

The Synopsis

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1 THE REVELATION

1.1 Chapter 22

The connection of the holy city with the earth, though not on it, is everywhere seen. The river of God refreshed the city, and the tree of life, whose fruits ever ripe were food for the celestial inhabitants of it, bore in its leaves healing for the nations. Only the glorified ever ate the fruit of constant growth; but what was manifested and displayed without, as the leaves of a tree, was blessing to those on earth. We see grace characterising the assembly in glory. The nation and kingdom that will not serve the earthly Jerusalem shall utterly perish-it preserves its earthly royal character; the assembly its own: the leaves of the tree it feeds on are for healing. There is no more curse. The throne of God and the Lamb is in it. This is the source of blessing, not of curse; and His servants serve Him; often they cannot as they would here. Note too again here, how God and the Lamb are spoken of as one, as constantly in John's writings. His servants shall have the fullest privilege of His constant presence, shall see His face, and their belonging to Him as His own be evident to all. There is no night there, nor need of light, for the Lord God gives it ; and, as to their state, they reign, not for the thousand years, as they do over the earth, but for ever and ever.

This closes the description of the heavenly city and the whole prophetic volume. What follows consists of warning, or the final expression of the thoughts of, and relationship with, Christ of the assembly.

The angel declares the truth of these things, and that the Lord God of the prophets-not as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor as directly teaching the assembly as dwelling in it by the Spirit-the Lord God of the prophets has sent His angel to inform His servants of these events. "Behold," says Christ, speaking as of old, in the prophetic spirit, rising up to His now personal testimony, " Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he who keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." The assembly is viewed, not as the subject of prophecy, but as "the things that are," time not being counted, specially time to come. Those that keep it are those concerned in the book, who are warned that Christ will soon be there. No doubt we all can profit by it, but we are not in the scenes it speaks of. John, impressed with the dignity of the messenger, fell down and would have worshipped him. But the saints of the assembly, even if made

prophets of, were not to return into the uncertainty of ancient days. The angel was a simple angel, John's fellow-servant, and fellow servant of his brethren the prophets: he was to worship God. Nor were the sayings to be sealed, as with Daniel: the time was at hand. When it closed its testimony, men would remain in the same state for judgment or blessing. And Christ would quickly come, and every man receive as his work was. Verse 7 was a warning, in form of blessing, to those in the circumstances referred to, to keep the sayings of the book, but this verse 12 is the record of Christ's coming to the general judgment of the quick.

Finally, Christ announces Himself, having taken up the word in Person in verse 12, as Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end-God before and after all; and filling duration. I suppose we are to take as the true reading: "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." The redeemed, cleansed ones, can enter there and feed on the tree of life; for I suppose it is the fruit here. Without are the unclean and violent, and those who love satanic falsehood and idolatry, sin against purity, against their neighbour, against God, and follow Satan.

This closes the summing up. The Lord Jesus now reveals Himself in His own Person, speaking to John and the saints, and declares who He is, in what character He appears to say it to them. "I am the root and offspring of David"-the origin and heir of the temporal promises of Israel; but much more than that-He is the bright and morning Star. It is what He is before He appears, in both respects; only the former regards Israel born of the seed of David according to the flesh. But the Lord has taken another character. He has not yet arisen as the Sun of righteousness on this benighted globe; but, to faith, the dawn is there, and the assembly sees Him in the now far-spent night as the morning Star, knows Him, while watching according to His own word, in His bright heavenly character-a character which does not wake a sleeping world, but is the delight and joy of those who watch. When the sun arises, He will not be thus known: the earth will never so know Him, bright as the day may be. When Christ is in this place, the Spirit dwells in the assembly below, and the assembly has its own relationship. It is the bride of Christ, and her desire is toward Him.

Thus" the Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is not a warning from one coming as a judge and a rewarder, but the revelation of Himself which awakens the desire of the bride according to the relationship in which grace has set her. Nor is it a mere sentiment or wish: the Spirit who dwells in the assembly leads and suggests her thought. But the Spirit turns also, and the heart of him who enjoys the relationship, to others. "Let him that heareth"-let him who hears the voice of the Spirit in the assembly-join in the cry, and say, Come. It is one common hope, it should be our common desire; and the sense of what is coming on the earth, and the sense of failure in things that are, ought only, though it be in truth an inferior motive, to urge the cry in all. But while still here, the saint has another place also. Not only do his desires go after God upwards and the heavenly Bridegroom, but he reflects God's known character, by having His nature and Spirit as manifested also in Christ's love, and in possession of the living water, though not of the Bridegroom. He turns round and invites

others, " Let him that is athirst come," and proclaims it forth then to the world, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Thus the whole place of the heavenly saint, conscious of the assembly's place, is brought out in this verse, from his desire of Christ's coming, to his call to whosoever will to come.

The integrity of the book is preserved by a solemn warning of the danger of losing a part in the tree of life ¹ and the holy city. Christ then cheers the saint's heart, by assuring that He would quickly come; and the heart of the true saint responds with unfeigned and earnest desire, " Even so, come, Lord Jesus." And then, with the salutation of grace, the book closes, leaving the promise and the desire as the last words of Jesus on the heart.

Let the reader note here that, in the beginning and end of the book, before and after the prophetic statements, we have in a beautiful way the conscious position of the saints.

The first, at the opening of the whole book, gives the individual conscious blessing through what Christ has done; the latter, the whole position of the assembly, thus distinguishing clearly the saints under the gospel from those whose circumstances are prophetically made known to them in this book. " Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God and his Father." As soon as Christ is named (and it is so in both cases), it awakens in the saints the consciousness of Christ's love and their own place in relationship with Him. They are already washed from their sins in His own blood, and made kings and priests to God and His Father- have their place and state fixed, before any of the prophetic part is developed, and in the coming kingdom will enjoy that place, not of being blessed under Christ, but of being associated with Him. Here they have their place simply in the kingdom and priesthood; it is individual title resulting from His first coming. They are loved, washed in His own blood, and associated with Him in the kingdom.

At the end of the book, Christ is revealed as the morning Star, a place forming no part of the prophecy, but that in which the assembly, who has waited for Him, is associated with Him for herself, and the kingdom (compare the promise to the overcomers in Thyatira). ² This draws out active love (not as before, simply being loved and what we are made)- love first directed towards Christ in the assembly's known relation to Himself, then to the saints who hear, then to the thirsty, then to all the world. The desire of the assembly, as the bride with whom the Spirit is, is directed to Christ's second coming for herself- to the possessing the morning Star; then the Spirit turns to the saints, calling on them to say to Jesus, Come- to join in this desire. But we have the Spirit though not the Bridegroom; hence whoever is athirst is called on to come and drink, and thus the gospel proclaimed abroad, " Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." It is love acting in the saint all round from Christ to sinners in the

¹The true reading here is " tree," not " book"; but the book of life is not life, nor is our being written there final, though a prima facie register, unless indeed written there before the foundation of the world: but, even so, it is not the same thing as the possession of life.

²Compare the place of the bright cloud in Luke 9. There it is the Father's voice.

world.