

***FINAL EXHORTATIONS
OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST***

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PART 2. THE NEW JERUSALEM– continued (22:1-5)

p. The river of the water of life (22:1-2)

22:1 “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”¹

22:2a “down the middle of the great *street* of the city.”²

Christ now continues to describe the New Jerusalem as a wonderful paradise. It has been planted to ensure the complete enjoyment of the people of God.

The terms for ‘river’, ‘street’ and ‘tree of life’ in the original language are *singular*, but they could also have *collective meaning*: “Every river, every street and every tree of life”. Thus, in his vision, John could have seen not just one river, one street and one tree, but parks consisting of rows and rows of trees between many rivers and many streets!

The river of the water of life before Christ’s second coming.

In the Old Testament the river of life already symbolised the cause of life and abundance (Psalms and Ezekiel). In the New Testament at Christ’s first coming the living water symbolised the Holy Spirit that gives eternal life, brings complete salvation and renews everything (John 4:14; 7:38-39). Christ is now in the process of making all things new and of giving eternal life to everyone who wants it (21:6, cf. Isaiah 55:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 3:5-6). The river of life is part of that aspect of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven at the present time (cf. 21:2)!

¹ Και εδειξεν (viaa) μοι ποταμον υδατος ζωης λαμπρον ως κρυσταλλον, εκπορευομενον (vrpm) εκ του θρονου του θεου και του αρνιου
² εν μεσω της πλατειας αυτης

The river of the water of life after Christ's second coming.

After the second coming, the river of life will flow from the throne of God and the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. John continues to describe the perfect salvation enjoyed in the New Jerusalem on the future new earth. The river of life symbolises the absolute fullness of salvation and the perfect renewal of all things on the new earth. God's people will never again thirst, but will instead enjoy the fullness of life continually (7:16-17). All their needs and holy desires will forever be fulfilled in an overflowing manner, giving abundant life and joy.

The water is clear as crystal. God's work of salvation and renewal is completely transparent and contains nothing that is disagreeable or unpleasant, nothing that could pollute or kill.

q. The tree of life (22:2b-3a)

22:2b "On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month."³

And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."⁴

22:3a "No longer will there be any curse."⁵

The word for 'tree' is actually 'wood' as is used of the cross (Acts 5:30; 10:39). By being nailed to the cross, Christ became a curse in our place and bore our curse in our place. The tree is thus associated with a curse (Galatians 3:13). However in the New Jerusalem, the tree of the cross is no longer associated with a curse. On the new earth there will be no curse!

The tree of life before Christ's second coming.

In John's vision, the description makes it impossible to think of just one tree of life. The literal translation of Revelation 22:2 is: "Between the city's street on this side and the river on that side was the tree of life, producing fruit twelve times, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there will no longer be any curse." Although the terms river, street, tree are singular, they can have *collective* meaning. Thus, between the streets and the rivers there were gardens full of trees of life! The city was just full of parks, with rivers and streets! Compare Ezekiel 47:7,12, "I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river."

And the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations. This does not mean that after Christ's second coming and final judgement there would again be preaching of the gospel, conversion and especially healing of sicknesses and hurts. Also here is spoken of things happening *now at this time*. Just as the water of the river of life, so also the tree of life with its fruit and leaves is *a part of that aspect of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven throughout the present New Testament period* (cf. 21:2,10)! Throughout the New Testament period, the bride of Christ is being prepared (19:7; cf. Ephesians 5:25-27); the water of eternal life flows from God's throne to people (cf. John 4:14; 7:37-39); the trees of life give and maintain the kind of life that pleases God (cf. John 6:35); and the leaves of the trees bring healing of every kind of sickness and hurt and maintain the kind of health that honours God (cf. Matthew 4:23-24). Thus, the trees of life, its monthly crops of fruit and healing leaves before Christ's second coming *symbolise* the wholesome influence and never-ending superabundance of God's work of salvation, which brings deep satisfaction and joy and heals all the scars of sin and misery. Of course, this is temporary, because the complete renewal and healing only comes at the resurrection of our present mortal bodies. This is true for all the nations, because all nations including the natural nation of Israel were lost in sin and misery (cf. Romans 3:23).

Throughout the present New Testament period, everyone who overcomes (cf. 21:7) will be given the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God (2:7).

The tree of life after Christ's second coming.

Producing fruit each of the twelve months is not explained. The number 3 represents God and the number 4 represents the new earth. It could refer to the superabundance of God and his never-ending blessing in the new creation, which satisfies all our needs and fills us with continual joy.

³ και του ποταμου εντευθεν και εκειθεν (from here and from there = on each side) ξυλον ζωης

ποιουν (νπρα) καρπους δωδεκα, κατα μηνα (month) εκαστον αποδιδουν (νπρα) τον καρπον αυτου

⁴ και τα φυλλα (leaves) του ξυλου εις θεραπειαν (healing) των εθνων

⁵ και παν καταθεμα ουκ εσται (vifm) ετι.

With a view to the eternal state after Christ's second coming, the description here shows that then it will be fully known how the people of the nations had received eternal life and complete spiritual, emotional and physical healing.

"No longer will there be any curse" (22:3a). Everything that will be struck by God's curse will be excluded from the New Jerusalem. No evil thing or person will ever enter her. Because the dragon and his helpers and all their followers have been thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulphur (21:8), there will no longer be temptations, sin and curse as its consequence. The New Jerusalem will never be destroyed, but will be secure forever (cf. Zechariah 14:11).

On this present earth, man has been driven out of the Garden of Eden. On the future new earth, the Garden of Eden will be inside the city!

r. The throne of God and of the Lamb (22:3b)

22:3b "The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city"⁶

The throne of God before Christ's second coming.

After his first coming, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven, Jesus Christ sat at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19). The word throne(s) appears 47 times in Revelation and besides the throne of Satan (2:13) and the throne of the beast (13:2), they all refer to the throne of God or Christ and are always *in heaven!* (See especially 1:4-5; 3:21; 4:2,4; 5:6,7,13; 7:9,10,11,15; 12:5; 15:5 and 16:17; 20:4,11). The throne of God and the Lamb *are a part of the New Jerusalem that is coming down from heaven at the present time.* The universe and everything in it is ruled by Christ from the throne in heaven (Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Peter 3:22). Throughout the present New Testament period, every believer may enter God's holy presence with freedom and confidence to receive mercy and help just when they need it (Ephesians 3:18; Hebrews 4:16).

At his second coming all knees of friends and enemies of Jesus Christ in the universe will bow before him and acknowledge that he is the Lord God (1 Corinthians 15:24-26; Philippians 2:9-11; cf. Isaiah 45:23).

The throne of God after Christ's second coming.

After Christ's second coming the throne of God and of the Lamb will be within the New Jerusalem on the future new earth! Then, the dwelling of God will be with his people and he will live with them (21:3). In this final eternal state fellowship with God in Christ will be perfect, not just a momentary experience, but a permanent condition! Then God, who is Spirit, will actually dwell and reign among his people. He will cause all his majesty to shine in the New Jerusalem in complete fellowship with the visible Lord Jesus Christ. Then, his holy presence will be the source of every goodness and blessing.

The Lamb is expressly mentioned as the temple, the light and the throne occupant of the New Jerusalem, because Jesus Christ is the Mediator of everything God does. God gives complete salvation only through Jesus Christ and on the basis of his completed work of salvation! Only those people who go to God through Jesus Christ will be partakers of this eternal inheritance. No one will enter the eternal Paradise except through Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)!

s. The servants (22:3c-5)

"and his servants will serve him."⁷

22:4 "They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads."⁸

22:5 "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."⁹

God's servants are the believers of both the Old Testament and the New Testament periods. What will the future activities of believers be? Eternal life is not an eternal doing nothing! Together all believers during the

⁶ και ο θρονος του θεου και του αρνιου εν αυτη εσται

⁷ και οι δουλοι αυτου λατρευουσιν (vifa) αυτω

⁸ και οψονται > οραω (vifm--3p) το προσωπον αυτου, και το ονομα αυτου επι των μετωπων αυτων

⁹ και νυξ ουκ εσται > εσομαι, ειμι (vifm) ετι, και ουκ εχουσιν (vifa) χρειαν φωτος λυχνου και φωτος ηλιου, οτι κυριος ο θεος φωτισει (vifa) επ αυτου, και βασιλευσουσιν (vifa) εις τους αιωνας των αιωνων.

Old Testament period, who believed in the Messiah that was coming, and all believers during the New Testament period, who believed in Christ that had come, will inherit the kingdom of God in its final form, namely, the new heaven (universe) and the new earth. They will be *occupied with godly, holy and very meaningful activities* on the new earth!

They will bring the splendour, glory and honour of every nation, from where they have come, into the kingdom.

They will serve God as priests (cf. 20:6; 1 Peter 2:5). They will probably continually bring to God a sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15). Just imagine singing together the most beautiful songs of every language and culture in all the voices of mankind accompanied by the great variety of music instruments to the glory of God! The greatest concert in history! And it never ends!

They will see God's face. Sin on the old earth prevented man from seeing the face of God (Exodus 33:20,23). But on the new earth all people will see God in the face of Christ and fellowship directly with God (Matthew 5:8). They will live, serve and reign in his immediate presence, forever and ever.

They will bear God's name on their foreheads. God's name expresses the being of God as he has revealed himself. He had revealed himself as the ONLY God that exists in the universe. Every other so-called 'god' is NOT the God of the Bible (Exodus 20:2-3). The God of the Bible took on the human nature in Jesus Christ (Isaiah 9:6-7). And he has revealed himself as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3). Every 'god' that is not the God and Father who took on the human nature in Jesus Christ and who did not enter creation and human history in Jesus Christ, is NOT the True and Living God!

The God of the Bible cannot be compared to the gods of all the other religions (Isaiah 40:18). The God of the Bible does not share his glory (his divine attributes and presence) with any of the gods of the other religions (Isaiah 42:8). The God of the Bible is the only Saviour and no god of the other religions will save their followers (Isaiah 43:10b-11). Only the God of the Bible revealed what happened in the past and foretold what would happen in the future (Isaiah 44:6-8). Only the God of the Bible did not speak in secret, but spoke the same unaltered message over a period of 1500 years to about 40 different prophets and apostles in three languages and cultures that were separated more than 2000 kilometres from one another (Isaiah 45:18-21a). There is no righteous and saving God besides the God of the Bible. Therefore, all the people on earth must turn to the God of the Bible and be saved. Finally, every knee in history will bow willingly or unwillingly before the God of the Bible. Every tongue will confess with conviction or with regret that the God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ is the only true God (Isaiah 45:21b-23; Philippians 2:9-11).

The name on their foreheads signifies that God acknowledges them openly to be his very own forever and they joyfully confess him as their Lord (3:12; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3).

They will reign with God. After Christ's second coming and the final judgement, the kingdom of the world (hitherto God's kingdom opposed by the dominion of darkness, cf. Colossians 1:13) also becomes the kingdom of God and his Christ (now God's kingdom in its final, perfect phase without any darkness)! Then the saints will receive the kingdom in its final, perfect phase and possess it forever and ever (cf. Daniel 7:18). God in his visible revelation in Jesus Christ will reign forever and ever (11:15; cf. 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; Isaiah 9:7; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; 2 Peter 1:11). And then his servants will also reign with him forever and ever. This means that they will probably realise their original assignment to rule over God's creation: nature with its animals and plants (Genesis 1:26,28). But all trouble and difficulty of work as we know it on this present broken earth will have been removed. Never again will this condition end!

t. Different views about the throne (22:1)

There are two views. See supplement 6 and the explanation of the symbols above.

First view. (The futurist view) The throne is literal and will probably rest on the summit of the pyramid shape of the literal city.¹⁰

Second view. (The correct explanation) The throne is symbolic of God's visible glorious presence and majestic sovereign reign in the midst of the community of his saved people everywhere on the future new earth as the centre of the future new universe. God does not need a literal physical place to be worshipped (Acts 17:24-25).

u. Different views about the leaves of the tree (22:2)

There are two views. See supplement 6 and the explanation of the symbols above.

First view. (The futurist view) The leaves will *prevent* sickness and preserve people in health on the new earth, just as Adam would have been preserved in health if he had eaten of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:22-24).¹¹

Second view. (The correct explanation) The leaves are for the healing of the nations on this present earth before Christ's second coming, thus pointing to that aspect of the New Jerusalem that is coming down from heaven throughout the whole New Testament period. On the future new earth after Christ's second coming there will not even be the possibility of sickness (21:4)!

v. Different views about the kingdom in eternity (22:5)

There are two views. See supplement 6 and the explanation of the symbols above.

First view. (The futurist view) After the 1000 year *millennial kingdom* on this present earth will follow the 33 000 year *perfect kingdom* on the new earth. At the close of this 'dispensation of the Fullness of Times', Christ will surrender this perfect kingdom to God (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). This is based on the 1000 generations (Deuteronomy 7:9) and Jesus' 33 years as the length of a generation. Then time will cease and 'the eternal ages' called 'the ages of ages' or 'ages to come' (Ephesians 2:7) will begin.¹²

Second view. (The correct explanation) The present kingdom of God was inaugurated at Christ's first coming (12:10; Matthew 12:28; 21:43). The kingdom of God in its perfect final phase will be inaugurated at Christ's second coming (11:15; Matthew 25:34). Then the Son of God in human nature will have completed his commission as Mediator.

The Bible clearly teaches that after Christ has put his enemies under his feet at his second coming, his work as Mediator will be complete and he will subject himself to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). In 1 Corinthians 15:28 Paul does not imply that God the Son would be subjected to God the Father. What Christ will lay down is not his divine nature or his eternal kingship (2 Peter 1:11), but *his office as Mediator* when he has conquered all his enemies and protected his people. The goal of the subjection of Jesus Christ (the God-Man Mediator) is that "God may be all in all" in the sense that God (the Triune God) is with all, ruling everything and possessing everything directly. All ungodly and pious people, and all devils will be compelled by the completed salvation work of Christ to recognize God as the One and Only. God's dominion will be universal and universally accepted. There will be no opposition any more!

¹⁰ Larkin, Revelation p. 207

¹¹ Larkin, Revelation p. 208

¹² Larkin, Revelation p. 202,208-209

PART 3. THE FINAL EXHORTATIONS (22:6-21)

Three give testimony to the authenticity of the book of Revelation: the angel (22:6), the apostle John (22:8) and Christ himself (22:16). And three speak to the coming of Christ: Christ himself (22:12,20), the Spirit and the bride (22:22:17) and John (22:20). There is a final blessing: Blessed those who keep on washing their robes, that is, keep on developing their character (22:14). And there is a final warning: Woe to those who add words to or subtract words from the book of Revelation (22:18-19).

a. These words are trustworthy and true (22:6a)

22:6 “The angel said to me, These words are trustworthy and true.”¹³ The angel who showed John these visions attests the genuine character of this revelation. The book of Revelation is indeed of divine origin (1:1; 19:9; 21:5; cf. 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 2:19-21).

b. The God of the spirits of the prophets (22:6b)

“The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets”¹⁴ God is the Father of all human spirits in the sense that he created them (Hebrews 12:9). God is particularly the God of the spirits of the prophets. He inspired them to proclaim his Word to people, which is now recorded in the Bible (2 Peter 1:20-21). He did this through the Spirit of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:9-12). So God also revealed the Old Testament revelation through Jesus Christ!

He also inspires the spirits of prophets today, that is, the spirits of those who proclaim God’s message today, and guides them when and how to say God’s message. But God has created the human spirit in such a way that the spirits of prophets are never kidnapped by the Holy Spirit. The spirits of the prophets always remain subject to the control of the prophets themselves and other prophets. Those who claim to have the gift of prophecy are therefore completely responsible and answerable to God about what they prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:32)! Everything genuine prophets proclaim must be in complete agreement with the Bible (cf. Acts 17:10-12; 1 Corinthians 4:6). Every prophecy that is not in agreement with the Bible originated in the sinful mind of people and Christians must not listen to these (Jeremiah 23: 9-40; 1 John 4:1-6).

c. The things must soon take place (22:6c)

“sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.”¹⁵ Both the introduction (1:1-3) and the conclusion of the book of Revelation teach that the book of Revelation is not merely a prediction of future history, but a proclamation in apocalyptic language of the main principles operating throughout world history from Christ’s first coming to Christ’s second coming. The book is directed to every Christian in every age! And the book is a relevant message to every Christian every day! What was ‘soon’ in the time of the apostle John two thousand years ago has become ‘now’ since that time!

d. I am coming soon (22:7a)

22:7 “Behold, I am coming soon!”¹⁶ Although in one way there is a definite final second coming of Jesus Christ that ends this present history, in another way there is an imminent coming of Christ for everyone at any time in our lives (cf. 2:5,16) and definitely when we die physically. There are different ways in which Christ is ‘coming’ (cf. 1:8; 3:11; 16:15; 22:17; Luke 12:35-40). See the introduction to chapter 3 (background).

e. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book (22:7b)

“Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.”¹⁷ Blessed is the person who reads, who hears and takes to heart (1:3), and who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book (22:7). See the seven blessings (22:14).

¹³ Και ειπεν (viaa) μοι, Ουτοι οι λογοι πιστοι και αληθινοι

¹⁴ και ο κυριος, ο θεος των πνευματων των προφητων

¹⁵ απεστειλεν (viaa) τον αγγελον αυτου δειξει (vnaa) τοις δουλοις αυτου α δει (vira) γενεσθαι (vnam) εν ταχει

¹⁶ και ιδου ερχομαι (virp) ταχυ

¹⁷ μακαριος ο τηρων (vrpa) τους λογους της προφητειας του βιβλιου τουτου

The book of Revelation is NOT a book that is relevant only for the future history, but IS a book that is relevant for every human being throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. And therefore the book of Revelation must be read, heard and obeyed by everyone, everywhere and at all times!

f. Worship God, not angels (22:8-9)

22:8 "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."¹⁸ Also the apostle John testified that the book of Revelation is not his invention, but a genuine revelation from Christ.

22:9 "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!'"¹⁹ Especially in Asia Minor, some Christians were tempted by the Gnostics to worship angels (cf. Colossians 2:18). But the angels themselves warn people not to do this, but instead to worship God alone (22:8-9)! Only Jesus Christ is worthy of worship and is worshipped as God (Matthew 2:11; 14:33; 28:17), because he is God (Isaiah 9:6; 10:20-21; John 10:30-38; 14:9-10; Colossians 1:19; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8-9; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20; Revelation 1:8,17; 22:13). Like Christians the angels are servants of Christ and they especially serve believers that inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14). In humility the angel calls himself *a servant* of the Old Testament prophets, of the New Testament apostles and of every Christian who holds on to and proclaims the words in the book of Revelation.

g. Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near (22:10)

22:10 "Then he told me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.'"²⁰

The book of Daniel had to be sealed (Daniel 8:26). "Close up"²¹ the vision" might merely denote "keep it safe until the day when it is needed", because it is relevant to that far future context. However, the verb more naturally suggests "keep it secret until that day". The verb "to close up" appears alongside the verb "to seal"²² in Daniel 12:4,9. For a second century B.C. audience of the book of Daniel this explains why the vision in the book of Daniel had not been heard of before (that is between the 6th and the 2nd century B.C.) The vision had been sealed up during that time. However, these words also express the conviction that the message really came from God. The fact that this message emerged in the 2nd century B.C. was a sign that 'the End' was near. That is, the end of the period of oppression (by Antiochus) and the fulfilment of God's purpose for his people at that time was near.

The book of Revelation must not be sealed (Revelation 22:10). 'The time'²³ is the time appointed by God for things to happen. The prophecies in the book of Revelation are appointed by God to begin to go into fulfilment from the time of the apostle John onwards (cf. 1:1,3)! The words of all the twenty-two chapters of the book of Revelation must not be sealed, *must not be kept away from people, because they have already begun to be fulfilled* (22:10)! The fulfilment of the words in the book of Revelation began at Christ's first coming and will only be completely fulfilled at Christ's second coming. The words of the book Revelation must be read and made known; they must be believed and obeyed. Blessed are those people who read and keep these words: in every age and now in the present time (22:7,14; cf. 1:3).

¹⁸ Καγω Ιωαννης ο ακουων (vnpa) και βλεπων (vnpa) ταυτα. και οτε ηκουσα (viaa) και εβλεψα (viaa), επεσα (viaa) προσκυνησαι (vnaa) εμπροσθεν των ποδων του αγγελου του δεικνουοντος (vnpa) μοι ταυτα

¹⁹ και λεγει (vira) μοι, Ορα (vmpa) (take care! don's do it!) μη συνδουλος σου ειμι (vira)

και των αδελφων σου των προφητων και των τηρουντων (vnpa) τους λογους του βιβλιου τουτου τω θεω προσκυνησον (vmaa)

²⁰ και λεγει μοι, Μη σφραγισης > σφραγιζω (vsaa) τους λογους της προφητειας του βιβλιου τουτου, ο καιρος γαρ εγγυς εστιν (vira)

²¹ Hebrew: setos

²² Hebrew: chatom

²³ καιρος

h. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong (22:11)

22:11 “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.”²⁴ Every person can already now know what destiny is waiting for him (cf. Ezekiel 18:21-24). The word ‘let’ has two meanings (cf. Matthew 13:30):

The ‘let’ of withdrawal lets go of a person, e.g. Revelation 22:11a. It means that Christians should not hinder a person who, in spite of exhortations and warnings, has completely hardened himself in his wickedness. Christians should not hinder him from continuing in his unrighteousness and also not hinder the filthy person from continuing in his filth. For the wicked this ‘let’ is a terrible reality, because God “gives them over” or abandons them to their wicked ways (cf. Romans 1:24,26,28)!

The ‘let’ of positive exhortation (22:11b) urges a person to do something, e.g. “Let the wicked forsake his way” (Isaiah 55:7). It also means that Christians should not hinder the righteous and holy person from continuing in the way of righteous deeds and sanctification.

i. Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me (22:7,12,20)

22:12 “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”²⁵ This promise is a warning at the same time - a tender admonition not to harden oneself in unbelief, but rather to repent and be transformed. At Christ’s second coming there will no longer be an opportunity to repent. Then Christ will not come to save, but to judge the unrighteous. His reward or punishment is with him and he will give it at his second coming in the final judgement (20:11-15; cf. Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15). The reward or punishment will be in exact proportion to the life one lived on earth. He will give to everyone according to what he has done (Luke 12:47-48).

j. I am the Beginning and the End (22:13)

22:13 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”²⁶ This exalted name of God (1:4) also belongs to Christ (1:8,17; 2:8; 22:13)! The eternal God had taken on the human nature in time and had entered his creation and human history in Jesus Christ (John 1:1,14,18; 10:30; 14:9; Colossians 2:9; 1:15; Hebrews 1:3). Jesus Christ is eternal (Hebrews 13:8) and his words are eternal (Matthew 24:36). The promises and threats of Jesus Christ (22:12) also have eternal significance.

k. Blessed are those who wash their robes (22:14)

22:14 “Blessed are those who continually wash their robes, that they (literally: he) may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”²⁷

There are seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation:

- (1) Blessed is he who reads the book (of Revelation), because the time is near (1:3).
- (2) Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. They will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them (14:13).
- (3) Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed (16:15).
- (4) Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb (19:9).

²⁴ ο αδικων (vppa) αδικησατω (vmaa) ετι, και ο ρυπαρος ρυπανθητω (vmap) ετι, και ο δικαιος δικαιοσυνην ποιησατω (vmaa) ετι, και ο αγιος αγιασθητω (vmap) ετι

²⁵ Ιδου ερχομαι (virm) ταχυ, και ο μισθος μου μετ εμου, αποδουναι (vnaa) εκαστω ως το εργον εστιν (vira) αυτου

²⁶ εγω το Αλφα και το Ω, ο πρωτος και ο εσχατος, η αρχη και το τελος

²⁷ Μακαριοι οι πλυνοντες (vppa) τας στολας αυτων, ινα εσται > εσομαι/ειμι (vifm—3s) η εξουσια αυτων επι το ξυλον της ζωης και τοις πλωσιν εισελθωσιν (vsaa—3p) εις την πολιν

(5) Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years (20:6).

(6) Blessed is he who keeps the words of the book (22:7).

(7) 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 (22:14).

All Christians have already been justified once for all by their faith in the death of Jesus Christ, symbolised by his blood (7:14; cf. Isaiah 1:18; John 15:3; Romans 3:24-26; Hebrews 9:14). Once for all time they have put on Christ and his righteousness (Ephesians 4:22-24).

But every Christian needs cleansing again and again from the sins he commits after he has become a Christian (1 John 1:8-10). Blessed are those who *continually* wash their robes. Every person carries with him a robe and he is all the time weaving this robe, because his every thought, word and deed enters into it. His robe also gets splashed, dirty and filthy and is constantly in need of washing (cf. Zechariah 3:3). Nothing in this world can cleanse it (Jeremiah 2:22). This robe is one's character, which Christ wants to sanctify! The only remedy that cleanses from all kinds of sin and all sin is the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7). The words 'the blood of Christ' does not imply that his blood is the magical means for cleansing sin, but is an expression referring to the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross, which made atonement for the sins of those who believe in him (Romans 3:25). All new stains of sin are cleansed by confession and forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

l. Outside are the dogs, etc (22:15)

22:15 "Outside are the dogs, those who practise magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolater and everyone who *continually* love and practise falsehood."²⁸ Outside the city (the New Jerusalem) that represents God's community of saved people living on the new earth are all those who have the characteristics of the great prostitute (sexual immorality, cf. 17:2,4), and of the dragon and beast (murder, cf. John 8:44; Revelation 11:7) and of the false prophet (idolatry, cf. 13:14-15).

The false teachers are literally called dogs (cf. Matthew 7:6; Philippians 3:2). Dogs were despised in the east. They are unclean (cf. 2 Peter 2:22) and must be avoided (2 John 9-11). The false teachers not only speak falsehood, but also love and practise falsehood! Practising falsehood in an age of rationalism is shown by people who do not base their thinking and convictions on the truth of the Bible and deliberately follow lies (cf. Isaiah 5:20). And practising falsehood in an age of existentialism is shown by people who do not base their feelings and experiences on the truth of the Bible, because truth has become a relative concept instead of an absolute reality that God has revealed! The apostle John always emphasised truth against falsehood (John 1:17; 8:40-44; 14:6; 1 John 2:21; 4:6; Revelation 14:5; 22:15).

m. The testimony of Jesus to the churches (congregations) (22:16a)

22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you the testimony for the churches (congregations)."²⁹ The Author of this book is not the apostle John, but Jesus himself (1:1). Jesus had seen and read, revealed and executed whatever was written in the scroll with writing on both sides – the book in heaven (5:1-2). The whole book of Revelation is the testimony of Jesus to all the congregations throughout the New Testament period of time!

n. Jesus is the divine origin and human descendent of David (22:16b)

"I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morning Star."³⁰ Jesus Christ is the Root of David, *the divine* origin of David, and the Offspring of David, *the human* descendent or the Seed that was promised to his covenant people (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16; Matthew 22:42-45). Jesus Christ is God that took on human nature, entered his creation and the history of the world to be the Saviour. He is the expected Messiah

²⁸ εξω οι κυνες και οι φαρμακοι και οι πορνοι και οι φονεις και οι ειδωλολατραι και πας φιλων και ποιων (νρρα) ψευδος

²⁹ Εγω Ιησους επεμψα (viaa) τον αγγελον μου μαρτυρησαι (vnaa) υμιν ταυτα επι ταις εκκλησιαις

³⁰ εγω ειμι (vira) η ριζα και το γενοσ Δανιδ, ο αστηρ ο λαμπροσ ο πρωινοσ (early, morning)

of the first coming and the second coming. He is the bright Morning Star, a symbol of royalty (cf. Numbers 24:17), the star that rules the heavens with royal splendour and dominion.

o. The Holy Spirit and the Church continually invite and expect Jesus Christ (22:17a)

22:17 “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’”³¹ The Holy Spirit and the Church (the bride, God’s community of saved people) always work together and they constantly say, “Be *continually* coming!” This prayer refers to Christ’s continual coming during the whole course of history that precedes his final second coming. See the different ways in which Christ is coming in the introduction to chapter 3 (background). *The Spirit and Christians pray, “Come and carry out your plan in history with a view to your final coming.”* That divine plan includes the principles of moral government revealed under the symbolism of the lampstands, the seals, the trumpets, the conflict with the dragon and his helpers, the bowls of wrath, the wedding of the Lamb, etc. “In and through all these means and agencies, cause your purpose to be realised and speed your coming!”

And let everyone who reads the book of Revelation pray the same, “Be *continually* coming!” This is what Christians pray when they say, “Your kingdom come”³² (Matthew 6:10)!

p. The invitation of Jesus Christ to the readers (22:17b)

“Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.”³³ Not only Christians invite Christ to come to them, but also Christ tenderly invites everyone who wishes to come to him and receive the free gift of eternal life (cf. Isaiah 55:1-2; John 1:12)! It is Christ’s invitation to the readers of the book of Revelation in every age. He offers eternal life as a gracious free gift. But people must wish it and receive it! Nobody needs to hesitate to come and receive it!

q. The warning against adding or subtracting words (22:18-19)

22:18 “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.”³⁴

22:19 “And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”³⁵

These words are directly spoken by Jesus. He states that the Bible is not the product of human invention or wisdom, but a divine revelation. God or Christ through the Holy Spirit inspired the prophets to put his words to writing (cf. 1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21). This warning does not only pertain to the book of Revelation, because the same statement is applied to the Law (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32) and to every word of God (Proverbs 30:6; Jeremiah 26:2). The Word of God (the Bible) is unassailable and may not be violated.

The earnest warning of Christ is for every person that reads the Bible. Don’t read your own opinions into this book! Don’t add to this book (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:6)! If you do, God will add his plagues to your life! And don’t say that certain passages in this book are interpolations! Don’t take away from this book (cf. John 5:39-40)! God will take your share in the tree of life and the holy city away from you!

This is also a serious warning to other religions that maliciously and without any evidence say that the Bible has been altered!

r. The response of Jesus and of John (22:20)

22:20 “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come Lord Jesus.”³⁶

³¹ Και το πνευμα και η νυμφη λεγουσιν (vira) Ερχου (vmpm). και ο ακουων (vpra) ειπατω > λεγω (vmaa), Ερχου (vmpm—2s).
The present tense emphasises the continual aspect of the action.

³² ελθετω > (2nd aorist of) ερχομαι (vmaa) η βασιλεια σου. (ερχομαι, ελευσομαι, ηλθον, εηλυθα)

³³ και ο διψων (vpra) ερχεσθω (vmpm—3s), ο θελων (vpra) λαβετω (vmaa) υδωρ ζωης δωρεαν

³⁴ Μαρτυρω (vira) εγω παντι τω ακουοντι (vpra) τους λογους της προφητειας του βιβλιου τουτου. εαν τις επιθη > επιτιθημι (vsaa)
επ αυτα, επιθησει (vifa) ο θεος επ αυτον τας πληγας τας γεγραμμενας (vrip) εν τω βιβλιω τουτω

³⁵ και εαν τις αφελη > αφαιρεω (vsaa) απο των λογων του βιβλιου της προφητειας ταυτης, αφελει > αφαιρεω (vifa)
ο θεος το μερος αυτου απο του ξυλου της ζωης και εκ της πολεως της αγιας, των γεγραμμενων (vrip) εν τω βιβλιω τουτω

Jesus responds with the confirmation that he is coming soon.
And John personally responds, “Amen. Be coming!”

s. The benediction (22:21)

22:21 “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.”³⁷ Some Greek manuscripts read “be with the saints”. If this was not the original reading it was nevertheless intended. The grace of the Lord Jesus is for his own people, for those who listen to the words of this book! Other manuscripts add the final “Amen” as a divine assurance of everything written in this book.

³⁶ Λεγει (ν1ρα) ο μαρτυρων (νρρα) ταυτα, Ναι, ερχομαι (ν1ρμ--1s) ταχυ. Αμην, ερχου (νμρμ--2s), κυριε Ιησου

³⁷ Η χαρις του κυριου Ιησου μετα παντων