurated in the first century, and extend through the “1000 years” to the end. The “tribulation” (as it is called) was near for those in the first century.
    - 3. The Prophecy is To Be Kept (7)
      - a. This is not just “for your information” – there is command in this prophecy
      - b. The exhortations of this book are to be heeded. To remain faithful in a corrupt idolatrous world. To hold fast to our faith through persecution and tribulation. To look forward to the reward of Christ and the new creation.
  - B. The Command of Worship (8-9)

1. John Tries to Worship the Angel (8)
  - a. Even after all that he has seen and been through, John is still in awe of the angelic messenger and the glory surrounding him
  - b. He also tried to worship the angel in 19:10
2. The Angel Rejects John's Worship (9a)
3. The Angel Commands That Only God is To Be Worshipped (9b)
  - a. This is a warning to us all – Only God is to be worshipped.
  - b. We must of course reject the idolatrous worship that the world and Satan would try to impose upon us – but we must also reject the worship of those things which seem right and good – BUT ARE NOT GOD
  - c. Only God, and God alone is to be worshipped
- C. The Prophecy of Daniel is Being Fulfilled (10-11)
  1. This is a difficult passage – Why would God say “Let the one doing wrong, continue to do wrong?”
  2. There are many explanations given as to what this means in John's ear.
  3. I believe verses 10 and 11 are revealing the fulfillment of Daniel 12:7-10
    - a. I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed. As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, “My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?” He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time. Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand. – Dan. 12:7-10
    - b. The time has come, and John is seeing the fulfillment of the times
    - c. The “Let” in v. 11 – is showing recognition that Daniel's prophecy is coming to pass – “Let it come to pass”

### III. The Declarations Based On The Prophecy (12-16)

- A. The Declaration of Coming Judgment (12)
  1. Jesus indeed “came” in judgment on first century Jerusalem and vindicated His Messiahship and prophecies.
  2. These are the last days – (The church age) there will never be another epoch or a further revelation. We simply wait on Christ's return

- a. Fulfillment of Isa. 40:10 -Behold, the Lord God will come with might, With His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him And His recompense before Him.
      - i. In the LXX, the Isa. Verse is almost verbatim to Christ's words here
      - ii. He is coming with his wages
  - B. The Declaration of Christ's Divinity (13)
  - C. The Declaration of Blessing and Cursing (14-15)
    - 1. Blessed Are Those With Access To the City (14)
      - a. Same thing we saw in 7:14-17 - I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."
      - b. Those with access (Rom. 5:1-2) have the right to eat of the tree of life (As Adam was denied) and they have the right to enter through the gate of the city
    - 2. Cursed Are Those Outside The City (15)
      - a. This is not a picture of them hanging out outside the walls wishing they could get in. They have already been cast into the lake of fire.
      - b. There is no place in the new creation for sin and wickedness
  - D. The Declaration of Jesus' Messiahship (16)
    - 1. Reference back to "the churches" – the seven letters in the beginning of Revelation
    - 2. This is also applicable to Churches throughout the church age
    - 3. Titles of Christ as Divine Messiah
      - a. Num. 24:17 - "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth.
      - b. Isa. 11:1 - Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
      - c. Isa. 11:10 - Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.
- IV. The Final Exhortation of The Prophecy (17-21)

A. The Invitation To Come (17)

B. The Warning of The Prophecy (18-19)

1. From Deut. 4:1-2 - Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. 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
2. From Deut. 12:32 - Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it. (Deut. 13 introduces the concept of false prophets who would teach differently than what God commands)
3. From Deut. 29:19-20 - It shall be when he hears the words of this curse, that he will boast, saying, 'I have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart in order to destroy the watered land with the dry.' The Lord shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the Lord and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven.
4. This is not just a warning to Scribes copying the inspired text. This is compromising the truth contained within through disobedience and idolatry. Remember the warnings to the seven churches. This is for those who do not persevere in the faith.
5. The inheritance claimed by this testimony is not theirs if they do not hold to the testimony. This is a picture of the lex talionis (law of retaliation)
  - a. If you add a word, God will add to you the plagues
  - b. If you subtract a word, God will subtract your inheritance
  - c. This is an ironic literary device of warning

C. The Final Message of God (20-21)

1. Jesus give His stamp of approval on the message of this book
2. This is an exhortation from God
3. This is a call for Jesus to come and grace be on His people until He does.