

Study 48: Revelation 22:14-21

14 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

- Again we see much of the truth that what was introduced in Genesis is revisited in Revelation. The tree of life was first mentioned in Genesis and man was barred from eating its fruit because of sin:

And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9).

And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever" (Genesis 3:22).

- Now all who "wash their robes" will have access to this tree, which of course imparts eternal life. I mentioned in an earlier study that a seminary professor I studied under interpreted eternal life to be life so good and pure that nothing can end it. I have always remembered that definition. Do you agree or disagree with his interpretation?
- How is anyone supposed to wash their robes? We are told earlier in Revelation that this washing is done with and through the blood of Jesus.

I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14).

- Entrance into eternal life and the Church is through one gate and that gate is Jesus! That is the message of Revelation. The focus of the book isn't the anti-Christ, it is the Christ! Purity and holiness come only through Him.

15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

- Entrance into the city and access to the tree of life is reserved for those who are righteous, a righteousness that only God can provide. There is no other access to the things of God except through Jesus. Is He your all in all? Is there any sin from which you need to repent? Are you relying on anything else—the wisdom of men, riches, intelligence—to give you the things of God? Are you practicing any "self righteousness?" Paul wrote:

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

- The Bible is in harmony with itself. The last few weeks, I have tried to provide more cross references from other books of the Bible that relate to or further explain the message of Revelation. Even though many different men wrote the Bible over a long period of time, the Bible is a book of amazing unity. That is because there were many writers but only one author. Someone once said the Bible is the oldest book whose author is still alive!
- You cannot invest in a more productive and meaningful spiritual discipline than the study of God's Word. I encourage you to make it your passion, with God's help and in His power, for the rest of your life. That is my commitment and desire.

16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

- The Jews asked the question:

All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" (Matthew 12:23)

- The answer is "Yes!" He is the Offspring of David.
- Jesus is the Morning Star. I wonder what that means? It is interesting that a star appeared to lead the Magi to Jesus. I have read various interpretations of what that star was and why it appeared. I really don't think it's that complicated.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course (Psalm19:1-5).

- I am no astronomer and the constellations are a mystery to me. How can anyone see a ram, a man or a crab from a pattern of stars in the sky? I know I can't. But when I search the night or early morning sky, I generally have no trouble picking out the planet Venus, referred to as the morning star. I can do this because it is by far the brightest.

- And I can search the heavens and pick Jesus out from all the other so-called lights. He is the brightest and best. He is the radiance of God's glory; He is God!
- If men search the spiritual heavens, they will find many stars in the sky. But Jesus is the brightest. He stands out from all the rest. Mohammed, Buddha and all the other "stars" that have some light cannot compare to the Morning Star. But Jesus is not only "based" in the heavens. He is also of the "ground," the root of David. Many referred to Him as the Son of David during His earthly ministry. Jesus is both God and man, and Revelation reminds us of this fact as it comes to an end.

17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

- The Spirit and the bride, the Church, need to be saying the same thing. But too often the Church is not saying to the world, "Come." We have often said to the citizens of the world, "Come," but have put too many stipulations around their coming. The Spirit wants and pleads with those who are outside the city to "Come." The Church needs to get its message in line with the Spirit's.
- Wait a minute. Why am I writing like I'm not part of the Church of Jesus? I am. If the Church has failed, it is because I have failed. I am to take the message of the Church to the world. I am to tell as many as possible to "Come." If I don't say that, who will? I can't wait for someone else to do it.
- Are you in line with the Spirit's message? Are you representing God accurately in what you say and do? Or do you have a different message and agenda? Are you angry but God isn't? Are you condemning but Jesus isn't? We are God's ambassadors and God's coworkers (see 2 Corinthians 6:1). An ambassador carries the message for the country or government he or she represents and not their own message. I must be careful to represent the kingdom of God accurately.
- For instance, Moses did not represent God accurately and God prevented him from entering the Promised Land:

"Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink." So Moses took the staff from the Lord's presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them." (Numbers 20:8-12)

- Moses was supposed to speak to the rock; instead he struck it. He made it appear that God was angry. Moses did not deliver the same message that the Spirit had in mind, and it cost him dearly. We must represent God when we speak and not our own opinions.
- We referred to the tree of life in the beginning of this week's study and now we see the water of life. Jesus referred to this water, too:

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." (John 4:13-15)

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty (John 6:35).

- If someone is spiritually dry and thirsty, they still must choose to drink the water that Jesus offers. I have known some thirsty people who steadfastly refused to quench their thirst with the water that God offers.

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.

19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

- Based on our studies, I think that some of my fellow servants have added many "words" to this book. They have made comfortable livings concocting fantastic interpretations of the end times, using Revelation as their source. They are not theologians, but science fiction writers with vivid imaginations and good writing skills.
- No matter how much I claim to know about God or the things of God, I still must face the reality of one truth:

For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known (1 Corinthians 13:9-12)

- We all know in part and not in full. May we keep that in mind as we study, preach and argue with one another! Could it be that we all see a part of the whole and not the whole itself?
- As we conclude this study, our premise has been that a key to understanding Revelation is to understand what it meant to the early church. The early church was under pressure from persecutors and was in a weakened state. The message of Revelation to them and consequently to us is that Jesus is on the throne. No power or authority will overcome His own. Therefore, the Church's focus is not to be on its enemies, but on Jesus, who is working in the midst of and through the Church no matter what the conditions.
- Oh yes, and the language of Revelation is also apocalyptic. It uses exaggerated images and metaphors to make a point and to hide the meaning from the "uninitiated," which in this case was the Roman government.

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

- The Lord is coming soon—that has been the testimony of every generation of believers, whose lives and hearts have been quickened by the power of the Holy Spirit living in them. This Holy Spirit's presence causes everyone to feel like the Lord is near and is coming soon. In fact, the Lord is coming soon. All life goes by quickly and all governments, kingdoms and empires seem like they will last forever; they do not. They pass quickly. Is this what the Lord meant when He said that He would come quickly? I'm not sure, but it is a better interpretation than those who say that soon means in a few thousand years!
- If you are in trouble or under persecution, be encouraged. The Lord is going to come to your situation soon! Either the pressure will be removed or you will die and meet the Lord—soon!

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved (Hebrews 10:35-39).

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-- kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith-- of greater worth than

gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed (1 Peter 1:3-7).

- Will the Lord return in your lifetime? Only God knows. No one else does and certainly no one can use Revelation to predict when He will return—no one.

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

- Yes, the last prayer of the Bible is for grace to be with God's people. Are you a carrier and recipient of God's grace? Is your objective to see this grace reach as many people as possible? If you think the Lord is returning soon, do you fret about a retirement account? Do you spend every vacation day on a missions trip to reach the lost? I would think that the so-called prophets predicting the Lord's return wouldn't spend so much time with the people of God who don't really need to hear that message. We're ready to go! It's those who don't know Him who need to hear that message!
- But my misguided brothers and sisters, end-time zealots, are not my enemies. They are my family. I choose, however, to spend my time and effort spreading the good news that Jesus reigns over all! He will come when He is ready and when the Father sends Him. The real question is: Will I be ready when He returns? I trust that this study has made you a little more ready to meet Jesus, who is coming soon, one way or another.
- There is no better way to end this study than to use the word that John used. So, my dear reader, I thank you for your time and effort that you expended on these Revelation studies, whether you joined them last week or have been here from the beginning of the year. With that said, I finally say along with John: **Amen!**