**REVELATION CHAPTER 22**

We open the twenty second and final chapter of the book of Revelation with a look back over the journey thus far. It began with a look at the “7 Churches of Asia” and their portrayal of the major historical milestones along the path of the church from calvary to the end of the church age and the return of Christ. Then we covered (and many times repeated) many amazing, though often tragic, events along the way as we looked at scenes of: “God’s two witnesses”, “The woman in the wilderness”, “The abomination of desolation”, scenes of judgment upon a false religious system, and much more. We watched as the word of God emerged from the dark age of tyranny and rose to heights not experienced for many centuries before.

In chapter twenty one (which is a parallel to the Philadelphian church period) we saw the phenomenal restoration of the church, the bride of Christ, a city coming down from God out of heaven. We watched breathlessly, as the power and tyranny of a corrupt, unscriptural church-state system lost its power and dominion, and a new day of genuine spirituality dawned upon the world like the rising of the sun. World-wide revivals brought back the experience of the new birth and the freedom and life-changing power of the word of God filled the world with a “new heaven and a new earth”, spiritually speaking.

All of this brought us far into the 20th century, when a spirit of self-satisfaction, of being rich and increased with goods (spiritually) along with a lukewarm, half-hearted Christianity, which spread throughout the church of the 20th century and now into the 21st century. This was the trademark characteristics of the church of Laodicea, the 7th and also the last church era before the return of Christ. Its impact on the Christian church has been astounding and very deceptive. Its influence has gripped the life line of the church – the word of God – with a strangle-hold it has not been able or even willing to shake off. It is the reason that the Lord has characterized the Laodicean church age as being “wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked”. At this point it might be beneficial for you to review the lesson on “The Church of Laodicea”, to refresh your memory as to its picture and spiritual condition.

**CHAPTER 21.**

 This chapter portrayed a symbolic picture of a new spiritual day and a gloriously restored church. It was portrayed as a “bride adorned for her husband”, and also as a great city coming down from God out of heaven, built of very precious materials. It was glorified by the indwelling of God himself and the Lamb as its temple. It had no need of the sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminated it and the Lamb is the light thereof. This grand description of the church was fulfilled in its marvelous spiritual awakening in the 19th century. This is a fact so well chronicled in her world-wide history that there is no question thereof.

**CHAPTER 22**

In the very first verse we are introduced to a **“pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb”.** What an amazing picture! A river – the waters of which give life – clear as crystal and completely filtered of all impurities – flowing out of the throne of God! What do we have here? Is it a literal river traversing the skies far above the earth (or beneath it if you are on the other side), with nothing to serve as its bottom or its banks? Or is it a beautiful symbol of the “river of God” flowing out from his throne of grace, to offer life giving waters to the desert of the sinful souls of man? Without any doubt it is the later.

**THE RIVER OF LIFE.**

We begin our search for an answer to this “river of life” in Ps. 46:4: “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the most high”. Then in Ps. 65:9: “Thou visitest the earth and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God which is full of water”. Ps. 36:8 embraces this river of God when it says: “And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures”. Is. 48:18 likens the peace that comes from obedience to the commandments of God unto a river. These scriptures should verify to us that we are not talking about a natural river such as the Euphrates, Nile or Mississippi. Instead they convey the thought of life giving waters or spiritual water.

The gospel of John, chapter 4, provides us with an unquestionable answer as to what this river of the water of life really is. This is the story of the encounter Jesus had with the woman at Jacob’s well, located in Sychar, a city of Samaria. Jesus, weary from his journey, sat on the well as this woman came to draw water and Jesus said to her, give me to drink. A conversation ensued about the alienation between the Jews and Samaritans. Jesus startles the woman by telling her he could give her “living water”. She is baffled at this concept of living water, and tries to relate it to the natural water in the well. (This is the problem with orthodox theology about the water in the river of life in Rev. 22: they try to compare it to literal water and that is not the subject).

The woman begins to question Jesus about the meaning of the “living water”, which he says he can give her. Then her wonderment is increased when Jesus tells her that the water he is offering will be **“a well of living water springing up into everlasting life”.** It is then that the woman asks him to give her of this life giving water.

With this amazing declaration and offer of a “well of water within the soul of those to whom Jesus give it” we should be clearly convinced that any biblical reference to the “water of life” or “river of life”, is a reference to a spiritual water of our salvation and in no manner a reference to a literal river of water of any kind. This is more profoundly confirmed when this river is seen proceeding from “the throne of God and of the Lamb”.

In addition, to frame it in a way that leaves the literal view of this river as being preposterously absurd, we have the words of Jesus again in Jn. 7:37-39. It was the great day of the feast, and Jesus stood and cried saying, **“If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters”. (V39, But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified).**

**THE RIVER OF WATER OF LIFE, CLEAR AS CRYSTAL, PROCEEDING OUT OF THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB, IS THE LIFE GIVING HOLY SPIRIT WHICH GOD GIVES TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE ON JESUS CHRIST AND HIS ATONING GRACE.** With this revelation from Jesus’ own lips, explaining this water, we can now proceed with the other descriptions of this scene. We can safely anticipate that the rest of this vision will, likewise, have a symbolic application, thereby confirming even further what we have already seen.

**THE TREE OF LIFE**

If the river of life proceeding from the throne of God was amazing, the description of the “tree of life” in verse two is even more so. Notice its description carefully. **“In the midst of the street of it – (the middle of the river) – and on either side of it, -- was there the tree of life, -- which bare twelve manner of fruits, -- and yielded her fruit every month: -- and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**

What an amazing tree that could span an entire river with its massive trunk fixed on both sides of the river. Then consider also that it is a “tree of life”. That is, it is capable of giving and sustaining life. Even more amazing is the fact that it bears fruit all year long, and every month it has a different kind of fruit! What could they possibly be? Then, as if that is not amazing enough, the leaves of this tree contains phenomenal healing properties, so that the nations can be healed by them!

Maybe the Bible can help us understand what this “tree of life”, which fills up the “river of the water of life”, along with its fruit bearing and healing properties. It is for sure that it is no ordinary tree such as an oak, pecan, fir or sycamore. There is no such thing as a literal (natural) tree, growing in the forests of the world that fits this description. The Bible mentions many varieties of trees, but a “tree of life”, that is in a class all to itself. If we go back to the morning of creation, in the book of Genesis, chapters two and three, we will find the first reference to the “tree of life”. I think we can safely conclude that in all time and eternity there is but one such tree. In Gen. 2:9, “and out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food: **The tree of life also in the midst of the garden,** and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told Adam that he could freely partake of all the trees, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Adam disobeyed God and you know the consequences of this disobedience. The tree of life he rejected in favor of a tree that (3:6) was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to make one wise (the 3 lusts of the flesh, eyes and pride), which brought sin and death into the world.

In Gen. 3:22-24, we learn that God took action against Adam by driving him from the garden, lest he eat of the tree of life and live forever. And God set up a flaming sword (his word) at the gate of the garden to keep the way of the “tree of life”.

In Eze. 47:1-12, there is a somewhat similar scene of a river and tree that gives life as that which is portrayed in Rev. 22. The waters of Ezekiel’s river issue forth from the house (of the Lord). On either side of the river were trees that would bring new fruit according to his months, because their waters issued out of the “sanctuary”. The fruit of this tree was for meat and medicine, as was the one in Rev. 22.

In both Ezekiel and Revelation, we are dealing with (1) elements of time, and (2) a process that is taking place among God’s people. When you are seeing a river of life flowing from God’s throne, you are witnessing the life-giving grace of God, flowing to lost and hopeless mankind. Ezekiel used a thought that so aptly describes the grace of God flowing like a river when he said that (47:9) “everything that liveth which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live. This so distinctly describes the mighty flowing river of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus, that wherever it flows, as far as the curse of sin is found, life is offered to a fallen race of humanity.

Not only does Rev. 22 show us a “river of water of life”, but, like Ezekiel, it also shows us the tree of life. This tree was so enormous that it was in the midst of the river and on either side of the river. If this river of life and tree of life are symbols for the wonderful grace of God, and the life changing work of salvation by the inward working of the Holy Spirit, then how can we explain it being on two sides of the river, plus its fruit and its leaves? For some help on this let us look at the prophecy of Zechariah, 13:1 and 14:8-9. In Zech. 13:1, the prophet foresaw a **“fountain being opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness”.** Could there possibly be any doubt that this fountain of life refers to the blood of Christ, of the house of David, shed in Jerusalem for the sin and uncleanness of all the world?

Next, look at Zech. 14:8, which says: **“And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea”.** Then verse 9 identifies when that day shall be: “In that day shall there be one Lord and his name one”. What Zechariah is describing for us is the river of God’s life-giving grace, which was opened in Jerusalem for sin, by the shedding of the blood of Christ. This life giving blood covers the sins of the saints of God of both the Old and New Testaments. The saving grace of God is essential and applicable to both testaments. While the law was imposed as a school master to bring them to Christ, that did not negate the necessity of the grace of God for their salvation. There was no salvation by the law. The story of Ruth and Boaz is a beautiful metaphor of the grace of God that was active in the Old Testament. However, the Old Testament times standing alone without calvary would have been incomplete. The moon borrows its light from the sun, and in like manner the Old Testament gets its light (grace) from the atoning work or Christ, implemented in the New Testament. Some commentators describe the “sea” of these verses as the Mediterranian and Dead seas. I fail to see how there would be any cleansing properties in that. If the thought does not refer to both Old and New Testaments, then there is no saving grace for the Old Testament.

Now compare this river of grace, covering both the Old and New Testaments, with the “tree of life” on both sides of the “river of life”, and the picture that emerges is one of God’s redeeming love which purges the sin and uncleanness of all mankind. How much better could the river of life and the tree of life be described than to interpret them as the river of living waters springing up within the hearts of the saved of God’s kingdom, to quench their thirst and satisfy the longing of a sin-burdened life.

**THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF LIFE.**

The fruit of this tree is said to be of twelve varieties, covering the span of a year. Let us ask ourselves this question: “If the water is life-giving, and the tree is life-giving, then what about the fruit it produces? The water of life waters the tree of life, and the fruit thereof should also be life-giving just as its source is. I have described this water and tree as symbolic of the life-giving grace of God, brought to sinful mankind by the shedding of the blood of Christ at calvary. If this is correct, it would follow that the “fruit” of this tree of life would be produced by the inward working of the Holy Spirit in the Christian heart, thereby producing fruit. With this thought you are immediately drawn to the “fruit of the Spirit”. It is doubtful that you can limit the precious fruit of the Spirit to a finite number. Nevertheless, in Gal. 5:22-23, Paul lists nine fruits of the Spirit as: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. This is a great list, but it does not include other such fruits of the Spirit as hope, courage, kindness, forgiveness and many more which could be named as a product of the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. “Grace” is not just a word by which we claim all God has for us; it describes the nature of what God has for us and what he can produce in the life of the one who has surrendered their heart to the Lord. These fruits are not a one-time expression, but a continual demonstration of God in the heart and life (throughout the months of the year). Moreover they bring the daily life of the Christian into focus as the branches upon which this fruit is produced. Is there a better illustration for the river of life, with the tree of life, bearing the fruit of life? The only question that remains is …….

**“And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations?** When you look at a tree, even one with fruit on it, basically what you see are the leaves. The leaves are produced by the same life giving waters from the river of life; the power of the Holy Spirit. And they hold within their substance a medicinal component that offers a healing touch for all to share. During the centuries of the dark ages, the body of Christ in the world was a source of injury, hurt and death (spiritually). That has been purged away and a new day has dawned, wherein the Spirit within the church offers peace, healing and hope to the nations of the world.

If you take all this vision combined together, including the river of the water of life, the tree of life, the fruit from the tree and the foliage or leaves of the tree for their healing touch, you have the full scope and marvelous effect of what God intended to do through his church, within the framework of the gospel of Christ and its saving power. When the church was restored to her former glory throughout the 19th century, by way of the restoration of the gospel message, accompanied by the mighty work of the Holy Spirit in human hearts, a new life is restored in the church and the world is affected by the sunlight and peace of God through her. As a result … (V3) “**There shall be no more curse”.** The reason is that the blight and curse of the former years of the abomination of desolation had been wiped away. **“But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it”.** In what? In that river and the tree with its fruit covered by its leaves, that is the kingdom of God. **“And his servants shall serve Him** (and not the old system of apostasy).

(V5) **And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light”.** This restored kingdom of God does not need artificial light from the tapers of false doctrines, pagan rituals, human deification and the like, for God is now enthroned in her temple and (I Jn. 1:5) in him is no darkness at all. The church is not illuminated by the artificial light of human creeds and religious offerings, but by the unquenchable light of the word of God. New light has been restored to the people of God and that light comes from the power of the Holy Spirit, shining its illuminating, revealing power on the pages of the word of God, which for centuries was buried beneath the tyranny of Rome, but now is freed and is flooding the church with the light that lighteth every man which comes into this world.

As we come to verse 6, the message seems to take a different direction as it says: **“And he said unto me, these sayings are faithful and true; and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done”.** The wording signals the end of the prophetic visions of the book. That is not all, it also signals **“THE END”.** The angel confirms to John the truth of the sayings of the book, that is, an emphasis is placed upon all that has been written, that it will faithfully and truly come to pass. Now, at the end of the prophetic visions, as if to say that when all of these things shall come to pass, then cometh the end.

We are at the end of the book; the end of the visions, and the end of the “Revelation of Jesus Christ”. The journey has been long, difficult, dark and has often followed a path of sorrow, heart break and martyrdom. Yet it has also been a journey of a faithful remnant, always striving under the most difficult conditions to hold on to the light of truth of the word of God, rather than to follow the creeds of Romanism. Then the dawn of the reformation came, exposing the darkness of the “great whore” and abomination of the earth. This was followed by the overthrow of Roman tyranny and control, which opened the door for the glorious light of the Bible and the phenomenal revivals that swept the world during the 19th century. The old days of Romanism and her unyielding control of the consciences of men have come to an end and now there opens up a new page of light and truth. The river of life is flowing freely again. The tree of life with its many fruits, are being produced and God is in his holy temple.

When we studied the seven church ages, Laodicea, the seventh, was shown as being lukewarm, miserable, wretched, naked, poor and blind. Laodicea is the last church age and the ending of the Revelation. There are no more “churches” or ages beyond Laodicea. This is the age that a final appeal of the Spirit was made for the church to “open the door”, so that the Lord could come in.

In the context of this last church age and end of the visions, the declaration that these things (of the book) are true and faithful, and the Lord God of the holy prophets has sent his angel to declare unto his servants **“things which must shortly be done”,** it signals not only the ending of the visions but also the ending of the last age of the church. Standing in the midst of Laodicea, God declares that these things (written in this book) must shortly be done. There is a critical point to understand here. The platform from which this declaration is made is that of the Laodicean church, which age also covers the flowing river and tree of life. From this vantage point, the declaration is made that the prophecies of this book will shortly be done.

There is another perspective on this that lends much light to the thought. In this case the word “done” comes from the Greek word **Ginomai.** It means to “cause to be”, “to be ended”, “to be finished”, fulfilled or complete. At the end of the book, in the last chapter, the proclamation goes forth that these things will soon be over and fulfilled. Thus, I believe we have a distinct signal for the end of the church age. We will find this thought emphasized over again as we close this Revelation from Jesus Christ to the churches.

Verse seven emphasizes this point clear and distinct: **“Behold, I come quickly”:** In other times and in the ages of other churches, the message was, I will come unto thee and remove your candlestick, etc. In other visions there were declarations of “coming in judgment”, which is altogether different from the coming of the Lord in the last day of time. Now at the end of the visions, the end of the churches and the end of the prophesied events, the message is distinct: “I come quickly”. The sayings of this book are done, finished, complete, fulfilled. The very next thing on the divine agenda is the visible second coming of Jesus Christ.

We need to pursue this declaration of “I come quickly” further in this, the last chapter of the book. In verse eleven, a scene is described that suggests that the mold is cast, the spiritual condition of hearts are unchangeable. Much like Noah’s ark when the door was shut and the rain began, there was no changing of the status of those outside the ark. In that manner of thought verse eleven says: He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. Then out of this fixed and unchangeable condition, verse 12 declares: “**Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be”.**

NOTE: I think the “prophecy proper” ended with the sixth verse of this chapter. After this is the general promise and exhortation of God relative to his return and a call for us to be ready.

Again in verse 20: **“He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly. Amen! Even so, come Lord Jesus.**

Three specific times in this last chapter, at a point in the age of the church which was deep into the church of Laodicea, the Lord sends a clear, ringing message, “I come quickly”. With this trumpet blast of the eminence of his return, verse seventeen issues a passionate plea for all to come and partake of the water of life. **“The Spirit and the Bride say, come, and let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.**

The church has traveled 2000 years along her journey from her founding on the day of Pentecost, to the apathy of Laodicea. Her journey has been hard, with only a remnant holding on to truth along the way. Her path has led through the dark abyss of Romanism, until it broke forth in the marvelous light of God’s word and the earth-changing revivals which this brought. In later years, her journey has fallen on a path of apathy, indifference and other debilitating conditions. She is in the last of the 7 church ages and the interest in a full dedication to God is waning. It is the time for the last trump of: “Behold I come quickly”.

In closing this chapter and the entire book, a look back at verses 8-16, offer some important final thoughts. (V8) **And I John saw these things and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things”.** “These things” refers to all the prophecy of the book. John knows he has received the last vision, so in a gesture of praise and gratitude, he falls before the “angel” that has shown him the incredible, phenomenal visions covering the church age. The very fact that John now signals the end of the message of the angel, also signals the end of the journey for the church.

Then in verse nine, in response to John’s worship at the feet of the angel, he is told: **See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant and of thy brethren the prophets and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. John is thus told that the “angel” by whom he has received the revelation, is his fellow servant and one of his brothers among the prophets.** In addition the angel is one who must also keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book. Every mention of an “angel” seems to bring to peoples’ minds the myths of the dark ages and images of some invisible, winged creature from beyond space. So let me ask a simple question: From where did you receive the glorious message of salvation; from some invisible entity from the sky, or from some pastor who declared its message from one of the writers of the Bible? I am sure it was the later. In the unfolding scenes of Revelation, we have been especially guided by Daniel the prophet and others such as Isaiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Ezra, Esther, Zechariah, etc. The writings and prophecies of these men have contributed in various ways to the revelation prophecy or to its interpretation. For example, the life, times and ministry of Elijah the prophet, served as a distinct type of the Thyatiran church age, where that prophet Jezebel ruled with so much cruelty. God, in his own divine power, and his own revealing ability, has used many resources to convey to John this great “Revelation of Jesus Christ”.

Verse ten continues, **“seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand:** In Daniel 12:9, Daniel is told that “the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end”. Daniel’s prophecy covered portions of many of the same things that Revelation does. In Daniel’s day they were sealed up till the time of the end. In the Revelation (1:3) the time is at hand and John is told not to seal up these things. They are not sealed for future generations, but are now opened unto us, upon whom the ends of the world have come. In all reality I would l think that the things prophesied in Revelation, mostly remained sealed until the respective history of events aided in their unsealing. For that reason, while there could have been a degree of understanding in the early centuries of the church, yet due to the unfolding of history, it is apparent an understanding of the book blossomed with the coming of the reformation and forward.

He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly. Amen! Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen!