

Revelation 22:16-21

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Revelation ends with an urge to believers to “come” and follow Christ, taking the free gift of the water of life. Jesus also warns those who would add or take away from these words given through John that they will have great adverse consequences for doing so. The book concludes with an invitation to experience God’s grace.

The last section of Chapter 22 begins with a statement that tells us the previous God-in-first-person quotes are from Jesus:

“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star” (v 16).

Jesus names Himself and refers to His *angel*. *Angel* means messenger. In this chapter, the messenger was a heavenly angel, who was so majestic John bowed before him (Revelation 22:8). The word translated *testify* is “martyreo” in Greek, from which we get our English word “martyr.” The angel testified (“martyreo”) to John of Jesus, who is the faithful and true witness (“martyr”) (Revelation 3:14). Revelation exhorts each believer to follow Jesus’s example and become a faithful witness: to overcome rejection and loss from the world and follow in faith. Revelation promises immense rewards for this.

This message was sent to *the churches*, the gathering of believers in various locations. It is a message addressed to any and all who have believed on Jesus. Jesus asserts *I am the root and the descendant of David*. As God, Jesus created David (Colossians 1:16). Jesus was also born from a human mother, and therefore became a *descendant of David* (Matthew 1:1). He is the Jewish Messiah, the promised One who was given to break the curse and heal the Fall of Man (Genesis 3:15).

Jesus is also *the bright morning star*. The *bright morning star* would perhaps be the primary or only star visible in the early morning hours. This perhaps testifies to the uniqueness of Jesus, who is both God and human. He alone has spanned the gap between God and humanity. He alone has received the honor of being a “Son” and has been rewarded to reign over all creation (Hebrews 1:5, 8, 13). And He alone has paved the way for humans to be restored to their original design to have the “glory and honor” of reigning over creation, through following Jesus’s example (Hebrews 2:5-10).

Jesus now gives an invitation:

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost (v 17).

The Spirit is likely the Holy Spirit, who is also God. The Holy Spirit invites all to *come*. The Holy Spirit has the ministry to convict people, that they might realize their need (John 16:7-8).

The Holy Spirit also leads believers, ministering to them by telling them how to walk in the path of faith and blessing (Galatians 5:16-17).

The *bride* might refer to the holy city, the New Jerusalem, which is called the bride in the immediate context (Revelation 21:9-10). This would include all who inhabit the city, which apparently will be all believers allowed to take up residence there. This holy gathering invites all who read this prophecy: *Come*. Presumably the invitation is for those who are allowed to enter the city.

The one who hears is told to say, “*Come*” (v 17). This letter is addressed to God’s servants, those who have believed on Jesus (Revelation 1:1). It admonishes each believer to read, hear, and heed these words—to do them in order to gain a great blessing (Revelation 1:3). Therefore, those who hear, understand, and heed are told to also be those who invite.

Faithful believers/servants are instructed to say, presumably to all with whom they come in contact, “*Come*.” Their lives should be sufficiently noteworthy to serve as a continual invitation to live faithfully. The faithful witnesses are invited to make more faithful witnesses.

The invitation to *the one who is thirsty* speaks of the free gift of eternal life that is given to all who believe. To take of the *water of life* comes *without cost*. It is a free gift. All who will drink will live. This describes the new spiritual birth (John 3:3) that comes from having the faith to look at Jesus on the cross, hoping to be delivered from the venomous poison of sin (John 3:14-15).

In John 3, all that is required to be born again (John 3:3) is for someone to realize that sin is death, to desire not to die, and so to look on Jesus in hope (John 3:14-15). Revelation 22:17 follows a similar pattern. Jesus invites anyone who recognizes they are thirsty to come and receive the free gift of the *water of life*. To say it is *without cost* is to say that there is no further obligation. The grace of God is freely given to all who will receive it.

To be born into God’s royal family, and receive the great inheritance that comes with it, is an amazing gift.

It is freely given, it cannot be earned or lost. But it also comes with a great responsibility—a great inheritance. In order to possess the inheritance we are granted, we must hear God’s call and walk in obedience. God warns each believer *who hears the words of the prophecy of this book*:

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book (v 18).

There is a great responsibility to hear God’s word, and act on it with integrity. If *anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book* (v18). To be born into God’s family is a gift, freely given. To possess our inheritance requires walking in obedience. There are great consequences to our choices. There are great negative consequences for disobedience—in this case, adding or taking away from God’s message to His servants.

To add to God’s word is to replace what He says with what “I say.”

The original sin was to follow our own way rather than God's way. Eve was deceived by Satan, and believed she could make a better path for herself through her own knowledge. Then, Adam followed Eve into sin (Genesis 3:1-7).

To add to God's word with our own words will be met with immense negative consequences. The *plagues which are written in this book* are far worse than the plagues visited on Egypt (Revelation 6:8, 16:1-12).

But adding to His words is not all that Jesus warns against. Also to leave out any words of the prophecy will have immense negative impact:

and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book (v 19).

To eat of the *tree of life* is a reward given to those who overcome (Revelation 2:7). Those who are outside and unable to enter the *holy city* which is the New Jerusalem are those described in Revelation 22:15 as "dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying."

Anyone who takes away from the words from this prophecy loses their reward of getting to visit the holy city. They are with the outcasts, outside the city. That is a pretty severe negative consequence.

The bottom line is that it is really important to read, understand, and heed the words of this prophecy; that is how to gain an enormous blessing (Revelation 3:3). By reading and understanding, we will learn to heed by living as a faithful witness who does not fear death, loss, or rejection by the world.

It is emphasized that it is vitally important not to add or take away from what is written. It is vital that we hear, understand, and heed what Jesus actually says, without altering either by adding or taking away. Jesus wants us to hear all and hear well.

Jesus ends this book, and the written revelation in the Bible, with this final statement:

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen (vv 20-21).

Jesus again uses "martyreo" translated as *testifies*. Jesus the faithful witness (Greek, "martyr") gives a faithful testimony (Greek, "martyreo").

Jesus *testifies to these things*. The phrase *these things* would seem refer to the words of this prophecy, the book of Revelation. Thus, this would be Jesus anointing the words of Revelation with His own testimony, His own authority and blessing. They are special words to be read, heard, and heeded. In Revelation, He calls each believer to do likewise, to lay down our lives for His sake, following Him and enduring rejection by the world.

Anyone who does so is promised a special blessing; anyone who adds or takes away is promised a special cursing. This is similar to the pattern given to Israel in the covenant/treaty God entered

into with them. They were and always will be His people because He loves them, regardless of their behavior (Romans 11:28-29). But He gave them clear consequences for their choices: blessings if they walked in obedience to their covenant/treaty and loved their neighbors, and cursings if they broke their treaty and followed the exploitative behaviors of pagan idolatry (Deuteronomy 28).

For the fifth time in this chapter, Jesus emphasizes that the fulfillment of these things is imminent, saying *Yes, I am coming quickly* (v20). This is Jesus's last quoted statement in scripture. This was written roughly two thousand years ago, but that is a wisp of vapor compared to eternity. To God a thousand years is as a day (2 Peter 3:8). The emphasis is that the time is short, and we should take full advantage of every moment to live as a faithful witness.

John apparently then responds to Jesus's statement, saying *Amen*, or "May it be so." *Come, Lord Jesus*.

Come, Lord Jesus and redeem the world from sin and evil.

Come, Lord Jesus and deliver us from a fallen world full of misery and death.

Come, Lord Jesus and set all things right, judging evil.

Come, Lord Jesus and vanquish Death and Hades.

Come, Lord Jesus and restore humans to their original design, reigning as teammates in harmony with You, with one another, and with nature.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Revelation, and therefore the Bible, ends with this statement: *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with us all* (v 21).

Here *grace* translates the Greek word "charis." This means "favor" and context determines who is being favored for what reason. We can see in Luke 2:52, that Jesus grew in favor ("charis") with God and man because of His excellent behavior. God bestows favor/grace upon all who believe because of His love for humanity (Ephesians 2:8-9; John 3:16). God promises to grant His favor to all who humble themselves under His mighty hand (1 Peter 5:6).

There is always a reason why favor is granted. In God's case, the reason is always because He decided to do so. There is no standard to which God is obligated. There is no debt He owes. In the case of the *Lord Jesus*, it is clear in this book that He has already poured out His favor and will pour out His favor on all who believe. All it takes to be born into His family and gain the free gift of eternal life is to recognize our spiritual thirst and receive the water of life from Jesus (Revelation 22:17).

But God also sets forth a path of choices for believers where He promises to grant immense favor if we follow His path (Matthew 7:13-14). That path is to walk in obedience to His ways, living as a faithful witness who does not fear death, loss, or rejection by the world. To overcome as He overcame, so that He can share His reward with us, which He greatly desires to do (Revelation 3:21).

John's invitation is not limited. He invites the *grace of the Lord Jesus* to *be with us all* (v 21). That infers that each and every believer has the opportunity to follow Jesus and walk in His ways and receive the great blessings that will fulfill His promises. The creator and sustainer of life

desires to pour out His love and favor upon all who will listen to Him and are willing to receive Him. His invitation is incredible, but He leaves it to us to decide.

Will we hear His voice, and fellowship with Him? If we do, we gain as much gold as we would like, and share the reward He was given (Revelation 3:18-21; Romans 8:17b).

Everyone has the invitation. Each one will decide how to respond. May you, dear reader, respond with a hearty “yes” and *Come*.

Biblical Text

¹⁶ “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” ¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. ¹⁸ I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. ²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. ²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.