

The SCROLL  
of REVELATION  
given to the  
Apostle JOHN

explained by  
a servant of God

PART ELEVEN:  
New Heaven and Earth  
Closing Exhortations

(21-22)  
March, 2003

## **The New Heaven and the New Earth** (21:1-22:5)

The **final major subject** of God's message to John is a totally new heaven and earth. By "heaven" we understand John to mean all of the creation minus our planet, not the realm of God's residence. A study of *heaven* in Scripture would yield a mixed understanding. A great portion of the time it is used to describe something material, but since it is a word that points men away from earth it is also quite often *the abode of God*. Here we believe the reference is to the same expanse as is mentioned in Genesis 1:1 at the original creation. Before we focus as John does on each piece of that wonderful *new* creation, I want to point out more of that to which I have alluded earlier, regarding the **seeming chronological conflict** raised by Isaiah and Peter as compared to John.

**First** let's be certain that we agree that by this time in the narrative, chapter 21, Jesus has come. The tribulation has totally ended. The saints have been given rule over the planet, for 1000 years. Evil ones have met their fate. Death is finished, and the lake of fire remains a constant reminder of God's wrath, God's justice. No place is now found for the old earth, from which have escaped only its billions of people. These things we know. **The first heaven and the first earth are gone** (20:11). The Celestial Jerusalem is at this moment about to descend, having just been populated by the citizens of "old" but totally glorified Jerusalem.

If that is the setting of Revelation 21:1, what is the meaning of the prophet in **Isaiah 65:17**, where he also mentions a "new heaven and new earth" ? For, just after his announcement of this he talks of **death** still being on the planet : "...the child shall die one hundred years old." (65:20) But is not death now banished from the realm? Yes! John insists in **21:4**, "...there shall be *no more death*..."

Could it be that there is a **clean break in thought** between Isaiah's verse 17 and verse 18? Thus his first comment could be just a general statement of the future. His further comments could be backtracking into the Millennial days. We believe that the man Isaiah, as all the prophets, had trouble understanding his own words, and only spoke as the Spirit gave utterance (I Peter 1:10-12).

A similar issue arises with the words of Peter. Does he agree with John's chronology? In II Peter 3:6, he informs us that the **"first earth"**, **the creation of Genesis 1**, **"perished"** through a flood. "Perished" here does not indicate annihilation, but rather surface destruction, including the taking away of most life forms. I Peter 3:7 goes on to say that our **present earth** is headed for a similar fate, that is, not annihilation, but destruction of the surface, this time by fire.

It is interesting to me that in I Peter 3:8, Peter injects the idea of **"a thousand years"**, admittedly in a different context than John's millennium, but perhaps this is the Spirit's hint that the Millennial Day of the Lord is indeed to be placed **between** the destruction by fire and the new earth he mentions in verse 13. Since one day is with the Lord as *a thousand years*, this day could be placed there in God's thinking without affecting the thinking of the prophets or apostles when He is giving them revelation about other end things.

I Peter 3:10 graphically describes the burning process, the melting down of earth's actual elements, so that, as John would later say (Revelation 6:14), the "mountains and islands" - but not yet the planet - "will be moved out of their place." Then comes his Isaiah-like statement that there is **immediately a new earth** "in which righteousness dwells."

The Millennium will be a time when righteousness will dwell safely and reign. But we must say, to stay in agreement with John's final vision, that this "newness" is the newness of a **restored** earth, not yet a re-created one. Or, Peter can be speaking the truth without realizing the full extent of his words, as the prophets did. That is, verse 13 can be taken as the actual new heaven and earth. We do look for this planet to be replaced one day, but one day **far in our future**.

There are other time issues in these chapters that can be dealt with in the text as we come to them. Just before we go there, let me once more insert some thoughts from *The Kingdom of God* study (see Part 10) regarding this very subject (pages 24-25).

### **New Heavens/New Earth**

...Will the new earth and heaven be recognizable as the present planet? There will be no sea, we know that. But the basic requirements of water and plant life and the like seem to be evident. Perhaps we can liken this distant period to the resurrection of our own bodies, wherein we will be recognized but vastly superior. This total new creation must be seen in contrast to the *renewed* earth of the Millennium, renewed in fact by man with Messiah's direct leadership. The earth will recover from its devastation and desolation, at least in part, and will be healed in most every way, getting itself ready for its final presentation to the Father by the Son. Knowledge of this is interesting in the light of the presence of those among us now, even in the church, who are dressing things up for the return of Jesus, not knowing that His next visit is one of unimaginable wrath and fierceness.

In all, not much is said of the final state of mankind. Revelation 21-22, reminding us of portions of Ezekiel and Isaiah, are the most complete descriptions. I say *reminding*, because Ezekiel has the 1000 years in view, with the "prince" David under Christ, an actual temple, real sacrifices, a very Jewish restoration of the nation, which corresponds to the first phase of things. But in describing elements of the city, it becomes obvious that John saw the same city **in its final form**, a city that has been lifted from earth before the earth is removed, transported to Heaven, then descending in the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of John's work.

In this final world, there is no more death. Not so in the millennium. Natural life will be greatly extended, but not eternal. Death itself is defeated once and for all and "cast into the lake of fire" only at the end of the 1000 years. Paul had said 30 some years earlier that He must reign until God has put every enemy under His feet. (I Corinthians 15) That is the purpose of that 1000 years. And when it is over, death is finished, along with pain, the temple, the sun, night, closed gates, the curse. Enter nothing but the glory of God, the water and tree of life.

Is the lake of fire still visible, wandering forever on that old earth in the "outer darkness"? Wherever it is, Isaiah 65:24 and Revelation 22:8 seem to say, yes, it will forever remind mankind of the justice of God. It is something God is aware of every minute, His judgment over evil, and He will give His people the grace to live with that constant, also.

I give here several reasons why I believe that the new heavens and new **earth** follow the 1000 years, as opposed to being simultaneous with them, as I believed for a short while, and as many still do.

1. Its mention is in the last two chapters of both Revelation and Isaiah.
2. Isaiah 4:5 says that after the great tribulation is passed, the Lord will create a cloud and smoke by *day* and the shining of a flaming fire by *night*, protect His people (or the Gentile nations?) from storm and rain. Storms and Days and Nights are all a part of the old earth.
3. "logic" . There is a "sabbath rest" for the people of God, Hebrews 4:9. If there will be indeed exactly 6000 years of earth history before Jesus comes, a 1000 year rest-day would be in perfect order to complete that history.
4. The "rebuilding" project. Isaiah 61:4 and 49:8 suggest that people will be preserved to restore the earth after its devastating blow at "Armageddon" and the rest. See also Jeremiah 31:4 and Ezekiel 36:33-37. Desolate land will be tilled. God is here given

credit for the restoration, but he uses man.

5. The “burial” project. After Armageddon, there will be seven months of burying the dead. This does not match with the instant recreating of a new earth.
6. If the earth is blown up, where will the people of God go? No mention is made of an off-planet hiding place. Jesus indicates that for the elect’s sake, He returns. The elect are waiting to take over the earth, and he will not disappoint them.
7. If the earth is immediately annihilated and replaced, how does the resurrection take place, the first, and especially the second? These wicked dead have been buried in the earth, and must be raised from that earth 1000 years after Jesus comes, per the apostle John.

**Let us go now to the text (21:1-22:5):** Please understand that the whole discussion of the coming city of God in what we think of as “eternity” is a total of **32 verses!** Most of what we know about the future is *Millennial* in nature, and contained in the prophets. The rest of Revelation concerns the trouble *before* that 1000 years. **32 verses** about eternity because eternity is so far off! But let us enjoy what we do know.

**There is no more sea (21:1).** The new earth will not be referred to as the “blue planet” any longer. There is water available, but not in these large concentrations.

**Descent of the City (21:2).** The saints have once more been *raptured* to heaven as the earth disappears from under them (20:11)! They see the city that has been for so long prepared for them, the *New Jerusalem*. Oh they have lived in a spectacular domain for 1000 years, described in detail I believe by the prophet Ezekiel from chapter 40 on. I know of nothing else Ezekiel could be describing but the Millennial Day. But now they see their **eternal permanent** home, and soon after they arrive, they are transported with that entire City, to the newly-created planet.

John tells us that **this city is as a bride**. 1000 years earlier, there had been an announcement of a Marriage Supper. The Lamb was to take His Bride. And He did. And what a wonderful marriage they have had as co-regents of the *old* Earth! But there is a distinctively different flavor of things in the *New Jerusalem* in chapter 21. It takes several readings to see it, but eventually one hears a voice from 40 years earlier, that of the apostle Paul, saying “Then comes the end, when [Jesus] delivers the Kingdom [His bride!] to God the Father, when [Jesus] puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The **last enemy that will be destroyed** is death” ( I Corinthians 15:24-25).

Isn’t that exactly what we have been studying up through chapter 20? And Paul did not have John’s Revelation on hand when he spoke those words. Yes, Paul, Death and Hades, *after 1000 years*, cast into the Lake of Fire. **The last enemy is destroyed!** Now, a new era, as the subdued Kingdom, ruled perfectly for so long, reverts back to God the Father.

Hear Paul again, 15:28: “Now when all things are made subject to him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him Who put all things under Him, that **God may be all in all**” What a significant statement and how it coincides with this 21st chapter. Notice that in all these 32 “eternity” verses, once the City has descended, the Lamb is always mentioned *in connection with God*. Jesus was always *subject to and united with the Father* (“I and My Father are one”) but there is a “reunification” here that both Paul and John, hearing from the same Spirit, bring out to us. They are inseparable, **God and the Lamb**, one, as Jesus always told us, but now the saints will see!

**God Himself comes down (21:3).** How often have you heard it said that for all eternity

God Himself—not just the Son of God is going to *come to earth*, albeit a new earth that is more amenable to Him, to live? Have you not rather heard sermons about us “living with Jesus in Heaven forever” ? Notice also here that whereas before, the Scriptures had to describe carefully God’s dealings with a specially chosen minority of earthlings, now he is with *men* , for **the only men living are the Redeemed**, the chosen from all eternity. What a happy company this! “God is with men...and they shall be His people.”

**The end of pain (21:4).** Still tears after 1000 years of Jesus’ reign? Oh yes. Loved ones and friends were perhaps caught up in the final Satanic rebellion. Satan has been released from the pit, and allowed to re-capture innumerable people from the old planet. There was the horror of the all-consuming judgment fire that fell on those armies of invaders. They had forgotten tears and sorrows of this nature for so long. Then there was the upheaval of saying goodbye to that old planet which had been their home for centuries . But now all of that is gone. Those who have said good-bye to a country can perhaps feel the wrenching here of a people without a planet, at least for a short while. All seems to be in chaos. Once more the heavens are disturbed and even removed. Yes, though redeemed and in new bodies, we will have human feelings. We are not destined to be a race of robots.

**A word of encouragement (21:5-8).** Caught up in the midst of all this excitement, we tend to forget that all of this vision is a message dictated to John for us. John seems to have needed such a reminder here and he is especially encouraged to tell his readers that what is being said is surely true! What truths are emphasized here? God is making everything new. God is the beginning and the end. God will give life to anyone who wants it. God will be God and Father to any overcomer. The second death is waiting for those who refuse God’s love. There is also a catalog of the sins of those who did not overcome.

#### **New Jerusalem described (21:9-22:5)**

**Location (21:9-10).** The view of the city is begun again here, close-up fashion, as one of the bowl angels (chapter 16) invites John now to take a look at the Lamb’s wife. We may speculate that it was the seventh angel, the one announcing that final outpouring of wrath, who speaks here and in chapter 17, describing that other city, Babylon. Here is the last time the Lamb is mentioned *alone* in the 32 eternity verses.

As we view the City of God **we are going to see things the prophets saw** of the Millennial period. There are similarities, as the old city was certainly built by the pattern of the Heavenly one. One thing true in both eras is the *elevation* of Zion. Which part of the new earth that this new mountain occupies we have no idea. Will there be anything similar to a “Middle East” in the configuration of things there? We know there are *no seas*. All is land. And this city is on a mountain. Is it the only such mountain? How great and how high is it? The measurements of the city are given below, but the mountain itself?

So the City located all these centuries in Heaven **now comes down**, fully populated by those who escaped the planet’s dissolution a short time before. It comes down to nestle into the top of this mountain. We cannot even begin to imagine how glorious a setting this will be. We know that the present earth can be splendid at times. We know that a new earth must be even more splendid. But add to that (verse 11) “the glory of God” and we are out of imaginings. We must wait.

**Regarding Light (21:11, 23 and 22:5).** The clear-as-crystal light comes from the glory of God and the Lamb. The lighting system of the old planet, a sun and a moon, will not be relevant here. Night, and the accompanying time of sleeping, will not be needed, for our bodies will

not grow weary! One eternal day lit by the radiance of the Creator.

**Regarding the gates of the City (21:12-13)** In the wall that surrounds the square city, described later, there are twelve gates, three on each wall, guarded by an angel, and named after the twelve tribes of Israel. Remarkably, Ezekiel describes very nearly the same picture (48:30-35). In his prophecy he even tells us the *name of the tribes*. We know his prophecy, however, is of the old earth, because just before these words is a description of the territory to be allotted to these tribes. These territories, many of which are familiar names to Bible students, will not be known on the new earth. In fact, the 32 verses I allude to as “eternity” contain only one geographical entity that is familiar, Jerusalem! But note that the pattern of things in Heaven had already been on earth 1000 years, and even in our day there are things going on here, in the church, that reflect what Heaven is like.

**Two more things** about these gates: First, each actual gate is **one huge pearl (21:21)** . A “pearl of great price” reminds those who come into and go out of the City, of the great price Jesus paid for all of this to be here and for us to be enjoying it. As to the size of this pearl and how it could possibly have come to be, another “wait and see.” And secondly **(21:25)**, the gates will be **open all day!** And all day means eternally, for there is no night there. No need to lock the doors when there is no evil abroad.

**Regarding the walls and their foundations (21:14-20).** The apostles will be honored by having their names on the “12 foundations” or foundation stones, of the surrounding wall. This is not the first time these men have been called foundational. Ephesians 2:20 reminds us of the truth of this fact, Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone, but the apostles and prophets the *foundation* of the spiritual building God is erecting even now.

**21:15** speaks of the bowl-angel again and lets us know that it’s time to **measure the City**. Talk like that brings us back once more to Ezekiel in 40:3. There a “man”, probably also angelic, meets Ezekiel in the land of Israel, though Ezekiel is a prisoner in Babylon. They meet atop a very high mountain, where lies a city. The temptation is to jump to the conclusion that Ezekiel and John speak of the same thing, but the measurements do not match, and we remember our last encounter with that prophet, whose mission is to see and describe the times and places of the 1000 years, not eternity. Nevertheless, once more we are impressed with the knowledge that Jerusalem is meant to be the center of God’s dealings in **every age**.

**The Measurements (21:16-17):** As stated earlier, the **layout of the City** is square **(21:16)**. The figure 12,000 furlongs, roughly translated *1400 miles*, is given as the size of the City. It would seem that this is the total of all 4 sides combined, or 350 miles per side. But we are not sure. From this side of glory though , a city with a 1400-mile perimeter is no less glorious to us than one which measures 5,600 miles . Both are incomprehensible. Think of the largest cities of our day with their scant one or two hundred miles around, and the enormity of the place is staggering.

But wait. Did I say it was **laid out as a square**? Indeed, I was quoting John, that is, the *angel*. But another detail is added at the end of 16: Though the bottom of the City is indeed square, its 3-dimensional structure actually makes this City a **cube**, stretching as far *up* as it is *long or wide*. Already bigger by far than any earthly city has ever been, God super-abundantly places layer upon layer straight up into the new atmosphere of this new planet. Our “mile-high” city of Denver causes shortness of breath among the most hardy. Imagine the 350-mile-high City or, why not, the 1,400-mile-high city! But imagine it with a new body easily able to ac-

commodate the breath-taking atmosphere. And of course, imagine, while you're at it, *a new atmosphere*.

Now comes the **measure of the wall (21:17)**. There is at first a similar vagueness as to meaning,. The 144 cubits, or 216 feet can be, the way we first hear it, either the height or the thickness of the wall. I suggest thickness. It seems to this earthling unusual to have a “mere” 200-foot wall enclosing a 350-mile-high metropolis. We can't rule this out, and who are we to call anything Heavenly “unusual”, but it would seem that the thickness of the wall is being discussed here, and that therefore the height of the wall is as high as the city.

**Construction materials (21:18-21)**. The city and the wall are considered separately when speaking of the materials of which each consist. The walls are of **jasper**. So again we observe that the new earth seems to have properties similar to the old one. Jasper is normally an opaque quartz showing up in various colors, green being a more common variety. But from the introduction of the word in **21:11** where the light of God is seen as a crystal-clear “jasper”, to this present verse where it is seen in conjunction with a clear gold, we are led to believe that the walls of the New Jerusalem will be nearly clear also, with perhaps a greenish tint to them. The City itself, including every street (**21:21**) is pure gold, but also clear. Who can find words to comment on such things?

**Foundation stones (21:19-20)**. Twelve precious stones adorn the foundation stones mentioned above. Of the twelve, eight are readily matched to eight of the stones in the breastplate of the High Priest, where also was the name of every tribe (Exodus 28: 15-30). The following chart indicates the match-up between Moses and John, the point being that there is a pattern in Heaven carried out by God's dealings on earth.

<b>EXODUS 28:15-30: Breastplate Stones in order given</b>	<b>REVELATION 21:19-20: Foundation Stones, arranged to match</b>
sardius (ruby)	sardius
topaz	topaz
emerald	emerald
turquoise	chrysolite or chrysoprase? ( both greenish)
sapphire	sapphire
diamond	(no obvious match)
jacinth (amber)	jacinth
agate (form of chalcedony)	chalcedony
amethyst	amethyst
beryl (yellow jasper)	beryl
onyx (carnelian)	sardonyx, (a form of onyx )
jasper	jasper

**No temple (21:22).** There is no temple here, since God does not dwell in temples made with hands. Yet a major portion of Ezekiel describes a city just like this one, and the specific *details of a temple*. This can only mean that Ezekiel's temple is meant for the 1000 year period, but when the full glory of God rests on the planet, Throne and all, no temple will be needed.

**Traffic (21:24-27).** It is nearly shocking to be seeing in this city a continued reference to "nations." As stated above, all men in this city are saved men. Their nations therefore are saved nations. They shall, it seems, be permitted to populate the earth, though Jesus makes it clear that our present form of populating shall not be a factor here (Matthew 22:29-30). How we shall cover the earth for God's glory remains to be seen, along with a host of other things. Somehow, when they have accomplished their various daily tasks, they shall bring the results of their labors back into the City to glorify God and the Lamb with them. Would that we would do all our daily tasks for the same reason now, as we prepare for that Day.

**No evil (21:8, 27, 22:15) . 21:27** echoes **21:8** and previews 22:15. There is constant assurance being given that the former things truly are past. This city is off limits to evil. Evil has been judged forever and is in the Lake of Fire. Only those in the Lamb's Book go in and out of this City.

**Natural Features (22:1-2) .** The vision continues and now makes us turn back the pages of history all the way to **Genesis** where last we saw a river watering a Garden, and a tree of life. There was only one tree giving life in Genesis, for there were only two persons who needed this fruit. Here in Revelation we see trees in the middle of the street and on either side of the river of the "water of life". This we have taken to be symbolic, and for us today, that "water" is a purely spiritual thing ministering to our souls. But there the spiritual body we will have, will need sustenance, and that sustenance is provided in this way.

**Ezekiel 47** sees much of the same that John sees, but sees it in a different context. He sees the **healing waters** (47:1), exactly as here. But in 47:8, when the water reaches the sea its waters are healed. This will work during the Millennium, which is as far as the Old Testament prophets ever saw, I believe. But in the New earth, there are *no seas*! Also, Ezekiel sees that water flowing from under the threshold of the temple. But in the New Jerusalem there is no temple but God Himself. That's why the water in our present chapter proceeds from the *Throne*! In Ezekiel, the trees, like here, are many, and are on both sides of the river. I believe that the trees and the water are literal there too, healing the poisonous acids that covered the earth when God's wrath was poured out during the bowl judgments. Ezekiel 47 is a fascinating comparison to Revelation 22, but *different* because in a different era of history. I recommend that all serious students of the prophecies of the Bible spend a lot of time deciphering Ezekiel 40-48.

**Zechariah** completes the prophetic look at living healing water: (14:8-9) "And in that day it shall be that **living waters** shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the western sea...and the Lord shall be King over all the earth..." Again I say that in the final City and earth, there are no seas. Ezekiel and Zechariah speak of Millennial days but they speak of the realities of their Holy City, a place very much like the one we are now studying.

**The healing of the nations (22:2).** It was Ezekiel who first said it, in 47:12 of his prophecy: the "leaves will be for medicine." The nations before us, recall, are comprised of the saved of all times. There is no pain in the new earth, no sickness, no sin, no curse. **Why then a**

**need for “healing”** ? I speculate, but based on what we know so far. Perhaps this medicine is the *reason* for continued health, a part of the diet of the new world order. Or this could refer to the fact that there are certain aspects of their life in the old planet that need dealt with, as they adjust to the new. See above comments on 21:4 about the wiping away of tears. I believe there is a connection between their need for comfort and their need for healing, *at least initially*.

**No curse (22:3).** One thing is certain. Whatever men inherited initially from Adam is now gone. Sin, sickness, problems of the fallen nature, all done away forever by the Spirit’s work in them. All that is left is perfect service to a perfect God, given cheerfully and effectively. And what could God possibly “need” in terms of service in that day? What are these people who come in and out of the city doing in the new world? Come and see ...

**Promises (22:3-5).** The final promises of eternity have to do with the intimate relationship God will have with His people. They will wear His Name as the followers of the antichrist wore that blasphemous name. They will actually see His face and not die. The strangest part of it all, to me, is that everything is still on the Planet, though a new one. Oh how God has set His love on us! Jesus is giving the Kingdom to the Father, **not destroying it** after the 1000 years. New Earth shall be our headquarters “forever”, or so it seems. The Father’s very Throne shall be here. Nations will continue to operate from here. Oh what joys await the people of God!

### **Closing Exhortations**

**(22:6-21)**

The Bible **concludes** its 32-verse description of eternity at 22:5. Following are directions, warnings, and invitations.

**John misunderstands again (22:6-9).** There is a bit of confusion in the following conversation that the enemies of Christ have jumped on to make one last Biblical effort to strip from Jesus His Deity. Recall our earlier discussion of how this Book came to be (1:1). It was from Father to Son to Angel to John. In this final word, an angel is talking. The “he” of verse 6 refers back to the “he” of 22:1, and 21:15, and finally all the way back to 21:9, where we are re-introduced to a bow-angel. Though it is the angel’s voice John hears, and the person of an angel of course is standing there, it is the very **words of Jesus being spoken** through that angel. John mistakes one for the other, as many readers have done. He begins to give credit to the angel for what is really the message of Jesus. And once more, as in 19:10, he begins to worship. In his rebuke to John it is noteworthy to see angelic self-concept: (1.) I’m just a **servant** like you. (2.) I’m **obeying the words** of this book, like Jesus is calling you to do.

**Jesus, through the angel,** reminds John of how the message came to him, and of the immediacy of the wrap-up of all things. The nearness of the coming of Jesus is emphasized in verses 6, 7, 10, 12, and 20. One moment He will *not* be here, the next moment He *will* be here. No gradual evolution of His “presence” as I heard it expressed once by some “believers”. No process. When He comes, he comes quickly. (See more on this topic, 22:10 ahead, and comments on 1:3.)

**Obey this prophecy (22:7).** We are back at the beginning of the book where this same command is given (1:3). Yes, much of the prophecy is symbolic, and prophetic, therefore future, but sprinkled heavily throughout the scroll are commands to obey, visions to cherish, warnings to observe, exhortations to cling to Christ and watch for His quick return. The saint of God is called to believe very incredible things. There is a constant call to worship. A person

who can “keep” all this will be a blessed one.

**Directions to John: Do not seal this book (22:10).** After the previously described worship incident, John is given a word that contrasts with that given to his counterpart Daniel. That prophet was told at the end of his revelation, “...the words are closed up *and sealed* till the time of the end.” This present angel tells John, *Do not seal* these words. That must mean we are living in the days that Daniel saw, the days of the Son of Man. And if it does not seem that Jesus has come quickly back to earth, we must learn to see these days as God sees them. In His eyes, Peter tells us, a thousand year wait is like a day (II Peter 3:8). Peter also reminds us that **scorners will laugh** at such logic, letting us know that *the time was to be long* (II Peter 3:3). We live in the age of grace, and God has always desired to extend that grace to as many as will hear. Grace and the glory of God keep us from that closing bell. But it will come. And the time, in one sense, is always *at hand*. The world always is ready to be judged, or so it seems. **Antichrists abound and Babylon surrounds us in every generation** Let us watch and pray.

**The end of God’s mercy (22:11).** This verse is written for those living just before Jesus’ return, as the Spirit inside John was indicating was very near. It is the end of God’s mercy and invitation. It is a locking in of the position of the soul for all time. It is a sad verse for many.

**I come quickly (22: 7, 10, 12, 20)!** And I bring a reward with me. As the resurrected damned are given what their evil works demand (20:12), so the participants in the first resurrection will be given rewards for their good works. These are already saved chosen people. They have received eternal life as a gift, by grace, through faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Now the Lord lets them see how He appreciated what they did in His Name. Note the similarity to Isaiah 40:10, “Behold the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him. Behold His reward is with Him...”

**Jesus identifies Himself again (22:13).** This part of the message is in 1:8, 1:17, and originally in Isaiah 41:4, “...I the Lord am the first, and with the last I am He.”

**A blessing (22:14).** There seems to be a major disagreement in the textual evidence when it comes to the blessing of verse 14. The King James translation, usually the most trustworthy rendition because of the Greek text it follows, talks here about “**doing his commandments**” to gain right to the tree of life. Most modern translations have followed another Greek text ( I will spare readers details of this whole study of textual criticism, though it is a valid and needed work among us ) . This other text reads that persons must “**wash their robes**” to have that right. I will hold to the reliable KJV translation, but I must add that there is no way a man can “keep the commandments” without “washing his robes” in the blood of Jesus. It is only the new life that flows from God that conforms a man to the image of His Son. Perhaps it was this knowledge that caused an erstwhile copyist to add a comment to the text. Later, I speculate of course, that comment was included erroneously.

**The cursed (22:15)** . John here backs up historically to describe the days of the Millennium, and even our day, when those who are truly God’s are safe within the commonwealth of Israel. In the eternal city, the only evil people “outside” will be the ones in the Lake of Fire. But here they still seem to be a threat to persons moving in and out of the City. The point is easily taken though that the righteous have access to the Heavenly privileges and the ungodly do not.

**Signature of Jesus (22:16).** No question Whose words are being spoken here, but I still maintain that they are coming through the angel’s mouth, for there has been no indication otherwise. With these words, Jesus brings us back to the current situation in the churches of Asia, and thus *all churches of all times*. This Book is for them, and He wants them to know of His **worthiness to be heard**. Humanly speaking, Jesus comes from the line of David. He is the Jew-

ish Messiah, the Son of Man. But being the Bright and Morning Star, He relates to that which is Heavenly too. The prophecy in Numbers 24:17 and His own imagery early in the Book about stars being the messengers of God (1:20) are recalled by His comment. He is not a created spirit, but truly He is the Spirit Whose brightness is eternal.

**Invitation (22:17).** This is the very Word of Jesus, not a commentary by John. Jesus speaks directly to the human heart here, hands outstretched as when He was on the earth saying “Come unto Me, all you that labor...” (Matthew 11:28). Never did He desire that man be lost. He will do everything in His mighty power to call men to Himself. When we are fully yielded to Him, inviting people to Jesus is what our life is about, also.

**Do not tamper with this prophecy (22:18-19).** The final warning. Add to the Revelation, and the plagues of it are added to you. Subtract from the Revelation, and the blessings of it are subtracted from you. Some speculate that because Revelation is placed at the end of the Bible, this warning applies to all 66 books. It is indeed a fearful thing to be caught tampering with what God has said. From the beginning God warned His people about this. Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32 strictly command Israel while they are still in the wilderness never to add or subtract from the words given by God.

**The end (22:20-21).** One more assurance that Jesus is coming quickly, at least by Heaven’s standards, and the work is finished. John gives the amen— so be it, Lord. Come! Then the beloved apostle adds his apostolic blessing and like Daniel and like us, must “go his way” to wait on all these things to be fulfilled.

And so I must go my way also. With limited vision, I have shared with you what I was able to see of the coming events of earth’s history. This work has been one of **discovery, not creation**. There are no new revelations from God about our future, though I was certainly able to find things I had not found before. Those who claim to have new *information* must be viewed with suspicion immediately and often. I have been especially nervous listening to, or even reading books about, persons who allegedly have died and returned to tell us what they saw . Often they add material to the book of Revelation, and I cannot see how that is not in defiance of the final warning of the book.

No, our job is like **Josiah’s** (II Chronicles 34:19), after having been given a copy of the Scriptures. We read it, we discover its truths, or re-discover them, we repent because of what we read, we tell others what we have read. No need for novel information. The 66 Books are sufficient (II Timothy 3:16-17). And of all God’s books, Revelation, when discovered, puts a man in touch with **the reality of God, and the horrible condition of humanity and one’s own self**. That’s a sure formula for repentance. May God bring these realizations to His people and may He use this labor of my hands to help along this pathway.

a servant of God  
March, 2003