

## E.M. Zerr Commentary On Revelation Chapter Twenty-Two

**Verse 1.** The pronoun *he* refers to the angel who has been with John all through the vision of this book. There is nothing more pleasing to the eye than a flowing body of water. It signifies something that is constant and moving with majestic procedure. But many rivers are attractive from these standpoints only, while within them may be vicious creatures that would devour helpless victims that came within reach. Also there may be much that is vile and foul, carrying with them the waste materials of the cities. But the river John saw had nothing of that kind because it had not been in contact with any place contained filth. Instead, its source is the throne of God and the Lamb where there can be nothing vile. For this reason the river is pure and also clear as crystal because there are no materials to becloud the stream. It is called **water of life** because it is always moving (never stagnant) and because of the quality and purity described in the foregoing comments.

**Verse 2.** *In the midst of the street of it* means the street of the city, and the river of life flowed down the center of the street. This description will give us no difficulty if we will think of the “divided highways” that grace our country in many places. Let us think of a river flowing from an inexhaustible fountain and proceeding on through a beautiful city. On each bank is a row of fruit trees that serve a double purpose, namely, furnish ornamentation for the crystal stream, and a source of food for those who are walking upon the section of the “divided highway” that one may be using. To clarify the description we think of it in this manner. First is a section of the street, next a row of trees, next the river, next another row of trees and then the other section of the street. **Tree of life.** This tree is promised to all who overcome the contests of life (chapter 2:7). The phraseology is based on the tree of life that was in the garden of Eden. It will be well for us again to remember we are still in a book of symbols, where the Lord is giving us a picture of Heaven in as strong terms as our human mind can grasp. The tree is spoken of in the singular number because there was but one in the garden. But the varieties are not limited to one, because this tree is pictured in connection with spiritual things. Here we have another instance of the numeral that has been so prominent throughout this book. That is twelve which is a multiple of four (the four creatures), and the number each of the

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two organized systems of salvation that God has given the world. The special significance of the twelve here is to show the fruit-bearing season is continuous and perennial, but a different kind of fruit will be produced each month, so that no occasion will exist for longing after a change; there will be one coming each month. Many kinds of fruit trees not only produce fruit, but also their leaves have medicinal value in them. Thus we are told that the leaves of this tree have healing qualities. Not that any citizens will become sick, but it is on the same principle of wiping away all tears (chapter 21:4). The leaves of this tree will heal the people by keeping them in such a condition that sickness will be impossible.

**Verse 3. No more curse** is an allusion to the curse pronounced upon the ground because of the sin of Adam (Genesis 3:17). Instead of a curse there will be endless blessings because not only will the tree of life be in the city (as it was in the garden), but God and the Lamb will themselves be there. Also all creatures who would tempt the righteous will have been consigned to their eternal place in the lake of fire. ***Servants shall serve him.*** It is sometimes asked if the saved are to be entirely free in that city, since it is spoken of as the place of rest for God's people. The word serve does not necessarily mean labor or toil. The word is from LATREUO and at this place Thayer's definition (the words in italics) is as follows: "To render religious service or homage, to worship." It certainly will be only unspeakable pleasure to engage in such employment as worshipping God in his immediate presence, when faithful disciples have taken real happiness from their worship of Him while in the world. In the words of one of the old songs of the church, it will be a service in a time and place "Where congregations ne'er break up, and rest days have no end."

Verse 4. Shall see his face is mentioned to indicate the great intimacy that will exist between God and the creatures that have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Persons spending some time in a city where many others are present, may be seen with pennants attached to their clothing for the purpose of identification, In this celestial city the name will be on the person, on the most conspicuous part of it, the forehead. How different this is from the condition of the members of the apostate church; they had the mark of the beast in their forehead (chapter 14:9).

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**Verse 5. *Shall be no night there.*** (See the comments at chapter 21:25.) ***Need no candle neither light of the sun.*** This is one of the most significant symbols used in this series, because it includes the two extremes on the subject. A ***candle*** is an artificial light and the weakest that man has devised. The ***sun*** is God's own direct work and is the strongest light in all the natural creation. In saying that neither will be needed in the celestial city, John is giving us the greatest possible picture of the strength of the light that will radiate from the throne of God; although he was to be the lawgiver, Moses was a natural man. And 1 Timothy 6:16 says God is "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see." ***They shall reign for ever and ever.*** The word reign may raise a question in connection with the truth that even Jesus is said to reign only until death has been conquered (1 Corinthians 15:25, 26). The explanation lies in the definitions of the original word. The Greek original is BASILEUO, which means "to reign," but in our passage Thayer explains it to mean "to denote the supreme moral dignity, liberty, blessedness, which will be enjoyed by Christ's redeemed ones." Hence the word does not necessarily mean to rule as a king. It is a figurative term and denotes a situation where a certain condition prevails. It is like saying that "all difficulties were removed and peace again reigned." We have the blessed assurance from the apostle that the condition of such a reign will continue for ever and ever.

**Verse 6. *He said*** means the angel said it to John. ***Faithful and true.*** These words are virtually the same in their fundamental meaning, and either could properly be used in place of the other for general purposes. Technically they mean the words or sayings just delivered by the angel are worthy of being relied on because they are true. Of the holy prophets is referred to as an evidence that His sayings are worthy of being relied on, for the predictions that God enabled the prophets to make were fulfilled in the proper time. For that reason there should be no doubt concerning the predictions that He has authorized his servants to make in the present book. ***Sent his angel.*** This refers to the angel who has been with John from the beginning of his vision on the isle. ***Must shortly be done.*** The Englishman's Greek New Testament renders this phrase, "must come to

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pass soon.” The word in question is a relative term, for even a number of centuries would be short when compared with the endlessness of what will come after the judgment day. However, since this period in the vision of John is at the near approach of the last day (as to the events predicted), the end is literally close at hand.

**Verse 7.** *Quickly* is from the same word as “shortly” in the preceding verse. Blessed means happy, denoting a condition entirely satisfactory. *Keepeth* is from TEREQ and in the King James Version it is translated **hold fast** 1 **time**, keep 57, **observe** 4, **preserve** 2, **reserve** 8, **watch** 2. It is a word with many shades of meaning which must be determined in each place according to the connection. If it is used in relation to things a man is required to do, then it means he must understand and do them. If used only of things stated as truths, whether they are predictions or otherwise, then the word means we are to believe them and keep them in respectful remembrance. The present verse applies the word to the prophecy of this book, hence it has the meaning just described. However, it would imply some activities on the part of man, for among the things predicted is the judgment day on which men will be judged according to their deeds. Hence if a man believes and respects that prediction, he will not forget it but will fashion his life in such a way as to be adjudged worthy of everlasting life. This explains why the angel said those were blessed or happy who keepeth the sayings.

**Verse 8.** These things refer to the vision of the celestial city and what the angel said about it. In chapter 19:10 John attempted to worship the angel but was prevented. Hence the things of our verse would have to apply to what had come before him since that time. The word worship is one of the terms in the Greek New Testament that have many shades of meaning, because it is from a dozen original words with about that many different definitions. Hence not every form or kind of worship would be condemned. The word as used in our verse and the following one, also in chapter 19:10, means to prostrate oneself before another as a recognition of superiority in rank. Such an attitude is due only to God and his Son. Angels are not superior to men as to their personal merit nor even in authority. In the great sphere of service to God the angels are only some of His

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servants. That is the reason that the angel assigned for his instructions to John in this place and also in chapter 19:10 refused to be worshipped. And it is the same reason why Peter refused the worship from Cornelius in Acts 10:25, 26 saying, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." This does not condemn the acts of homage that are paid to kings or other dignitaries as was the custom in old time and is yet in some countries. Those performances pertain to matters of social or legal standing, while the word under consideration in our passages has to do with authority, in religion. For a complete analysis of this word according to the lexicon and concordance, see the comments at Matthew 2:2 in the first volume of the New Testament Commentary.

Verse 9. Many comments that would be suggested on this verse were made on the preceding one. There were two phases of devotion to God in which John and the angel were in the same class, namely, fellowservant and prophet. The first will apply to all of the Lord's disciples while the second pertains to their work in predicting future events. But neither of these services entitles a man to receive worship from another, so the angel told John to worship God.

**Verse 10. Seal** is from **SPHRAGIZO**, which Thayer defines at the passage, "keep in silence, keep secret." In the beginning of our study of this book, we were told that the future experiences of the church in its relations with the governments were unrevealed. That was indicated by a book (containing visions of the future) that was sealed, and it required the inspiration of Christ to reveal it. At some time before the Christian Dispensation (we know not how long) God composed the subject matter that makes up the book -of Revelation, but since the events were not to be fulfilled "for many days" as Daniel was told (Daniel 12:1-4), He sealed them up in the book we are studying. When the time came to begin making them known He enabled the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" to break the seals. But at the point reached by us in the vision there is nothing depending on future developments--the time is at hand—hence there is no reason for sealing it up.

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**Verse 11.** The preceding verse must be remembered in connection with his one in order to get the full meaning of the passage--it is very vital. We are arrived at the judgment day (in the vision) when the final and eternal lot of all intelligent creatures will be announced for good. After this there will never be any change either for better or worse with anyone. The unjust and filthy will always be so, and the righteous and holy likewise will remain so. That is why there will never be any sin committed in Heaven by angel or man after the judgment. Neither will there be any chance for reformation on the part of the creatures in the lake of fire.

**Verse 12.** *I come quickly* is explained at verse 7. *My reward is with me.* When Jesus comes again it will not be for the purpose of setting up another reign on the earth, for all of His reign will then come to a close (1 Corinthians 15:24-26). The lot of both just and unjust will have been decided at that time, and Christ will be coming to bestow the reward according to that decision. It is in that sense that the reward will be with Him--not coming merely to announce what it is going to be. He will at that time recompense either "tribulation" or "rest" upon mankind (2 Thessalonians 1:6, 7), which is the meaning of the present passage. The basis on which the rewards will be distributed is according as his work shall be.

**Verse 13.** This is virtually the same as chapter 1:8; see those comments.

**Verse 14.** *Blessed* is from MAKARIOS, and in the King James Version it has been rendered "**blessed**" 43 times and "**happy**" 6 times. The reason for their blessedness or happiness is their right to the tree of life. The word *right* is from the word EXOUSIA, which also means power or authority. It is a very serious passage in view of the notions of many people as to the lot of the unsaved. As an outburst of sentiment of emotion it is said, "How could God refuse to admit any person to the eternal happiness when He has it within his power to grant it." But the last part of the statement is not true, for God cannot do that which is not right. (Titus 1: 2; 2 Timothy 2: 13.) If those who do the commandments are the ones who have the right to the tree of life, then it would not be right for others to have access to it. And if

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they would not have a right to it, it would be wrong for them to have it. And since God cannot do wrong it follows that He cannot admit any person to the city who has not done the commandments. It is clear that having right to the tree of life requires the right for entrance into the city, for we learned at verse 2 that the tree is growing inside the city.

**Verse 15. Without** means on the outside of the eternal city. The preceding verse reveals who will be permitted to enter the city and this one tells some of the kind that will not enter. **Dogs.** It would be foolish to think this is used with reference to the dumb brute, for it would not be more true of the dog than of all others of the animal kingdom. 2 Peter 2:12 informs us that the beasts are destined to be destroyed; there will be no “hereafter” for them. The word is from KUON and Thayer says that some authorities define it to mean “sodomites.” The word corresponding to it in the Old Testament is **keleb** which Strong defines, “A dog; hence (by euphemism) [substitution of a milder word as being less offensive to the ear] a male prostitute.” In Deuteronomy 23:18 the word is used in that sense where it is associated with an immoral woman in designating “tainted money.” The “hire of a whore” means money an immoral woman receives from her male patrons. While on that subject it was appropriate to name another immoral person and that is a man who practices unnatural immorality for money, and that is what is meant by “the price of a dog.” It seems very fitting to call a Sodomite a dog, for that animal is the only creature of the brute creation that is inclined to gratify his lust on one of his own sex. And we have the same appropriateness of the two kinds of immoral characters that the Old Testament passage showed, namely, the dogs and very soon the whoremongers. The dogs are men who have immoral relations with other men, and whoremongers are men who patronize women who are immoral as an occupation.

Thayer says a **sorcerer** is “one who prepares or uses magical remedies.” It is similar to those who are engaged in the “dope” business today. The scriptures tell us that medicine does good (Proverbs 17:22), but any kind of drugs or narcotics that produce unnatural feelings of gaiety, or the opposite one of abandonment to lasciviousness, will damage the body and that will bring the curse of God upon the guilty. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20.)

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The first sin committed by man against man was murder (Genesis 4:8). That crime is so great that God finally gave the decree of capital punishment against all who commit it (Genesis 9:6). But literal murder is not the only kind that can be committed. 1 John 8:15 says a man who hates his brother is a murderer, and of course all such persons will be on the outside of the holy city. Idolaters are those who worship anything or any person besides the true God. It may be images made with hands or the works of creation such as the planets or animals, etc. Also Paul says that covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5), hence there will be no covetous persons in Heaven. Chapter 21:8 shows that liars of all kinds will be cast into the lake of fire. Our verse expresses the same thought as to its comprehensiveness by taking in all who love the liars.

**Verse 16.** This book starts out by telling us that it is the *revelation of Jesus Christ*, (not of “Saint John the Divine” as the heading title erroneously states), and this verse reveals Him introducing himself directly. However, He does not overlook the services of the angel, but faithfully backs up his work by saying that He sent him. To *testify* means to transmit the testimony to the churches. That is, to bear testimony to the things that have been showed him throughout the vision of this book. **Root and offspring of David.** This means that Jesus was in the direct line of genealogy that came down from Abraham through David. That great man was not the only prominent Hebrew in the line, but there was a distinction in his case. David had two sons by the same woman, Bathsheba, and those sons were Solomon and Nathan (1 Chronicles 3:5). At this place the blood line divides and on Solomon’s side it comes down to Joseph the husband of Mary. On Nathan’s side it comes down to Mary the mother of Jesus. (See Matthew 1 and Luke 3.) There is another fact that makes David of special importance. He was the first king of the Israelites from the tribe of Judah, and it had been predicted (Genesis 49:10) that the tribe of Judah was to give law to God’s people in latter times. The Mosaic law was of the tribe of Levi (Exodus 2:1-10). David was the first king of the tribe of Judah to sit upon the throne of God’s ancient people. That kingdom was destined to be set aside and replaced by another. But God assured David that his throne would not always be vacant. There was to be one of his



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descendants who would reign on the throne, only by that time it would be spiritual and not one with temporal government as its purpose. Such a king was worthy of coming to John with an authoritative commission such as this vision. **Bright and 'morning star** is what He says of himself in chapter 2:28. The significance of this phrase is due to its brightness as it precedes the sun in rising, thus announcing that a new day is beginning. (See 2 Peter 1:19.) And truly did the rising of Jesus come as a star to announce that a new day was about to come, the day of the Christian Dispensation.

**Verse 17.** The subject running through this verse is along the line of invitations. It has been stated more than once that as to the relative place of the items in the over-all vision of this book, the time of the Judgment has been reached. From that standpoint there would be no reason to give anyone an invitation to come for salvation--that opportunity has passed. Yet in reality, aside from the symbolized feature of the book, the basic purpose of the book of Revelation is to give the world a final document from Heaven as an incentive for preparing to meet the day of all days, the second coming of Christ and the judgment of the world. Otherwise there would be no point in inviting men to come and drink of the water of life. Nor would there be any call for the warning sounded in the two verses following this. Hence we shall consider the important phrases of this combined invitation. The **bride** is the (espoused) church (2 Corinthians 11:2) and **the Spirit** is in the church (Ephesians 2:22). The church of Christ has a standing invitation to people of the world, wishing them to accept the salvation offered so freely. In truth, it is the only organization that has any right to make such an offer (Ephesians 3:21 and 1 Timothy 3:15). But others as individuals have the right to repeat the invitation, hence the verse says for those who hear to repeat the call. That makes it the duty of every individual to be active in the salvation of souls. **Let him that is athirst come.** This is in line with the statement of Jesus in Matthew 5:6 that they who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. That is logical, for unless a man is thirsty he will not be interested in the opportunity to drink. **Whosoever will** signifies the same as the preceding comment, that unless a man is willing it would do him no good to go through the formality of obeying the Gospel. Let it be observed also that the blessing is to those who come. Man must come to

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the fountain for it will not be moved towards him for his convenience. The **water of life** is the same that Jesus made known to the woman of Samaria (John 4:10-14). This water is the word of God and it will be in man "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It is offered freely which means abundantly and without the price such as silver and gold. `

**Verse 18.** It is asked if the phrase this book refers to the book of Revelation or to the whole Bible. Its direct application is to this book for it is the one that John was engaged to write. But the principle applies to the entire word of God, for 1 Peter 4:11 commands "any man" who speaks to do so as the oracles of God. That would not be done were he to make any change in the Sacred Text, either by adding to it or by taking from it. To **add unto these things** would not be done only by literally writing some uninspired words to the document; no person is apt to do that. But when a man assumes the privilege of practicing things not authorized in the book, he thereby adds to it in principle. The **plagues** were symbolized and were repeated in various forms. The idea is that such a man will be plagued as severely as those described.

**Verse 19.** There is nothing put in the book of God that is not necessary, therefore it is sinful to take any of it out. That would be done by rejecting any of its requirement. (See Hebrews 2:2.) **Take away his part.** No man, actually has possession of any part of the things in the holy city, but God has prepared a part for each person who will prepare himself for it by faithfulness to the word. `

**Verse 20.** **He which testifieth these things** means Christ according to the statement in chapter 1:1. **I come quickly** is also stated in verses 7 and 12 and explained in connection with those passages. The word surely is added at this place for the sake of emphasis. The attitude of John to that announcement is that which every faithful disciple will have. In 2 Timothy 4:8 the apostle Paul is speaking of the crown to be given him at the coming of Christ. He says it will be for him but not for him only; it will be unto all them also that love his appearing. If a man is living a righteous life he will not dread to think either of death or the judgment.

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**Verse 21.** The *grace of the Lord* is the favor that is bestowed upon all who are living in faithful service to Him. All can be faithful regardless of human weaknesses, hence no reason exists why anyone should be rejected when He comes. John lovingly thinks of his brethren to- whom he is to commit this book and wishes for the favor of Christ to be with them. When Amen is used at the close of a sentence or composition, it means “so be it, may it be fulfilled.” John has no regrets about anything he has been told to write, and hence closes the great book with the sincere endorsement.