

An Invitation to the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:6-21)

The book of Revelation, having addressed the needs of the church and warned about future judgments, concludes with a glorious description of the heavenly Jerusalem. However, any description of heaven apart from an invitation to participate in its splendor would be meaningless, even heartless. Therefore, Revelation closes with a grand invitation to “come.” People are invited to come to the Lamb for salvation, even as the Lamb has promised to come to us as the culmination of human history. As we await the coming of the Lord we must come to Him for life in its fullest. Revelation 22:6-21 presents the basis for our invitation to enter the New Jerusalem.

We have an invitation to heaven based on God’s revealed truth (22:6-11).

First, we can be confident that we have a place in the New Jerusalem because of the truth revealed in the Scriptures. The final verses of Revelation emphasize this authoritative message by repeatedly using terms like “words” (verses 6, 7, 9, 10, 18), “prophecy” (verses 7, 10, 18, 19), “prophets” (verses 6, 9), and “book” or “scroll” (verses 7, 9, 10, 18, 19). Each of these terms underscores revealed, divine truth.

The angel told John that this revelation was trustworthy and true (22:6).

“These words,” referring to the description of the New Jerusalem and, indeed, the entire book of Revelation, are true according to the angel who spoke with John. They are “faithful” or “trustworthy” words, words that bear the truth of God. They come from the Lord, the God of the “spirits” of the prophets. Here “spirits” refers to the human spirits of God’s prophets that connect with the Holy Spirit in prophetic revelation. The Lord sent His angel to show His servants the things that must occur in the future, things that will occur “soon” or “quickly.” Revelation 1:1 introduced this book with the same concept. The return of Jesus Christ is imminent and the events in the book of Revelation will, at that time, occur in rapid succession. This promise is trustworthy and true.

Jesus declared that He is coming soon and that He blesses those who honor this revelation (22:7).

In verse 7 we read the words of Jesus Christ: “Behold, I am coming soon!” His return for His church could occur at any moment. Jesus further pronounced a blessing on all who keep, that is cherish and obey, the words of the prophecy of this book of Revelation. Rather than avoid the study of Revelation we should embrace its truth, knowing that there is indeed a blessing in hearing its message (Revelation 1:3).

John fell down to worship the angel of revelation but the angel instructed him to worship God alone (22:8-9).

John spoke next, identifying himself by name and declaring that he is the one who heard and saw these revelations. He also confessed that these revelations were so overwhelming that he fell at the feet of the revealing angel in an attempted act of worship. John had done so once before (Revelation 19:10) and then, as in this instance, the angel forbade such worship. John's frailty in those moments is understandable in light of the intensity of the revelation he'd received. The angel reminded John that they were both fellow servants of God—the angel identified in his submission to God with John, with the other prophets who were John's spiritual brothers, and with all who keep the words of the book of Revelation. All worship must be directed to God alone. "Worship God!" Since angelic splendor is so overwhelming to the human spirit, imagine the splendor of our God.

The angel instructed John not to seal this revelation since the time for its fulfillment is near (22:10-11).

The angel then told John not to seal the words of the prophecy of this book. The prophet Daniel had been instructed to seal his prophetic writings, apparently allowed to publish them but to resist undue anticipation of their fulfillment because the time had not yet arrived (Daniel 12:4). In Revelation 10:4 John had been instructed to seal up a brief message he'd heard as a private matter between him and God. However, the book of Revelation is an unsealed book because, as the angel explained, "the time is near." Its events could begin at any moment.

The fact that Revelation is an open book prompted the angel to issue a warning. Those who are unrighteous may continue to act out their unrighteousness and those who are impure may continue to act with moral impurity. However, the words of this book should serve as sufficient warning to enact change. By contrast, those who are righteous should continue to live righteously and those who are holy should continue to live separated, holy lives. Believers should avoid at all cost any slippage in their faith because the time is near. The words of Revelation are faithful and true.

**We have an invitation to heaven
based on Christ's redemptive authority (22:12-16).**

Second, we can be confident that we have a place in the New Jerusalem because of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Verses 12-16 present the words of Jesus Christ who alone has the authority to grant salvation.

Jesus declared that He, the Alpha and Omega, is coming soon and will reward everyone appropriately (22:12-13).

"Behold, I am coming soon!" Jesus repeated what He had stated in verse 7, emphasizing the imminent nature of His return. Here He adds that He will bring His

reward with Him, rewards that will honor the works of each of His followers. In addition to our salvation we will be rewarded for our faithful service when Jesus returns (compare Matthew 25:21; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Jesus underscored His eternal deity by describing Himself as the Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8; 21:6), the First and the Last (Revelation 1:17; 2:8), and the Beginning and the End (Revelation 21:6). Taken together, these descriptors paint the picture of Jesus as the author and culmination of all that exists (compare Hebrews 12:2). He exists outside of time, eternal in nature. He is eternal God.

Jesus pronounced a blessing on all who wash their robes, granting them access to the heavenly Jerusalem (22:14-15).

Having pronounced a blessing on those who keep the words of the book of Revelation (verse 7), Jesus now pronounces a blessing on all who “wash their robes.” (Many Greek manuscripts say “do his commandments.”) The idea is that Christ’s redemptive work has been applied to the human heart in such a way as to produce purity or obedience. Through redemption, received by faith in Jesus Christ, we are granted authority to partake of the tree of life and allowed entrance through the gates into the city, the New Jerusalem. The heavenly Jerusalem will be home to all who follow the Lamb. By contrast, the heavenly Jerusalem will be denied to unbelievers. Their refusal to put their faith in Jesus Christ will be evident in their character and practices. Jesus describes such unbelievers as dogs and sorcerers characterized by sexual immorality, murder, idolatry, and lovers of deception. There is no room for unholiness in God’s holy city.

Jesus identified Himself as the source of this revelation and as the anticipated Messiah (22:16).

Identifying Himself by the name “Jesus,” the Lord confirmed that He is the one who sent His angel to testify to John about the events described in Revelation, including the messages to the churches (Revelation 2-3). This statement brings the reader back to the present age, the age of the church with its triumphs and challenges. Jesus then described Himself in messianic terms. He is “the root” and “the offspring” of David. As the root of David, Jesus is the source of David’s line, the Creator of humankind. As the offspring of David, Jesus in His humanity was the descendant and rightful heir of Israel’s great king. Jesus is the promised Messiah. In addition, Jesus is “the bright Morning Star.” The morning star marks the time when darkness fades into dawn. Jesus is the promise of light in the darkness of the world. His return will result in the fullness of spiritual light. Taken as a whole, Jesus is the eternal, messianic redeemer through whom we have access to the New Jerusalem forever and ever.

**We have an invitation to heaven
based on history’s inevitable outcome (22:17-21).**

Finally, we can be confident that we have a place in the New Jerusalem because God will fulfill His plan for this world. Nothing can thwart God's plan. History's outcome is certain.

John voiced an invitation for anyone to come enjoy the heavenly Jerusalem and the water of life (22:17).

The source of the message shifts from Jesus to John again (although some commentators see verse 17 as a continuation of Jesus' words). The message is an invitation. This particular invitation comes from both the Holy Spirit and the bride of Christ, the church. "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!'" It's possible to link this invitation with verses 12 and 20 and view this as an invitation for Jesus Christ to come soon. However, because verse 17 later includes an invitation for people to come to Christ for redemption, this closer proximity makes it preferable to view this invitation as directed toward people. The Holy Spirit plays a significant role in the salvation of lost people, being the source of regeneration. It makes sense, therefore, that the Spirit would invite people to "come" to the New Jerusalem through faith in Jesus Christ. The church, the bride of Christ, is the active agent on earth responsible for sharing the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ so it makes sense that the bride would also extend the invitation for people to "come" to Jesus. In addition, those "hearing"—possibly those hearing the words of the prophecies of Revelation (verse 18)—join in the invitation for people to follow Jesus. The specific invitation from the Spirit, the bride, and the hearer is directed to those who are spiritually thirsty. They're invited, if they wish—the choice is theirs—to take freely the water of life (compare Isaiah 55:1). The gift of eternal life, like water for the soul, is free to all who choose to receive the gift, who choose to place their faith in Jesus Christ. Only by taking this free gift of life can anyone enjoy eternity in the heavenly Jerusalem. The invitation stands today. Come!

John expressed a warning that no one should add or take away anything from this book of Revelation (22:18-19).

Accompanying the invitation for people to come to the New Jerusalem through faith in Jesus Christ is a final word of warning. Again, it appears that John is still speaking (although some commentators consider these to be the words of Jesus). Those who hear the prophetic words of the book of Revelation must treat them carefully. If anyone adds to these words, God will add onto that person the plagues recorded in the book. To add to the book of Revelation might include distorting its truth by embellishing its contents with false teachings. In addition, anyone who takes away from the prophetic words of the book of Revelation will be subject to God's judgment through which He will take away that person's access to the tree of life (many Greek manuscripts say the book of life) and access to the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem. To take away from the book of Revelation might include downplaying its dire message or selectively applying its content to suit one's preferences. Whether adding to the book or taking away from the book, both approaches reveal hearts that disrespect its content and consequently its author, Jesus Christ. There is no hope of heaven for those who deny the Lord.

John underscored Jesus' promise to come soon by declaring his own "amen" and invitation for Jesus' return (22:20-21).

John declared that Jesus testified to the blessings and warnings of the book of Revelation. Jesus Himself declared, "Yes, I am coming soon." His strong affirmation, including a confirming "yes" and repeating for the third time in this chapter, "I am coming soon" (compare verses 7 and 12), gives us confidence that Jesus will indeed fulfill His promise to return and that His return is imminent. John added his own affirmative exclamation, saying "Amen!" He then added, "Come, Lord Jesus." The Aramaic word "Maranatha" literally means "Lord, come." This word became the expectant prayer of the early church (1 Corinthians 16:22) and reflects John's concluding thought, "Come, Lord Jesus." As we await the coming of the Lord we must come to Him for life in its fullest.

John closes the book with an expressed desire that the grace of the Lord Jesus would be with all of God's people. "Amen." God's grace is evident in Jesus Christ, evident in the warnings of the book of Revelation, and evident in the lives of God's faithful people. It's by grace that the Lamb, Jesus Christ, offers us eternal life. It's this Lamb, the Lamb who is Lord, who will come again. It's this Lamb, the Lamb who is Lord, who deserves our undivided love and loyalty. Like the 144,000 loyal believers described in Revelation 14:4 we would do well to "follow the Lamb wherever he goes."