

# Revelation 22:10-15

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*God emphasizes that each person will receive a blessing based on the actions they chose in life, reiterating the idea that He is the first and last, repeated from the beginning of Revelation, to emphasize His power.*

In the prior section, Jesus insisted that He was coming “quickly,” and the angel told John the words of this prophecy “must soon take place” (Revelation 22:6,7). Now the imminence and certainty of these events is emphasized for a third time, as the angel tells John, *Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near* (v10).

To *seal up* invokes a picture of a scroll being sealed with wax so it may only be opened by the person to whom it is addressed. The message of this book of Revelation is not to be sealed up (*do not seal up the words*). It is to be read, understood, and heeded (Revelation 1:3). It is not intended to be mysterious or difficult to comprehend. It is intended to be read, understood, and followed. This is not for a later time, it is for now, because *the time is near*.

The idea that the *time is near* is repeated in verses 7, 10 and 12. In Hebrew culture, points are often repeated three times to emphasize them. Since the Bible is largely conveyed from a Jewish perspective, that this concept that *the time is near* is repeated three times in a short span of verses highlights that Jesus is telling us how very, very important it is for us to understand this point and promptly act upon it. He wants each believer to possess their inheritance by heeding His instructions and walking in obedience to His commands today. His ways are for our best, and He wants us to learn and follow them; not later, but now.

God desires His people to walk in His ways, and He greatly rewards them when they do. God grants an inheritance to His people, but leaves it to them to possess the inheritance through walking by faith.

This is a theme throughout scripture. We see that the first generation of Israel coming out of Egypt did not possess their inheritance because they did not mix what they heard with faith, and therefore refused to cross over the Jordan River and possess what had been granted them (Hebrews 4:2). The author of Hebrews exhorts these “holy brethren” (Hebrews 3:1) to not follow that bad example, but rather to follow the many examples of faithful witnesses set forth in scripture (Hebrews 11).

Of course, our greatest example to follow is Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2). We are exhorted to have His same mindset, to set aside all comfort and follow His Father’s will, then to gain His great reward (Philippians 2:5-10). Jesus Himself exhorts us to overcome as He overcame and promises to share His great reward with those who do so (Revelation 3:21).

God wants believers, His servants, to be overcomers. Joining God’s family is a simple matter of having the faith to receive the free gift of eternal life (Ephesians 2:8-9; John 3:14-15). God grants each person who believes an inheritance with Him, but leaves it up to them whether they take the actions to possess that inheritance. Jesus declares, “Blessed is he who heeds the words of

the prophecy of this book,” (Revelation 22:7) But then, paradoxically, only a few verses later He says:

*Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy (v 11).*

The point here could be to emphasize that heeding the words of the prophecy is not compulsive. The one who does heed the words of the prophecy will be blessed, but not everyone will heed the words of the prophecy. It is each believer's choice. God will not make us do it. We get to choose our actions, but then we will face the consequences of whatever action we chose (Galatians 6:8).

God exhorted the first generation of His people to come out of Egypt to cross over the Jordan River and possess the land, but they refused. He did not reject them as His people. He still cared for them as His people (Deuteronomy 8:16). But they did not possess their inheritance.

Those who make poor choices, choices to *do wrong*, will have negative consequences. This is a pattern in scripture. God disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12:6). But each person reaps what they sow (Galatians 6:8). If we sow to the flesh, we get the reward of the flesh, which is exceedingly negative (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). Walking in sin leads to self-destruction.

Likewise, those who make the choice to follow the words of this prophecy will have positive consequences:

*let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy (v 11).*

The point of verses 10 and 11 appears to be to emphasize that each believer will choose for themselves and reap the reward of their choices. When we piece together the messages of this and the previous section it seems apparent that God is emphasizing that judgment is near and certain, and our choices really matter. So He is creating a sense of urgency to take full advantage of our opportunity to walk faithfully each day. It really, really matters.

Next, Jesus declares that the reward for making these wise choices lies with Him:

*Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done (v 12).*

He says again, *Behold, I am coming quickly*. This repeats the phrase previously stated in verse seven, right before He declared “Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book” (Revelation 22:7). This is now a fourth time the imminence of Jesus's return has been highlighted (Revelation 22:6, 7, 10, 12). Revelation conveys an intense sense of urgency to heed the admonitions therein, namely to take full advantage of the opportunity to be faithful witnesses for Jesus in this life. For more, read our article, [“What Does it Mean to Be a Faithful Witness?”](#)

This life is apparently the only opportunity we will ever have to live by faith. The angels are watching believers living by faith to understand God's wisdom, even though they are in His presence (Ephesians 3:10). The angels are in God's presence, so cannot walk by faith. Faith is believing what cannot be seen (Hebrews 11:1). We as humans will also not be able to walk by faith in the new earth, when we are in His presence.

The incredible opportunity to walk as a faithful witness, not fearing death, loss, or rejection by the world is a brief, one-time opportunity to gain the immense benefits offered in scripture, as emphasized in Revelation (Revelation 3:21). Jesus told the Apostle Thomas that those who believed but did not see would gain a much greater blessing (John 20:29).

The statement from verse 7, *Behold I am coming quickly* is repeated, and the second part of the statement promising a great blessing for those who heed the admonition of Revelation to live as a faithful witness is expanded upon. Now, not only do we know how those who live faithfully will be blessed, but by whom they will be blessed: by God. By Jesus, *who will render to every man according to what he has done* (v 12).

Jesus did not come in His first advent to judge the world (John 3:17). But Jesus will judge all things after He returns (Matthew 25:31; Acts 17:31). All deeds will be judged (Romans 2:5-7; Revelation 20:12), but those who believed in Jesus will not be condemned for their sins, since Jesus took on the sins of the world (2 Corinthians 5:14; Colossians 2:14). The open question is one of rewards. It is one of approval, not of belonging. We belong to God unconditionally, because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. But Jesus will only approve those deeds which are beneficial for us and for others (Romans 2:6-7).

Believers are made righteous in God's sight by grace through faith, apart from works (Romans 4:3, Ephesians 2:8-9). Then, although each believer is accepted by God unconditionally, each one will also be judged to determine what rewards they receive for the deeds they did during their time on earth. Each deed will get a reward, good and bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

So when Jesus says *My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done* this includes all actions (v 12). There will be good rewards for good actions, while bad actions will receive an appropriate negative reward, presumably a chastisement. We can infer that any chastisement will be a part of God's refining process to conform each of His servants into His image (Romans 8:29). But although all will be conformed to His image, it seems clear that taking full advantage of walking by faith in this life is of such enormous benefit to us that Jesus is going way out of His way to get the point through to us: "Don't lose this incredible opportunity to walk by faith."

We are told elsewhere that God will judge according to the thoughts and intents of our hearts, so the emphasis in the judgement will likely be on intent (Hebrews 4:12-13). God will also judge according to our level of gifting (Luke 12:48). The standard by which He will judge us will be affected by the standard we apply to others (Matthew 7:1-2).

Scripture speaks of the deeds of each believer being like building materials. Deeds done out of selfishness or to gain rewards from the world are like "wood, hay, straw" that will burn up in the judgment fire. There will be nothing left to reward, nothing to "build our house" in the next life. But if we do good, serving as a faithful witness to Jesus, then our deeds are like "gold, silver, precious stones" that are refined to be made pure and with which we can "build onto the house," the figurative building each believer adds to that has Jesus as its foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

God will *render to every man according to what he has done* (v 12). This goes back to the statements in verse 11, that *the one who does wrong will still do wrong and the one who is filthy will still be filthy* (bad deeds) as well as *let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy* (good deeds). Jesus will judge whatever deeds each person has. The choice is left to us, and we will reap what we sow (Galatians 6:8).

For more on the topic of rewards, read our articles, [“Eternal Life: Receiving the Gift vs. Inheriting the Prize”](#) and [“What Does it Mean to Be a Faithful Witness?”](#)

Jesus ends this statement with an exhortation that we seek His blessing by living faithfully and being a good witness for Him. He begins the exhortation by reiterating His authority:

*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end* (v 13).

*Alpha* and *Omega* are Greek letters that begin and end the Greek alphabet. Jesus is the “A and the Z.” Thus, verse 13 gives three ways to say *the first and the last*. We know the *I* here is Jesus from the context in verse 20. Jesus created the world (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). He sustains the world (Colossians 1:17). As a result, because He became human and lived as a faithful witness, even to death on a cross, He was given the reward of being “Son” (Hebrews 1:5, 8, 13, 2:5-10) making Him the firstborn of Creation (Colossians 1:15). This means He was given authority over heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:5-9). He therefore has the right to judge and the power to reward.

This assertion of Jesus’s divine power and authority is another refrain that has been echoed throughout Revelation from the very beginning (Revelation 1:8, 1:17-18, 2:8). This is another way of Jesus/God saying that He is on His throne. He has ultimate authority and is in control of all things. Therefore, this promise to believers that if they are faithful they will receive an enormous reward, a tremendous blessing, is a promise that is fully dependable. It might be hard to fathom, but it is real, and it will come to pass (1 Corinthians 2:9; Romans 11:33).

Now comes a statement that gives additional color to the blessing Jesus promises to those who overcome death, loss, and rejection of the world by being His faithful witnesses:

*Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city* (v 14).

The blessing here is said to be bestowed upon those *who wash their robes*. Since this describes a deed, an activity to *wash their robes*, this does not speak of the new birth, which is received by grace, through faith, apart from deeds (John 3:14-16; Romans 4:3; Ephesians 2:8-9). This is speaking to God’s servants, His people to whom He gave the gift of eternal life, and the privilege of being His servant. God’s servants make up the audience for all of Revelation (Revelation 1:3).

The phrase *those who wash their robes* speaks of any believer upon whom will be bestowed a great reward for living as a faithful witness. The image of a cleansed garment reflects any believer who has repented and has become transformed by a renewed mind and has, accordingly, walked apart from the ways of the world (Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 5:16-18).

Scripture uses the analogy of fire refining precious metals and soap washing garments to represent the heart of humans being cleansed from sin and sanctified to walk apart from the world. This occurs through confession and repentance (1 John 1:9; Hebrews 10:19-22). It results in walking by faith in harmony with God’s design, loving and serving others—what the Bible calls “righteousness.”

The sin and brokenness of the world is often depicted as impurities in precious metals and dirt on garments. An example is this passage from Malachi:

“But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness.”  
(Malachi 3:2-3)

A “fuller’s soap” is the soap of a launderer. God will refine and purify His people like a launderer scrubbing dirt out of a robe, or a metalsmith firing precious metals to make them pure.

Some believers will be purified at the judgment seat of Christ, where impurities are burned away, and rewards are lost (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Those whose deeds burn will miss out on blessings. The Book of Revelation encourages believers to be of those who are purified by enduring the fiery trials of this life by walking in faith (1 Peter 4:12-13). It is these believers who walk faithfully in this life who overcome, and *who wash their robes* through walking by faith. These will gain the great rewards promised in this book.

The overcomers *who washed their robes* are those who *have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city* (v 14). We saw in Revelation 2:7 that eating from *the tree of life* was a particular reward given to the overcomers. The overcomers also have permission to *enter by the gates into the city*, which is important since the *tree of life* is apparently inside *the city*.

In the previous chapter, we saw several statements about the *gates of the city*. This is speaking of the New Jerusalem, in the new earth (Revelation 21:1-3). Revelation says of this city that “its gates will never be closed” (Revelation 21:25). This indicates that in the new earth there is never a threat that requires a defense. The new earth will be completely secure; there will be no more violence.

Also, through the gates of this city, the New Jerusalem, “they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it” (Revelation 21:26). This “they” apparently refers to the “kings of the earth” referred to in Revelation 21:24. These “kings” are presumably from the group of believers who have been rewarded to share Christ’s reign with Him (Revelation 3:21).

Chapter 21 states that “nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it [the city], but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:27).

Since there are those who live in the new earth but are not allowed to enter through the gates, this means that there are those outside the city but residing on the new earth who do not have their names written in the Lamb’s book of life. The next verse appears to describe these people:

*Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying (v 15).*

We saw earlier that anyone whose name was not written in the Lamb's book of life was thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15). So it would seem that the lake of fire is present in the new earth. How this can be is not explained, but we can surmise from a number of verses the possibility that the lake of fire may in fact be God's unveiled presence:

- God is presented throughout scripture as a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29).
- God will dwell upon the new earth, and His unveiled presence will be like the sun (Revelation 21:23, 22:22:5).
- God's throne is pictured as being enveloped in fire (Daniel 7:9).

It could be that we are given a preview of this contrast between overcomers and unbelievers in the story from Daniel 3:19-29, where three faithful Hebrews stood apart from the king's command to defile themselves by worshipping an idol (*idolatry*) and were accordingly thrown into the fiery furnace.

In this story, the three faithful Hebrews are described as being observed standing together unharmed in the fire of the great furnace. Only three of them were thrown in, but there is seen with them a fourth person, who is said to be a divine being, perhaps the pre-incarnate Christ. They are not harmed at all by the fire, not even singed. Meanwhile, the Babylonian soldiers (*idolaters*) stoking the fire are slayed by its intense heat.

This picture from Daniel could illustrate the social situation of the new earth, where overcomers bask in the glow of God who is as bright as the sun, a "consuming fire," while unbelievers whose names are not in the book of life are constantly consumed by His presence.

We also get a hint that the lake of fire is in the new earth from Isaiah, which speaks prophetically of Satan:

“Those who see you will gaze at you,  
They will ponder over you, saying,  
‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble,  
Who shook kingdoms.’”  
(Isaiah 14:16)

It seems that Satan's impotence will be visible to those in the new earth. Perhaps this is a part of his torment, he who said in his heart “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God” (Isaiah 14:12). This same person will be looked upon as a pitiful and impotent being no longer able to make an impact.

Since the list of those *outside* the city are contrasted with believers who washed their robes and are blessed, it could be that the *dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying* (v 15) also include believers whose names were erased out of the book of life, a possibility inferred in Chapter 3:

“He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”

(Revelation 3:5)

As covered in Chapter 3, the erasing of names from the book of life cannot mean believers would lose their status as children of God. That would violate many other passages of scripture, including this one that forecloses that as a possibility:

“If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.”

(2 Timothy 2:13)

Since believers are new creations in Christ, placed into His body, for Jesus to then deny them as being a part of His body would be for Him to deny Himself.

But it might be that believers can become sufficiently apostate to cause them to be erased from the book of life and therefore lose access to the New Jerusalem. *Dogs* were like pigs in Jewish culture, unclean animals. This would indicate that those being denied entrance into the New Jerusalem are defiled with unconfessed sin. This goes with *sorcerers*, which translates the Greek word “pharmakos” and indicates those who deal in illicit drugs, perhaps as a part of occult practices.

The phrase *immoral persons* translates the Greek word “ pornos ” which indicates someone engaged in sexual immorality/promiscuity. *Idolators* are those who seek control through the agency of false gods. *Murderers* and *everyone who loves and practices lying* are subsets of a category of humanity that has sunk into exploiting others for their own gain.

Perhaps believers who sink into these low states lose the ability to partake in the fellowship in the New Jerusalem. Romans tells us that it is the destiny of every believer to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). And 1 Corinthians 3 tells us that even believers who have nothing to show in terms of good deeds during their lives are still saved, “so as through fire” (1 Corinthians 3:15). But this might be telling us that there is particular loss for those who sink into gross immorality.

This would seem to be a better explanation than relegating this list to only include unbelievers since this list is contrasted with those who *wash their robes*. Each deals with deeds rather than initial faith. Further, all unbelievers will be consumed in the lake of fire, regardless of what sins they committed (Revelation 20:15; Hebrews 10:26) and the entire book is addressed to believers (Revelation 1:1). All the more reason for those who read and hear these words to be motivated to heed the words of this book. Those who heed these words and walk by faith will receive a great blessing (Revelation 1:3). Part of that great blessing might be to avoid great loss (1 Corinthians 3:15).

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>10</sup> And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. <sup>11</sup> Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still**

keep himself holy.”<sup>12</sup> “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”<sup>13</sup> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”<sup>14</sup> Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.<sup>15</sup> Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.