

## Revelation Chapter 22 - John Karmelich

1. This lesson is called "Coming Full Circle".
  - a) This is an expression that refers to the idea of ending a journey back where one started, but hopefully wiser for the experience of the journey itself.
  - b) This lesson comes full circle in that Revelation 22 is the final chapter in the bible, and at the same time, it ties to the early chapters of Genesis. Revelation is a book of "endings". In many ways, it is a mirror image of the book of Genesis, a book of "beginnings". Many of the concepts that begun in Genesis have their final climatic ending in Revelation.
    - i) For example, some aspects of this chapter tie to the Garden of Eden. That story was the first involving mankind. The last story of mankind here in Revelation involves some of the same imagery.
  - c) What I want you the reader to grasp out of this chapter is to reflect upon one's whole life as a Christian believer, past, present and future. That is what is in view in Revelation. In many ways, the direction of a life comes full circle when one reaches the end. I'll talk more about this theme as we go through the chapter.
2. Back when I wrote my first lesson on this book, I mentioned that Revelation is the only book of the bible that says in effect, "Read me I'm special". It is the only book in the bible that says one is blessed by reading the words of this book.
  - a) Chapter 1, Verse 3 says, "Blessed are those who read this prophecy". Verse 7 of this final chapter says, "Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book." Somehow, someway, people who study Revelation are blessed by reading this book.
  - b) As I stated some chapters back, I don't think we are blessed by reading about say, angels pouring out bowl judgments on earth. ☺ The blessing has to do with understanding God's game plan for our salvation, understanding what entails our redemption and what is God's eternal plan for us.
  - c) Let me put it another way: Do I believe innocent babies who die at birth go to heaven? Yes. (See 2nd Samuel 12:20-23). Do I believe people who commit their lives to serving Jesus and trust Him for their sins get to go to heaven? Of course. The question is what's the key difference in the end? Is the saved Christian any better off than the innocent baby? Yes, in the sense the Christian had the maturity to realize that sin was wrong and one needed to change from that sin.
    - i) The human maturity process is to go from innocence to guilty to redeemed by God's grace. In the Garden of Eden, we see mankind begin to exercise their own free will against God for sin. The Christian eventually figures out that God's way is better than man's way, and asks God for forgiveness and desires to be "perfectly forgiven" for all one's sins.
    - ii) In that sense, mankind goes full circle. We go from being "perfectly innocent" to being "perfectly innocent" because we are perfectly forgiven of sins. The circle of life is best to be lived for God once we realize just how much God loves us and how much trouble He went to in order to redeem us.
3. OK, John, I understand I'm forgiven and all that. How does that affect my life today? What does any of this have to do with the final chapter of Revelation? So glad you asked! ☺
  - a) This chapter consists of two things: The first is a final description of life during "eternity". The second is final comments by Jesus saying in effect, "Blessed are the Revelation readers!" Most of this chapter gives some final reminders of the key things that are important to those of us who have committed our lives to serving Christ.
  - b) As you read this chapter, stop and think about the fact that these are the final things God wants to say to me. It is like someone giving you their final words in life or the "big conclusion" to a matter. The point is if it's the conclusion, it must be important.

- c) The problem with life is that it is too easy to be caught up in the moment. The problems of daily life be it work, finances, relationships with people, sickness or whatever tends to take our minds off of God. I'm convinced "worrying" is the opposite of faith in that we worry and focus about the matter of the moment as opposed to God.
  - d) This does not mean we should be thinking about God at every moment. It does mean one should consider "the eternal perspective" when dealing with issues. I can't tell you how many times in my life when things are going wrong I have to think, "At least I'm saved. God is going to get me out of this. I don't know how, but I have to trust in that." Another example, when I'm feeling unloved or lonely, is to remember that God loved me so much as to pick me for all of eternity.
  - e) What Revelation does, more than anything else, is give one the eternal perspective. It is a book about how life as we know it ends. What it does it get us to see past the end of the day. It gets us to see past the problems of the moment. It gets us to see a glorious future over and above whatever situation we are facing at that moment. That is how Revelation is a blessing to the reader. Yes, the Gospel message is scattered all through the book. The other idea is that not only are we saved for eternity, but we are saved into a loving relationship with God that will last for eternity. That is what "blessed" is all about. The material things of this world will disappear one day. Loving, sinless relationships with God and people will continue into eternity. On that happy note, I'll start Verse 1. ☺
4. Verse 1: Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city.
- a) Let's recall what is happening:
    - i) Most of Revelation is about "judgment" on the earth prior to Jesus Second Coming. The early chapters of the book focused on God judging Christian churches, and then bulk of the book is on judging nonbelievers.
    - ii) Chapter 19 described the literal return of Jesus to earth occurs. There is a final battle (more of a wipeout) between those who oppose Jesus' rule over the world.
    - iii) Chapter 20 described a 1,000-year time frame where Jesus rules over the earth.
    - iv) In Chapter 21, that thousand-year period is over. Chapters 21 and the first five verses of Chapter 22 describe life during the "forever" period of our existence.
    - v) The rest of Chapter 22 is an epilogue with final comments by Jesus and John, the writer of Revelation.
  - b) Which leads us to Verse 1 of Chapter 22: We are still describing life in "eternity".
    - i) (Remember the chapter breaks were not added until about the 12th Century AD.)
    - ii) We ended Chapter 21 with John describing "The New Jerusalem". John saw a new earth, as somehow, the world as we know it no longer exists. The earth and the atmosphere around it explodes, implodes or just plain disappears. ☺ (Some claim the "new earth" is the same old earth with a new "existence", but I disagree.)
    - iii) Anyway, the latter part of Chapter 21 was John describing a city coming down to earth. The new city, called "The New Jerusalem" is described separately from the new earth. Most believe it is "plopped down" on the earth and some argue it hangs in the sky. Whatever it is, it is called "The bride of Christ" as it is the inhabited home of Christians for eternity.
  - c) Verse 1 states that within this city, is a "river of the water of life". This river is crystal clear. It flows from God's throne and down the middle of "Main Street".
  - d) If you recall from the last chapter, there is "no more sea". (Ref. Revelation 21:1) If there is no more sea (i.e., oceans), then there should be no more rain as we know it, no more snowfall, and thus no river sources as we know it.
    - i) Do I believe this river is literal? Of course. If "God is God", He can create anything. My point about oceans and rainfall is to stretch one's imagination about what life will be like.

- ii) Do I also believe this river is also symbolic? Of course. The bible is designed to teach us things about God and our relationship with Him. Even the historical stories of the bible are also designed as word pictures and prophetic events.
  - e) What does the God want to teach us about this river? The answer lies in reading the text in context of the surrounding text.
    - i) Back in Verse 6 of the previous chapter, it read, "To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life."
      - a) Here in Verse 1, it said, "The river of the water of life".
    - ii) Obviously, the same flow of water is in view. Verses 1 and 2 give us more details about this river. Chapter 21 Verse 6 says "To him who is thirsty". The idea is to compare our relationship with God to "thirst and drinking".
    - iii) The previous chapter stated there is no temple in the New Jerusalem, as the whole city is "one big temple". However, there is a central location as it is stated that God the Father's throne and God the Son's throne have a combined, single, central location. This river starts from this central throne location.
    - iv) The idea of this verse is that the river is "pure and clean". In other words, to "drink of God" contains no pollutants. There are no algae or fish in this water. ☺
  - f) Notice in Chapter 20 Verse 6, it is called "a spring". Here in Verse 1, it is called a "river".
    - i) The Book of Ezekiel Chapter 47 describes a similar flow of water that exists during the millennium. Ezekiel said in 47:3 that the water came up to his ankles. In 47:4, Ezekiel went further away from the temple and the water came up to his knees. Ezekiel then went further away, and the water was waist-deep. By Verse 5, one had to swim to cross it. My point is this river is unusual in that it grows by itself. I suspect this "New Jerusalem" water source is the same (or similar) to the one seen by the Ezekiel. The similarity is the water amount increases as it goes.
    - ii) The symbolic meaning has to do with "immersing" ourselves in our relationship with God. As one grows with God, the water becomes deeper, just like our relationship becomes deeper. At the same time, the central point of our relationship is a simple, "spring" of water.
  - g) What this "pure, crystal-clear river" means is that our relationship with God continues into the next life, but there is no "impurity" of sin in our relationship. In the same way, the river grows, so does our relationship with God.
5. Verse 2 (cont.): On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.
- a) This sentence, in Verse 2 is probably the strangest in the chapter. We're still describing the "New Jerusalem". Surrounding the river that runs down (or along side) "Main Street" is a type of tree. This tree bears twelve types of fruit, on a once per month basis. The leaves of the trees are for the "healing of the nation".
  - b) To understand this verse, let's start with the expression, "The tree of life".
    - i) Back in the Garden of Eden, people forget that Genesis mentions two trees:
      - a) "In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." (Genesis 2:9).
      - b) It was the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" that was forbidden to be eaten. That's another story. ☺
    - ii) There are two other references to the "tree of life" in the Garden of Eden story: After Adam and Eve sinned, God said, "The man (Adam) has now become like one of us (God in plural form!), knowing good and evil. He (mankind) 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, NIV, parenthesis text added.)
      - a) The other reference to the tree of life is in Genesis 3:24, where a cherubim (i.e., a high-ranking angel) guards the tree.

- iii) The point is, back in the Garden of Eden, there were two key trees. One provided sustaining (that is, "everlasting") life and one leads to death.
- iv) Now it's time to come back to the theme of "coming full circle". Just as the tree of life is mentioned in the first story of mankind, the same tree of life is mentioned here in Revelation in the last story of mankind. We are "back where we started". The key difference is we can now eat of this tree as the price for sin has been paid.
- v) The "tree of life" represents some way of sustaining life forever. Since it exists in the "New Jerusalem", it exists for people who have already been forgiven of their sins. Does that mean we have to eat of this tree in order to live forever? Don't know. Bible scholars are split on this issue. Some suggest, "We don't have to eat of it in heaven, but the option is available."
- c) One more thing about these fruit trees. They bear fruit "every month".
  - i) I've been saying all through Revelation that God exists outside of time. When we are resurrected, we will exist forever. Yet here in Revelation, there is still a reference to a "month". Does that mean there is still a lunar cycle in eternity?
  - ii) Understand that we do live for eternity, but we will be aware of the time going by. Time can still exist, but there is no "final year". In a sense, living for eternity is timeless as there is no end. At the same time, we are aware of time passing.
- d) Let's move on to the next sentence: It says, "The leaves are for the healing of the nations".
  - i) It doesn't say the fruit of the tree is for healing, but the leaves. So apparently, eating salads are good for you in the next life too! ☺
  - ii) Here in Revelation, there is no reference as to why the leaves are for healing.
  - iii) Since the "tree of life" ties to a Garden of Eden reference, I'm speculating whether or not the "leaves" are also an Eden reference. In the Garden, after Adam and Eve sinned, they realized they were naked and made clothing out of fig leaves. (Ref. Genesis 3:7). God then replaced that leaf-clothing with animal skins, as to show "the blood of the innocent" is needed to cover sin. I'm speculating that there is some sort of "tie in" that animal sacrifices are no longer necessary and now the "leaves" are some sort of positive benefit.
- e) Let's step back and summarize the first two verses of this chapter:
  - i) We are getting details of the New Jerusalem. There is a river flowing down by the main street. There is a type of tree that grows alongside the river that bears a twelve fruits on a once-per-month rotational basis. The leaves of these trees are for "the healing of the nations".
  - ii) The one word used five times in this chapter is "life". The water is referred to as the "water of life" and the tree is referred to as the "tree of life". The point is whatever this water and trees mean, they have to do with sustaining life.
  - iii) Apparently, heaven is not going to be some place where we just sit there with harps singings songs all day. Somehow, we are to take in "things" that sustain life. Can we die in heaven if we don't? I don't think so. This is not about life in the sense of living or dying. This is about life in the sense of drawing closer to God. Remember eternity is about our relationship with God. These symbols (and probably literal "things") somehow help our relationship with God.
  - iv) I believe a Christian can believe Jesus died for our sins, and never do much about it. We can have a "starter" relationship with God and never grow from there. What God desires is a mature developed relationship. That means praying and studying God's word regularly. That means being with and ministering to other people regularly. The development of mature relationships will continue in heaven. That is why I call this chapter "coming full circle". In heaven, we still work on developing relationships with God and with other people. Somehow, this "pure river" and these "trees of life" are literal and symbolic of that process.

6. Verse 3: No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.
- a) Verse 3 states another point already implied: There is no more "curse".
  - b) Again, this ties back to the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve sinned, God placed a curse on mankind. Part of this curse was in effect, "Men have to work all of their lives and the ground will be cursed for their sake." (Ref.: Genesis 3:17). That is another reason why there has to be a "new earth". God cursed the ground of the old one.
    - i) To put it another way, eternity has many of the features of the Garden of Eden prior to the curse. Again, we as people are "coming full circle". The world of eternity will no longer be under any sort of curse. The difference is, in the new world we are aware the curse once existed and has been removed. That is, we are aware God has forgiven our sins, and we now live in gratitude for that fact.
  - c) The next fact is that "The throne of God and of the Lamb (Jesus) will be in the city."
    - i) Again, there is no central temple in this New Jerusalem, but there will be a single throne where God the Father and God the Son are located. The whole city is one-big-temple as it is place of worship of God the Father and God the Son. (The Holy Spirit's function is to draw us to God the Father through God the Son.)
  - d) Here's the key phrase for us: "His servants will serve him."
    - i) Who are the "servants"? The answer is in the first verse of Revelation: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place." In other words, it is us. It refers to Christians.
    - ii) There is a false notion that when we get to heaven, we just sit around in our individual mansions watching television while angels stock our refrigerators. ☺ The truth is we serve God in heaven.
    - iii) Let's define biblical "love". That term means to put other's needs in front of our own. It means to fulfill someone else's needs as a priority over our needs. That is a broad term for "ministering" to each other. To serve God means to put His priorities and desire for our lives in front of our own desires. Examples include everything from prayer and worship to helping other people.
    - iv) Again, heaven is not going to be a place where we just "sit there". Somehow, someway, we are going to minister to God and to others. This won't be a burden. We don't punch a time sheet to work in heaven. ☺ If we love someone, it is a joy to serve them. One of the greatest joys we can have on earth is putting other's needs over our own. Serving God is a sense of joy that is far greater than any sort of self-pleasure we can have. That will continue in the next life. The bonus prize is there is no more sin to interfere with that desire to serve God!
7. Verse 4: They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.
- a) Back in Exodus, God once told Moses, "You (Moses) cannot see my (God's) face, for no one may see me and live." (Exodus 33:20, NIV, text in parenthesis added). The idea of that verse is God is "perfect" (i.e., "holy") and man is still a sinful creature. We as humans cannot fully comprehend God this lifetime. That changes in heaven. As resurrected beings, we can now see God "face to face" whatever that means. Do I believe God has a literal face like a man? I don't think so. Somehow, someway, we will be able to comprehend and see God in a way that no man could ever do in this lifetime.
  - b) Again, heaven is about an intimate relationship between God and people. We will know God in ways we cannot comprehend in this lifetime. In that sense, life with God will be "face to face" as our relationship will be more intimate than it is in this lifetime.
    - i) Paul said, "Now we see (God) but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face." (1st Corinthians 13:12, NIV).
  - c) The verse says God's name will be on Christian's foreheads. Why the forehead? It occurred to me is we can see who else is marked, but we can't see our forehead!

- d) Will this be literal seal? It could be. What's more important is understand the concept. The idea of God stamping our forehead with "Property of God" is like branding cattle to show its ownership. If this is literal, I think it is more for our sakes than God's sakes. It will be a visual reminder that we belong to God. Here's the good news. We belong to God starting "now", and not just for eternity. God is all knowing. He knew in advance who would be in heaven. He picked us. In a sense, our forehead already has His name imbedded. God cannot change. God cannot "un-love" what He loves!
8. Verse 5: There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.
- a) The first thing to notice about the New Jerusalem is that neither sunlight nor "lamp light" is necessary. God Himself provides the light. The verse says there is no more night.
    - i) Does this mean there is no more sun? Does the new earth not rotate around the sun? The text doesn't say. This verse is quiet on that issue. The point is there is no "night" in the sense that God illuminates the New Jerusalem to a point where one cannot tell daytime from nighttime.
  - b) The important point is that God is "all the light we need in heaven". We as saved people don't have to depend upon God and anything else.
    - i) For the Christian, the idea is we fully depend upon God for all our needs. We still work for a living, but we understand that somehow God is in the background working out our lives for His glory. In our new eternal state, that concept of being dependant upon God continues forever, only it will be more blatant.
  - c) Before we begin to study Verse 6, note that this is the end of the "New Jerusalem" description. Beginning in Verse 6, we get in the "epilogue" of Revelation where we get some wrap up comments on the whole book.
9. Verse 6: The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."
- a) Let me paraphrase Verse 6: "I'm not making this stuff up as I go along. All of the things you've read about here in Revelation are pure truth. Bank on it!"
  - b) If one is skeptical, one can ponder all sorts of questions. There are aspects of this New Jerusalem that defy laws of nature as we know them. For example, how can a river of water have no source? How can people be resurrected and live forever anyway? How can there be a "new earth" and huge city coming down to it?
    - i) I've always stated, "If you can handle the first verse of the bible, you can handle the rest." The first verse in Genesis says, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth". If one can accept the fact there is a God and He is capable of creating the world as we know it, then the rest is acceptable. If "God is God", He can create any type of world He wants to. He created the present world for the purpose of drawing "His People" to Himself. He is going to create a future world (i.e., the New Jerusalem etc.) for the purpose of having an intimate, eternal relationship with those who choose to love God for eternity.
  - c) Let's talk about the word "soon". The verse says, "What must soon take place".
    - i) It's been about two thousand years since Jesus was resurrected. That doesn't sound very "soon" to me! ☺ Think of it this way: How fast has your life gone by? How fast has it been since your childhood? How much longer do you have before you die? "The idea of "soon" is from our perspective is "soon"!
    - ii) Also consider the fact that the older people get, the less likely they are to change their habits and lifestyles. The idea of "soon" is we need to change our behavior "soon" as the older we get, the more difficult it gets.
  - d) The reason this verse is stated now, is that from Verse 6 to the end of the chapter is the "wrap up" section of Revelation. The book is now giving its "key points to remember" about Jesus Second Coming. The first key point is that God's word is trustworthy.

10. Verse 7: "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."
- a) Verse 7 is a quote of Jesus himself saying that He is coming back soon. I've already discussed "soon", so I'll move on to the next point.
  - b) The second sentence is another "blessing". The sentence says that a person is blessed who keeps the words of this book. How do we "keep" them? This gets back to what I said in the introduction: The blessing has to do with understanding God's game plan for our salvation, understanding what entails our redemption and God's eternal plan for us.
    - i) The idea of "keeping" Revelation is to keep in mind that all of the things predicted in Revelation will happen one day. It gets back to having the "eternal perspective" about life. During the bad moments in life, one will be blessed to keep in mind what is our inevitable position in life. If I had to pick the one thing I get the most out of Revelation, it is that it gives me that eternal perspective.
    - ii) Let me give an example: If one is sick and is in pain, one still takes medicine and tries to get better. At the same time, it does help to remember the pain will not last forever. To have faith (and hope) in a better, future eternal life helps one to deal with the pain of the moment. Even if the situation never gets better in this life, one has the assurance that it will be better in the next life.
11. Verse 8: I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"
- a) In these two verses, John gives his "autograph" to start Verse 8. It is another point where John verifies that he penned this book and he personally saw all of the events. John then makes the mistake of worshipping the angel who showed John all this stuff. The angel then said in effect, "Get up John, you're embarrassing me and embarrassing yourself! You should worship God and that's it!"
  - b) This is the second time John mentioned he made the mistake of worshipping the angel who showed John all of this stuff. The first time is in Revelation 19:10.
    - i) Notice that both times John "groveled" at the feet of the angel are right after John saw his future. In other words, after describing all of the "earth judgments", John never worshipped an angel. The only two times John made this mistake was after he saw what will be his reward in heaven. I'm speculating that John started worshipping the angel was he was overwhelmed by what heaven is all about.
  - c) Let's give John some credit. He could have edited out his mistakes. ☺ Instead, John choose to record both instances where he made the mistake of worshipping God.
    - i) By the way, notice God did not "zap" John for this sin. It is a violation of the 3rd (of 10) Commandments to worship anything but God. God did not say, "Hey John, you just sinned. Sorry dude, I'll get someone else to write Revelation." ☺
    - ii) Even when John made the same mistake twice, there is only an "oral rebuke".
    - iii) That should give us comfort. If God is willing to forgive John of sinning while doing the important work of writing a bible book, there's hope for us all!
  - d) Why did John worship this angel? I'm sure John knew this angel was not God. I believe He was just so overjoyed about what he saw about his future in heaven that he started to thank the angel to the point of it being "worship". I sort of picture John on his knees kissing the angels' hand, saying, "Thank you! Thank you for showing me these visions!" The point is John was giving credit to the angel and not God. It is a form a "false-worship" to not give God credit for something God did!
  - e) Finally, let's give this angel a little credit. Remember that the reason Satan rebelled against God is he wanted to be worshipped as God. (Ref. Isaiah 14:13-16). This angel wanted to avoid that temptation and turned from John's sin of false worship.

12. Verse 10: Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.
- a) When the angel told John, "Do not seal up the words...", it meant "write it down, pass it around, and write more copies". The idea is that this prophecy was not for John's eyes only, but it is to be written and end up being part of the bible.
  - b) In the Book of Daniel, it says, "Seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future." (Daniel 8:26b NIV). Daniel was told to seal his vision. John was told not to seal his vision.
    - i) The question becomes, "What's the difference between "seal it up" and "Do not seal it up" if both John and Daniel wrote it down and "made it public"?
    - ii) It appears the difference is about "understanding". A lot of what Daniel wrote was not understood to the people of his time era. It involved things that were future to Daniel, but also included past historical events to us. Yes, a good part of Daniel's writings is still future, as is John's writings. The difference is the time is "near" to the Christian living today, and it was "far to go" from Daniel's time period.
  - c) So when Revelation says, "The time is near", does that mean all this judgment stuff will happen soon? Wasn't this book written two thousand years ago?
    - i) This gets back to understanding "soon" or "quickly". Remember the early chapters of Revelation were about judging the churches. Those types of judgments were not entirely about salvation, but about included judgment about whether or not that church had the privilege of existing as a church. Those types of "church existence" judgments can happen at any time and have in the past.
    - ii) Again, consider the idea that one can die at any time. When one looks back at one's life, one realizes how fast time goes by. In that sense, the end comes quickly.
    - iii) Did the early church live with the idea Jesus could come back at any time? Yes. Do I believe Jesus could come back at any time? Yes. One day, that answer will truly be "yes". The point is to use the return of Jesus as a motivational factor for our behavior. A Christian should always live as if Jesus could return at any time. It is a motivational factor to keep us working for Jesus in all that we do.
13. Verse 11: Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy."
- a) This is one of those verses that if read out of context, appears to be "unbiblical". The idea of this verse is "Whoever is a sinner will remain a sinner and whoever is a Christian and trusts in Jesus for his or her salvation will remain perfectly forgiven." If that were the case, we could never pray for someone to be saved. This verse gives the false impression that no one could ever repent of their sins as "whatever you are now, you always will be".
    - i) Yes, God knows all things and God knows who will be saved. We don't. That is why we pray for people and God gives us the responsibility and privilege of sharing the Gospel message with other people. This verse, taken out of context, appears to be contradictory to that principal.
  - b) Verse 11 has to be read in context of Verse 10. Jesus said, "I am coming soon" in that verse. What does Verse 11 mean in that context? It means there is a point when it is too late. In other words, once one is in hell, they can't say, "Wait a minute, I don't like the room temperature here. ☹ Give me another chance to accept Jesus!"
  - c) This verse gives the impression that however one acts now, that behavior will continue in unto the next life. In other words, Christians won't get to heaven and have to "start over" and deal with sin again. For the condemned, their sinful desires go along with them!
    - i) I suspect (along with a lot of bible scholars) that for people in hell, they will still have the desire to sin, but that desire will be unfulfilled. It is as if their behavior and their desires for that behavior will exist in the next life, but be unfulfilled.
    - ii) At the same time, those who seek God and want God as part of their lives now will do all the more so in the next life.



- iii) In other words, "we take our behavior with us in the next life". Don't get me wrong, the Christian's desire to sin will end when we get to heaven. I suspect our desire for God and better Christian relationships increases as one enters heaven.
    - iv) On the flip side, for the condemned, the desire to sin will increase in hell. It is God saying in effect, "if that's the way you want to be, you'll be that way for eternity!"
  - d) The point of this verse is a warning about our behavior. It is God saying to the unsaved, "Repent now, because one day it will be too late to change". Again, one never knows when one's life is coming to an end and the older one gets, the harder it is to change. The saved person doesn't have to worry about this, in the sense we are perfectly forgiven now and will be perfectly forgiven after we are resurrected.
14. Verse 12: "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.
- a) Five times in this chapter, we are told that Jesus is coming soon or the "time is near". It is as if God does not want us to miss that point. Each time, that fact is stated, there is another point to go with that statement. In this verse, it is about rewards. The verse is saying Jesus will reward believers "based on what he (that's us) has done".
  - b) Heavenly rewards are a bible study all unto itself. Apparently, we are rewarded in heaven based on how we acted here on earth.
  - c) The point is not only do we get to heaven, but we are rewarded "base on what we do". That implies that our actions on earth have heavenly consequences.
  - d) What about the fact Christians are saved by faith alone? (Ref.: Ephesians 2:8-9). This is true. Still, if one believes in Jesus and does what is commanded of them, it would "naturally follow" that we would do something with that faith. In other words, our behavior matters. This is the main point being made in the Book of James, Chapter 2.
  - e) Personally, I think the eternal reward aspect should be a "footnote" to our motivation. Our greatest motivation to do good deeds is solely to please the one we love, which is God. If you love someone, you want to please them. To me, any reward I get over and above that is just a bonus.
15. Verse 13: I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.
- a) This is the second time in two chapters this title of Jesus is used. As I stated in the last lesson the "alpha" is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and the "omega" is the last. This title is Jesus way of saying, "Everything begins with Me and ends with Me".
  - b) The question becomes, "Why does Jesus repeat this title here?" It is a reminder that our new life begins and ends with Jesus. It starts when we first make a commitment to serve Him. This is another reason why I call this chapter, "coming full circle". Our Christian life begins and ends with Jesus. He says so with this title.
  - c) Again, the last story here in Revelation has a lot of imagery from the Garden of Eden story. We have in view the first and last story of mankind. In both stories, the central figure is Jesus as He is redeemer from our sins. He is the way that mankind got out of the "sin predicament". It does begin and end with Jesus.
16. Verse 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.
- a) Verse 14 says in effect that those who get to go to heaven are those who "wash their robes". Apparently, we have to do some laundry do in order to be saved. ☺
  - b) The King James Version translates "wash their robes" as "Do His Commandments". The King James (and other versions) are stating that those who do God's commandments are the ones who get into heaven. The key to understanding this is that "wash their robes" is a metaphor (i.e., a "word-picture") for obeying God's commandments.
    - i) For example, Revelation 19:8 in the NIV translation states: "Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints".

- ii) My point is a "symbol" for a saved soul is they have "white-washed" robes. It has nothing to do with the robes naturally white color or bleach. ☺ The symbolism is we are symbolically clean on the outside due to Jesus paying the price for our sins.
  - c) Since "washed robes" refers to salvation, let's now move on to the rest of the sentence and see what the rewards are: The right to the tree of life and enter the gates of the city.
    - i) We've discussed the "tree of life" already. This is the "other tree" from the Garden of Eden story. After Adam and Eve sinned, they were forbidden from eating this tree of life as it would (implied) help them to live forever.
    - ii) The idea of eating of the tree of life may be literal in heaven, but more importantly, it is symbolic of our salvation. The "tree of life" is a symbol of living forever. Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat of this tree after they sinned by eating of the other tree. Adam and Eve are in heaven, but only because God provided a blood sacrifice for their sins (they were given "animal skins" to wear in Genesis 3:21). We as Christians also have access to this "tree of life" as we too accept Jesus blood sacrifice for our sins.
    - iii) Will these trees be literal too? Probably. I'll worry about that in heaven. ☺
  - d) The "gates" is much easier to explain. The idea is about entrance into heaven.
17. Verse 15: Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.
- a) Verse 15 is another verse that is best read in context of surrounding verses.
    - i) Verse 14 said in effect, "Blessed are those who have the right to enter the gates of heaven". Verse 15 is the opposite. When Verse 15 says, "outside", it refers to those who are outside heaven, which is obviously hell. This verse does not mean hell is literally outside the city gates of New Jerusalem. It is an "either/or" comparison.
  - b) In the ancient Middle East, "dogs" was a negative slang word. Most dogs were not household pets, but dangerous wild animals. It is also a Jewish slang term referring to unsaved non-Jewish people. The word "dog" is used about 40 times in the bible, and almost every time it is a reference to being "something lower than human".
  - c) Understand that this "bad list" is not a complete list of sins that gets one into hell. The idea is to pick examples of people who refuse to turn to God. The idea of these sins listed is that they these people continued to practice these things and never turned to God.
  - d) Let me expand upon a few of these items:
    - i) "Those who practice magic arts" is a term for sorcery. Satan is given some real power that people can draw upon. God wants us to freely choose Him. In order to have the free will to choose God, He allows some appealing alternative choices to exist. I do believe such powers as "channeling" and "voodoo" have some real demonic-based power, although many con artists claim to have such powers.
    - ii) The reason "sexually immoral" is singled out is it is a word-picture of failing to keep a commitment to God. Marriage is a vow of commitment. Our relationship to God is also a vow of commitment. To turn from marriage or to live a lifestyle with lots of sexual partners is a similar in concept of breaking a vow to a single person relationship.
    - iii) The next two are "murderers" and "idolaters". Those are a little more self-explanatory. The final one is "those who practice falsehood". That includes false teachers and those who claim they are Christians but their heart is not in it. Remember that any sin can be forgiven of God. The point is not that these are unforgivable sins. The point is about unrepentant sinners.
    - iv) Again, this list is designed to be a list of examples, not a complete list. Any sin can keep one from heaven. One must be "perfectly forgiven" in order to gain entrance to heaven, and that requires accepting Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for one's sins.

18. Verse 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."
- a) The first sentence of this verse says in effect that Jesus sent an angel to tell John what to write in this book. Verse 16 tells us that this book is not only about Jesus, but He is also the true author of the book. John essentially wrote what he was told to write.
  - b) The next sentence says, "I (Jesus) am the Root and Offspring of David".
    - i) King David is a key figure in Jewish History. Of all the Old Testament characters, King David is the one who told that the Messiah would be his descendant. (Ref.: 2nd Samuel 7:13). David was picked, as he was the first king that God "respected". Another reason David was picked is that he was the greatest king of Israel in terms of a warrior who defeated all of his enemies. The idea was the Messiah would be "like David" as a ruling, conquering king, but rule the entire world.
    - ii) Jesus is stating he is the "offspring of David" as to show He is the promised King of Israel, as well as King over all. The point is God keeps His promises.
    - iii) At the same, Jesus is the "origin of all life" in that by Jesus, all things were created. (See John 1:3, Col. 1:16). Therefore, Jesus is not only the "offspring" of David, but also the "root" of David, in that Jesus created all life.
    - iv) Putting this together, it is a poetic way of saying, Jesus is the start of all things and Jesus coming to be the Messiah is the fulfillment of God's promises.
  - c) Let's go back to the first sentence. It ends with "for the churches". The Book of Revelation is written for Christians. That includes non-Jewish believers as well as Jewish believers.
    - i) The first sentence emphasizes non-Jewish believers as the "seven churches" in view in Chapters 2-3 were predominately Gentiles.
    - ii) The second sentence emphasizes the "Jewish-ness" of Jesus as a Son of King David. The point is this verse is tying together Jewish and Gentile believers as one entity.
  - d) The last phrase of this verse says, "The bright Morning Star".
    - i) When I get up just before dawn, I can look at the morning sky and see one bright star. It is the planet Venus. I'll assume those living in John's time had the same privilege of seeing a bright star right before dawn. It is a "sign" of the coming of a new day. It is a word picture of a coming of a new day.
    - ii) Back in Chapter 2, Jesus said, "I (Jesus) will also give him (the believer) the morning star. If Jesus "is" the morning star in this word picture, the idea is Jesus will give us "Himself". It is another word-picture of salvation and the fact that we will have an intimate relationship with Him forever.
19. Verse 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.
- a) The word "Come" means to "Come on in to heaven". This verse is saying in effect, "You that are unsaved, come on in, and accept the Gospel message. I want to spend eternity with you in heaven! You no longer have to carry the guilt of your sins. You don't have worry any more about the past. Let Me (God) take over your lives. Just come on in!"
    - i) Verse 16 stated in effect Revelation is for believers. Verse 17 is an invitation for nonbelievers to be believers!
  - b) This verse is telling us who is making the invitation: The Spirit and the bride.
    - i) First is "The Spirit". This is the Holy Spirit. His main job is to draw people to God and draw Christians closer (a more intimate relationship) to God. It is the Holy Spirit that convicts people of sins. He doesn't need our help. ☺ He's also the one who puts it in people's hearts to want to accept the Gospel message.
    - ii) Next, the "bride" says, "come". The "bride" is short for the "Bride of Christ", which is another term for Christians. God the Father gives Christians the privilege of telling others about Jesus and watching them get saved.

- iii) Understand that we don't get "points" for every person we save. It is the Holy Spirit's job to draw people to heaven. Our job is to be available to be used by God. Our job is to pray for unsaved people. Our job is to tell others about the Good News. We then watch God work in their lives and He gets credit for the results.
    - iv) Next, it says, "He who hears say, "Come". In other words, you don't have to be a professional minister or stadium-speaking evangelist to tell others about Jesus. Once you give your life to Christ, you are just as qualified to spread the Gospel message as any other person.
  - c) Here we are, four verses away from finishing Revelation, and we get a call for the Gospel message. This verse is saying to the nonbeliever in effect, "Hey, have you been reading Revelation so far? Remember all those verses about plagues and judgments? God doesn't want you to be part of that crowd! All of this is truth! Change before it is too late!"
    - i) To the believer, this final call is a reminder of what is important: Jesus is coming back and He's coming back to judge the world. We as Christians need to keep that as a priority. Every now and then, we need to "rethink our lives" in terms of what is important and what will make a difference for all of eternity.
20. Verse 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.
- a) Verse 18 and 19 say in effect, "Don't mess with the Book of Revelation! If anyone edits out passages or adds passages, they not only will be sent to hell, but will receive the plagues described earlier in this book!" God is saying in effect it is a sin to edit or add to this book.
    - i) Let me stop and say what this means and does not mean. This does not mean that Christians are required to learn "Biblical Greek" and only read Revelation in its original Greek letters. Someone might ask, "If someone writes a commentary on Revelation, are they "adding" to this book?" For my sake, I hope not. ☺
    - ii) It does mean that one has to correctly translate the book to the best of one's ability. There is no such thing as a perfect translation and the meanings of word changes with time. This is not a condemnation against Bible translators that are doing their utmost to translate the bible either word for word or thought for thought.
    - iii) The danger is actually adding or subtracting from the text as to change the ideas being stated in the text. In that sense, God is warning it is a sinful act to "mess" with the words, predictions and concepts taught here in Revelation.
  - b) Think about these warning verses this way: They are given after the verse on the Gospel message. We are now three verses away from being finished. It is put on equal par with the Gospel message itself and this warning is given right in the next verse!
21. Verse 20: He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.
- a) Verse 20 has two speakers:
    - i) The first is Jesus Himself giving us one last reminder that He is coming soon.
    - ii) The second is John the writer of Revelation saying, OK, Lord, so be it!
  - b) I want you to think about John's response based on everything he has written and seen:
    - i) John saw Jesus describing judgments on Christian churches in the early chapters.
    - ii) John saw the rise and fall of the antichrist and how he deceived the world.
    - iii) John saw plagues and judgments hit the whole world. We can assume millions or billions of people die from these plagues.
    - iv) John saw people being sent to hell.
    - v) John saw the glorious future for all Christians, including Himself.
    - vi) Now after all of this, Jesus says, "I'm coming back soon!" I suspect John took a deep breath and said in effect, "OK, Lord, if that's what you want, so be it!"

- c) My point of this exercise is to accept "God's will" for our lives means to accept the bad things that happen as well as the good things. It means some people we know will spend an eternity in hell. It means that the world as we know, including what is beautiful will be destroyed one day.
  - d) The question is, are we willing to say, "Yes Lord Jesus come now", or are we really saying, "Can you wait until next Tuesday?" ☺
    - i) One of hardest parts of accepting the return of Jesus is to accept change. Let's face it, change is scary as we don't know what that change means. If God intervenes in our lives so that we are going through some major change, are we willing to accept that change as "God's will?" If we are going through some sort of suffering, and our best efforts and our prayers can't stop that suffering, are we willing to accept that suffering as part of "God's will" for some ultimate good?
    - ii) My point of this exercise is to understand that saying "Come Lord Jesus" is not a blind, catchall to make the world instantly better. It is about accepting God's will for our lives no matter what the situation. Yes, I am off base in terms of the context of this verse, but what I'm stating is still a biblical principal that we are here on earth as Christians to do God's will and not our will for our lives.
    - iii) Doing God's will is about praying regularly for spiritual guidance that we are doing His will. Doing God's will is regularly bible reading so we understand what God demands of us. With that stated, we can then go through our lives doing God's will, with the motivation factor of wanting to please God in all that we do. We are developing that love-relationship with God by our actions in life.
    - iv) Part of doing God's will is accepting the fact that Jesus may return at any moment. It should be another motivational factor for us to do His will.
    - v) Well I hate to stop when I'm on a roll, but I still have one more verse to go!
22. Verse 21: The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.
- a) God's grace is "unmerited rewards". It is about God blessing us only because He loves us and not because we deserve any blessings. The Book ends this way to remind us that all the blessing we have and receive in life come from God. He is not blessing us because we are doing His will, but because He wants to. It is the realization of that fact that should inspire us to respond to His love and love Him back. We do that by obedience to Him.
  - b) It is His Grace that should cause us to live a life of gratitude for Him. That gratitude is the basis of our love relationship with Him and other believers. That grace is the motivation for us to do "good works" that are in conformity of His will.
  - c) Part of my motivation for writing these studies is for myself to learn more about God and draw closer to Him. The best way to learn the bible is to teach it. I hope you have enjoyed these studies and it has blessed your life. Revelation promises a blessing to the reader and I hope it has blessed your life as much as mine. May the grace of Lord Jesus continue to shine upon us!
23. Father, We thank You for Your grace. We thank You for the lessons You have taught us in this book. May not these lessons be wasted. Help us to have the eternal perspective as we go through our daily lives. May Your will be done and give us the discernment and boldness to complete Your will in our lives. No matter what is going on in our lives at the moment, help us, like to John to look up and say, Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!
24. On the next page is a list of my sources used in preparation of these studies.

## Supplement: Bibliography

“If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.” (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted *me* to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to further commentaries as listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in this study. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) and The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. “The Message” copyright © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved. All the bible text is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over the past lessons. The specific commentaries on Revelation are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to “audio” commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in Real Audio® or MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated:

1. Commentary on Revelation by Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at <http://www.joncourson.com/>
2. Commentary on Revelation by Bob Davies. They are available in MP3® format at [http://northcountrychapel.com/audio\\_studies/](http://northcountrychapel.com/audio_studies/)
3. Commentary on Revelation by David Guzik. It is available for free in text and audio format. The web address is [http://www.enduringword.com/library\\_commentaries.html](http://www.enduringword.com/library_commentaries.html).
4. The Coming World Leader: Understanding the Book of Revelation, by Dr. David Hocking. Publisher: Multnomah Pub, Sisters, Oregon, U.S.A. Date Published: 1988 ISBN-13: 9780880702195
5. Commentary on Revelation by Ray Steadman. It is available for free in audio and text format. The web address is <http://www.raysteadman.org/revelation/index.html>
6. Commentary on Revelation by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>. Also available at <http://firefighters.org/html/library.cfm>
7. Commentary on Revelation by Chuck Smith, available at The Word for Today ministries. The web address is <http://www.thewordfortoday.org/>
8. Revelation: An Expository Commentary, 'God's Last Word' by Donald Grey Barnhouse (Hardcover - June 1971, Zondervan Publications)
9. Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary by Steve Gregg (editor) Nelson Books, May 1997, ISBN# 0840721285
10. The Defender's Study Bible by Dr. Henry Morris World Publishing (1995) ISBN: 052910444X
11. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229
12. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: [www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm](http://www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm)
13. When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties -- Norman L. Geisler, Thomas Howe; Baker Book House 1999
14. I also refer to Greg Koukl's apologetic ministry which is Stand to Reason at [www.str.org](http://www.str.org).