

INTRODUCTION to REVELATION chapter 22

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1 THE THEME

FINAL EXHORTATIONS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

2 THE STRUCTURE

Revelation 22:1-5 is a continuation of the picture of the redeemed and transformed universe *after* Christ's second coming as foreshadowed by the redeemed Church *before* Christ's second coming.

Revelation 22:6-21 are final exhortations of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 THE CONTENTS

[a. Revelation chapter 22 continues to describe the ideal reality of the Church for the present age and the perfect reality of the Church for the coming age \(22:1-5\)](#)

Revelation chapter 21:1 to 22:5 is a picture of the redeemed and transformed universe *after* Christ's second coming (19:11-16) as foreshadowed by the redeemed Church *before* Christ's second coming.

The symbols in Revelation chapter 21:1 to 22:5 are on the one hand *the ideal reality* of the Church (the kingdom) for the present age *before* Christ's second coming and on the other hand *the perfect reality* of the Church (the kingdom) for the future age after Christ's second coming.

The angel continues to show John the river of life and tree of life. John sees the throne of God and what his servants do for ever and ever.

[b. The final exhortations of the Lord Jesus Christ \(22:6-21\)](#)

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). The words of this book must not be sealed, that is, it *must not be kept away from people, because the events in the book have already begun to be fulfilled* (22:10)! Blessed are now in the present time those people who read and keep the words in the book of Revelation (22:7,14; cf. 1:3).

Three speak to the coming of Christ: Christ himself (22:12,20), the Spirit and the bride (22:17) and John (22:20).

A final blessing and warning is given. Blessed are those who keep on washing their robes, that is, keep on developing their character (22:14). However, there is a serious warning to those who add words to or subtract words from the book of Revelation (22:18-19).

4 THE BACKGROUND

a. The river of life (Ezekiel 47:1-11)

King David pictured God's temple as a place of abundance of good things (Psalm 65:4) where high and low people find refuge and feast of that abundance. "With God is the fountain of life, in his light we see light" (Psalm 36:8-9).

The prophet Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel chapter 1 concerning what he saw of the Lord himself results in his vision concerning what the new temple, the new city and the new land in Ezekiel chapter 40 to 48 would look like. The cherubim are symbolically the bearers of the divine life in Ezekiel, but in the future New Israel (Jerusalem) there would be a river of life. In a vision Ezekiel saw water coming out from under the temple that would become a river that no one could cross. The river would originate in God's presence and become increasingly deep. It would flow towards the East into the Dead Sea and cause its waters to become fresh. Wherever the river would flow, everything would live: fruit trees of all kinds, swarms of living creatures and large numbers of fish of many kinds. And along its shores fishermen would spread their nets (Ezekiel 47:1-11). The water of the river would give life to everything and would fill every form with new inner life. Fulfilment: Revelation 22:1.

b. The tree of life (Genesis 2:9; Ezekiel 47:7,12)

In the Old Testament the tree of life already symbolised the cause of eternal life. At the creation, God had made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground. They were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden of Eden there was literally, 'the tree of lives'¹ and the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9). The plural 'lives' is explained as a plural of abstraction. The definite article 'the' indicates that life was in a special way given or maintained by this tree. Although the other trees also served man as a livelihood, the tree of life must refer to a special kind of life, namely eternal life (cf. Genesis 3:22).

In Ezekiel's vision, there were a great number of trees on each side of the river (Ezekiel 47:7). They were fruit trees of all kinds and grew on both banks of the river. Their leaves would never wither and their fruit would never fail. The water flowing from the sanctuary caused them to bear fruit every month. Their fruit would serve for food and their leaves for healing (Ezekiel 47:12). Fulfilment: Revelation 22:1-2.

c. The throne of God

During the Old Testament period, God is depicted as sitting on his throne in heaven surrounded by his angels (1 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1; 63:15; Ezekiel 1:26). When unholy people tried to enter God's holy presence in the temple, God's anger broke out against them and consumed them (cf. Leviticus 10:2; 2 Samuel 6:7; 2 Chronicles 26:16-21).

¹ Hebrew: ets ha-chajim