



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Revelation

## Chapter 22

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# Introduction

- This Chapter contains God's Last Message to Humankind
- In the previous chapter St. John described the glory of the New Jerusalem as the eternal destiny of the redeemed was revealed
- In the first six verses of this chapter, St. John's vision of the glorious future for the people of God is completed with a brief description of the river of life, the tree of life, and the throne of God and of the Lamb



# Introduction

- Here at the close of the Holy Bible we are reintroduced to the tree of life, which has not been mentioned in the Holy Bible since Genesis 3, where Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden
- Paradise is restored in the eternal state
- All that was lost in the fall is redeemed by the Lamb
- Eternal fellowship with God, stressed in the previous chapter, Revelation 21:3-4, is emphasized again with the promise of seeing His face and having His name on one's forehead



# Introduction

## Chapter Outline

- The River of Life 1-5
- The Time Is Near 6-11
- Jesus Testifies to the Churches 12-17
- A Warning 18-19
- I Am Coming Quickly 20-21



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- In the previous section, Revelation 21:9-27 the angel had showed St. John the city and its walls with their gates and foundations
- In this section he shows him *the river of water of life*, and *the tree of life*
- The vision of Ezekiel 47:7-12 is exactly parallel to this one
- Tertullian says that we cannot explain this text literally
- For in the eternal life there are no rivers or streets or trees



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- The symbolism of these descriptions is shown in his talk about the tree of life
- The Apostle says, that it stands in the middle of the street of the city, and in the same time the tree itself stands on the shore of the river from both sides
- How then can this be, if it is literally explained?!
- Tertullian is of the opinion, that the river is the Person of our Lord Jesus who gave water to every soul



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- As well as He is the Lamb who saved us, and the Tree of Life who feeds His children
- *a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, Because, "there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles"* Revelation 21:27
- The river is full of water, and that water is the symbol of life
- It is the beautiful symbol of life in its gladness, purity, activity, and fullness



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- The garden of Eden, Genesis 2:1 had its river
- Even in the wilderness Israel had from the smitten rock the water which gushed out like a river, Psalm 105:41
- Prophets, in their pictures of the ages of blessing, almost invariably introduced the river, or broad stream
- Joel saw a fountain out of the house of the Lord, Joel 3:18
- Zechariah spoke of living waters from Jerusalem, Zechariah 14:8





# The River of Life 22:1-5

- But Ezekiel had the fullest vision when he beheld the stream which deepened and broadened in its onward progress from under the threshold of the house of God, and carried life in its train: everything lived whither the water came, Ezekiel 47:9
- Thus did all prophets speak of the river of God's pleasures, Psalm 36:8
- The teaching of our Lord threw new light on the prophetic imagery



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- The pure delights of spiritual joy and communion with God were promised to men by the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life
- In the bestowal of that spirit of life did Christ give true satisfaction to the thirsting souls of men, John 4:10-14, 7:37-39
- St. Ambrose believes, that the river is the Holy Spirit that no one can drink from, other than he who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, John 7:37-39



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- This is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, proceeding from the Father and dwelling in the Son
- The Son sent the Spirit from the Father to rebuke, to sanctify and guide us until we reach the heavenly wedding
- This is the eternal river that watered, and still waters the bride
- This also refers to the delightful flow of God's blessings in eternity, which in its truth is nothing separated from Him who gives us Himself to enjoy and be delighted with



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- And as the psalmist says, *“There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God. The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved”*  
Psalm 46:4,5
- It also indicates the eternal peace with which heavenly Jerusalem is delighted
- As it says, *“Behold I will extend peace to her like a river... As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. When you see this, your heart shall be rejoice”* Isaiah 66:12-14



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- When the soldier pierced Jesus' side, water and blood gushed forth, John 19:34
- This is the water of life
- In His earthly ministry Jesus promised this gift of "living water" when He talked to the woman of Samaria and later during the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, John 4:1-14 and 7:37-39
- The source of the river is in the *throne*



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- Ezekiel's river took rise in the temple; but in John's vision there is no temple, Revelation 21:22
- We are brought nearer, even to the throne
- It is the throne, not "thrones", one throne of God and the Lamb, Revelation 3:21
- The source of the river was in the Divine throne, the seat of God and the crucified Savior



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- *the tree of life*, Saint Ireaneus and other Fathers of the Church saw the Holy Cross as the definitive Tree-of-Life
- The Tree-of-Life that was in the Garden of Eden was only a promise of the true Tree-of-Life that would be fulfilled in Christ's sacrifice for the sins of the world
- The Tree- of-Life is sustaining believers now as they partake of Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist and its effects continue into eternity



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- *twelve fruits*, The recurrence of the number twelve is to be noticed, for here, too, as well as in the foundations and gates of the city, we have variety joined with unity
- The tree bears twelve kinds of fruit that yields its fruit every month suggesting the infinite variety that will fill heaven
- Diverse and seasonable fruits, and yet one tree of life
- *every month*, The fruit is always in season
- Since time exists no more, emphasizes the expression of the joyous condition of eternity using familiar terms of time





# The River of Life 22:1-5

- We may see in this bountiful supply of the tree of life an image of the abundance of grace and life in store for the redeemed
- The hunger as well as the thirst of the spirit is to be satisfied, Matthew 5:6
- The tree of life, as well as the river of life, is to be found in the new and better Eden, Genesis 2:9, 3:22
- *the healing of the nations*, Are not the heathen, but the multitude of the redeemed, gathered out of every nation, Revelation 21:24



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- It is, of course, not implied that there is, in the new Jerusalem, any disease which needs healing, but the tree of life is put forward as the means by which the continual health and life and general well being of the inhabitants are sustained
- The leaves therefore will be to promote general health or another way of stating that would be
- Life in heaven will be fully energized, rich and exciting continuously



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- *And there shall be no more curse*, The effects of the curse of the fall of man, Genesis 3:14-19 will be totally gone forever
- There may be an allusion to Joshua 7:12
- There is certainly similar language to Zechariah 14:11
- All accursed things are removed, and with them passes the curse
- In eternity, sin and disobedience do not exist
- There will be only pure life and blessing, every effect of the displeasure of God for sin being now totally removed



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- The blessing of God's presence, and the blessing of God's rule take the place of the power of evil over the groaning creation, Romans 8:22
- *the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it*, This is the consequence of there being no accursed thing
- *His servants shall serve Him*, We turn from the city to the inhabitants
- They are described as serving
- The most honorable title in the universe is to be His servants



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- Their service here was discharged in the midst of discouragements and in difficulty; and they walked by faith, not by sight
- Now the servants shall serve without hindrance or opposition, and they shall be encouraged by His immediate presence *They shall see his face*
- Seeing Him is another consequence of there being no accursed thing - no sin



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- Though this is now impossible for an unglorified human being, Exodus 33:20, it will occur in the eternal state
- The saints in New Jerusalem will see God's face
- Being perfectly holy and righteous, they'll be able to endure the blazing, glorious light from God's presence without being consumed
- That was impossible for mortal men
- They shall know Him even as they are known, 1 Corinthians 13:12



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- They shall see Him as He is
- All are pure in heart, and therefore they see God
- The same promise is made in 1 John 3:2
- No wonder, then, that he should add *His name shall be on their foreheads*
- The name of God in their foreheads shows ownership and consecration, Revelation 3:12, 13:16; Exodus 28:36-38



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- The name stands for what God is in holiness and righteousness, purity and love
- The name on the forehead indicates their resemblance to their Master
- The last clause connects this chapter with Revelation 3:12, and shows that these who are here described are those who have overcome, Revelation 7, 14:1
- Verse 5 is A repetition of Revelation 21:23,25





# The River of Life 22:1-5

- Since in the New Jerusalem God is always present, His glory makes all other sources of light unnecessary, Revelation 21:23; Isaiah 60:19-20; Zechariah 14:7
- Those who were children of light now dwell in the light of God's countenance
- The Lord God is their sun and shield
- He has given grace; He now gives glory
- The Fathers of the Church had experienced the light of God shining upon them while they were here on earth



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- St. Augustine says, “My God... You are my Light, open my eyes to see Your divine beauty. I cannot walk on my way without falling into the traps of the enemy. What is light but You my God! You are the Light to the children of light! Your day does not have a sunset! Your day gives light to Your children, that they might not stumble down. But those who are away from You walk and live in darkness! Let us then get close to You who are the Light of the world. Why do we have to try getting away from You everyday?! Anyone who keeps distance from you, the true Light goes deeper into the darkness of sin. And when darkness envelops him, he would not be able to distinguish the traps set up for him, all along the road!”



# The River of Life 22:1-5

- No good thing has been withheld; light, life, and love are theirs, *“For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, Blessed is the man who trusts in You!”* Psalm 84:11-12
- As a final word describing the saint's heavenly experience, they are told it once again that it will never end
- They shall reign forever and forever



# The Time Is Near 22:6-11

- Verses 6-21 form a conclusion or summary to the book
- They emphasize two themes
  - (1) the authenticity of the book as a revelation from God
  - (2) the closeness of the return of Christ
- *These words*, The reference is to the whole book
- *These words are faithful and true*, Three times repeated, Revelation 19:9, 21:5
- For we are slow to believe that God is as good as He is



# The Time Is Near 22:6-11

- The news seems to us too good to be true
- They are no dreams of a visionary, but the realities of God's sure word
- The angel's words reinforce an important truth: Everything John saw in Revelation will come to pass
- John's words are not mystical and the Apocalypse is not a record of his dreams
- It is an accurate description of events and persons that are yet to come



# The Time Is Near 22:6-11

- The book contains the Revelation of the *faithful and true* witness, Revelation 3:14, whose words are faithful, trustworthy, and fulfilling the desire of them that fear Him
- Nor is there reason to doubt this; for *the Lord God of the holy prophets* the God whose spirit moved the holy men of old to speak, 2 Peter 1:21, *sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place*



# The Time Is Near 22:6-11

- This warning of His judgment is not to be taken lightly
- The expressions of immediacy *The time is near* (or close) is repeated , 1:1, 1:3, & 22:10
- *I am coming quickly*, The words of Christ Himself to confirm the declaration of the last verse
- So here is the 6<sup>th</sup> Beatitude which repeats the promise of the 1<sup>st</sup> Beatitude in Revelation 1:3 "*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*"



# The Time Is Near 22:6-11

- He that loves Christ will keep His commandments, John 14:15, even as Christ loved His Father, and kept His commandments, John 15:10
- Those who so keep the sayings or words of Christ in this book will stand firm as those who have built upon the rock, Matthew 7:24-25
- The blessing of Christ to such was victory over death, "*if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death*" John 8:51





# The Time Is Near 22:6-11

- But how can you keep the sayings, if you do not know what these sayings are?
- Most people avoid Revelation
- But if we must keep the sayings, then we must read and understand what they are
- Believers are called to defend this Holy Book against critics who deny its relevance, against those who deny its authenticity and authority as well as against confused interpreters who obscure its meaning



# The Time Is Near 22:6-11

- This Holy Book of Revelation calls believers to desire heaven, to desire holiness, to desire to see Christ vindicated and for Him to triumph over His enemies, to desire the end of the curse and to desire the new heaven and the new earth
- To see God's face, to see an end of the Babylonian Harlot and to look forward to a life of peace and happiness
- Thus the purpose of Revelation is to reveal the glory of God's Son and call believers to live godly, obedient lives in light of His soon return



# The Time Is Near 22:6-11

- The words of the angel are confirmed by the words of Christ
- Now we have the confirmatory testimony of the apostle to the truth of the vision
- The declaration reminds us of the opening of the Epistle of St. John: *“That which we have seen and heard we declare to you”*  
1 John 1:1-3
- He wrote nothing from his own mind
- And now he shows his own weakness



# The Time Is Near 22:6-11

- For the second time he forgets himself, and thinks that the angel escorting him was Christ, and wanted to kneel to worship him, but the angel refused
- This twice offered and twice refused worship is full of teaching
- To submit to all their due is wise and seemly and Christ-like
- But to offer exaggerated reverence to any is to reverse God's order, and to degrade by pretending to exalt man, whose true glory is that he is God's creation



# The Time Is Near 22:6-11

- It could be, that it was the angel who spoke to him, yet probably it was the Person of the Lord who will carry on the speech
- Anyway, the visions being now complete St. John received a heavenly order, and was commanded to communicate them to the world, contrary to the direction given in Revelation 10:4
- *Do not seal the words of the prophecy*, For the time is near, the prophecy must be revealed so every believer should benefit of it
- As if he tells everyone to do as he wishes, in complete freedom, until the coming of the great day of the Lord



# The Time Is Near 22:6-11

- The intention seems to be to stir men up to a realization of the nature of their conduct in continuing to reject the warnings of God
- Those who hear the truth but continue to do wrong will by that hardened response fix their eternal destiny in hell
- Conversely, those who continue to practice righteousness and keep themselves holy give evidence of genuine saving faith
- When Christ returns, the deliberate choice of each person will have fixed his eternal fate



# The Time Is Near 22:6-11

- He is reprimanding us as it came in the book of Ecclesiastes, *“Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, And in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.”* Ecclesiastes 11:9
- Or it may be that he means what St. Macarius the Great says, that what man acquires here, will remain with him to eternity in a more perfect and complete way. He who plants corruption will fall where the chief of corruption is, and he who struggles in righteousness, will get his share in the Lord our Righteousness, where he finds delight in Him

# Jesus Testifies to the Churches

## 22:12-17



- *To give to everyone* , Here we have the truth declared by St. Paul uttered in words borrowed from Isaiah 40:10 “*Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap,*” Galatians 6:7-8
- God *give to every one according to his work*, says St. John
- This is also what Jesus spoke of in Matthew 16:27, “*He will reward each according to his works*”
- This is one of the fundamental truths enforced throughout the book



# Jesus Testifies to the Churches

## 22:12-17



- The greater our faithfulness is in this life, the greater will be our opportunity to serve in heaven, not to mention the crowns believers will receive
- *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.*” These words, which appropriately open and close the book, Revelation 1:8, occur continually in Isaiah, Isaiah 41:4, 43:10, 44:6, 48:12
- He originated the whole plan of salvation, and He will determine its close
- He formed the world, and He will wind up its affairs

# Jesus Testifies to the Churches

## 22:12-17



- *Blessed are those*, This is the 7<sup>th</sup> Beatitude in this book
- *who do His commandments, If you love me, keep my commandments*, Revelation 12:17, 14:12; Matthew 7:13-21; 1 John 3:6-10
- *they may have the right to the tree of life*, They would not be forbidden to approach that tree as Adam was, but would be permitted always to partake of it, and would live forever
- The tree of life indicates immortality and divine blessing, Revelation 2:7; 22:2

# Jesus Testifies to the Churches

## 22:12-17



- *may enter through the gates into the city*, They would have free access there; they would be permitted to abide there forever
- The sins listed in verse 15 are similar to those mentioned in Revelation 22:8
- It is the reiteration, therefore, of the warning that those who would enter in must break off their sins by righteousness
- The allusion to the dogs outside the city is hardly appreciated by Westerners

# Jesus Testifies to the Churches

## 22:12-17



- In the East, however, the term is used as an expression for what is most degraded, 1 Kings 14:11, 16:4, 21:19, 22:38; 2 Kings 9:10,36; Jeremiah 15:3; Psalm 59:6, and thus became such objects of dislike that fierce and cruel enemies are poetically styled dogs in Psalm 22:16,20
- The dog, moreover, was an unclean animal
- Dogs, therefore, are represented as outside the city, because nothing unclean is allowed to enter

# Jesus Testifies to the Churches

## 22:12-17



- It is not all who have ever committed any of these sins listed in this verse that will be excluded from heaven
- But it is those who love and habitually practice these sins and stubbornly cling to them and refuse to confess their sins, repent, and return to Christ
- They will be the ones cast into the lake of fire

# Jesus Testifies to the Churches

## 22:12-17



- The warning is followed by the voice of our Lord Himself testifying to the truth of the revelation made, *I, Jesus*, your Savior, and Redeemer and the One who cares for you all the time, *have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches*
- But it is not merely a message, or the confirmation of a message that we have
- It establishes that this final invitation in Scripture is not a human invitation, but a divine call issued personally to sinners by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself

# Jesus Testifies to the Churches

## 22:12-17



- This verse is Jesus' seal of approval on the whole book of Revelation
- Christ is the root and pledge of hope to all, *I am the Root*, I am his Creator
- *and the Offspring of David*, According to the promise in the Scripture, that the Messiah should be descended from David
- He is David's Lord and David's Son, possessing David's throne, Matthew 22:42-45; Luke 1:32

# Jesus Testifies to the Churches

## 22:12-17



- He is both the source *the Root* and the end of the Davidic line
- He is the bright star which leads up the dawn of everlasting day, Malachi 4:2; 2 Peter 1:19
- The cry of all creation is for its true Lord
- The cry of the Spirit in prophecies and in the hearts of God's people is for the coming Lord
- The bride, the Church, waiting for the bridegroom hears the voice of her Bridegroom, through the Holy Spirit, she whispers, '*Come!*'



# Jesus Testifies to the Churches

## 22:12-17



- The Apocalypse is the book of the coming One
- It ends with the cry that the coming One would come Revelation 22:20
- The power of the whole gospel is the ability to respond to this Come, and repeat it from the heart
- The Holy Spirit working in the Church, through whom she is bound to Christ as His bride, and the Church herself, eagerly welcome the fulfillment of Christ's promise made in verse 12

# Jesus Testifies to the Churches

## 22:12-17



- The Church in her corporate capacity welcomes her Lord
- So, also, let each member in his individual capacity, who hears this "testimony" (verse 16), be desirous of the advent of his Master
- As St. Augustine, martyr Cyprian, and other Fathers say, there is no salvation outside the Church
- *Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely,* Though the living water be freely given without money and without price, it is not enforced upon any



# A Warning 22:18-19

- Here the Lord Jesus adds a severe, serious, and firm warning, not only to the churches of Asia, but to all who should ever hear or read this book
- They might be the most solemn and terrifying words of the prophecy and every teacher of Scripture must tremble at these words
- In a very real sense these words embrace and conclude all Scripture



# A Warning 22:18-19

- *If anyone adds to these things, The command in Deuteronomy 4:2, “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”*
- *the plagues, Are those of the seals, the trumpets, the vials, the doom of Babylon, etc.*
- *The command of St. Paul to Timothy, “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” 2 Timothy 1:13*
- *Also what is said in 2 Timothy 2:16-18 concerning the heretical teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus*

# I Am Coming Quickly 22:20-21



- Here is the final witness
- It is in the words of the faithful and true witness Himself
- It is the answer to the repeated cry, “*Come*”
- It is the warning to those who forget Him
- It is introduced with the definite *Surely!* “*Surely I am coming quickly*”
- The answer breaks forth in prayer from the apostle’s lips, *Amen*

# I Am Coming Quickly 22:20-21



- So the writer who delivers the message is the first to proclaim his belief in what is herein contained
- And he is the mouthpiece of the Church
- His desire is one with the desire of all who love Christ's appearing
- *Even so, come, Lord Jesus!* As the book opens, so it closes with this promise
- Reflects the cry of the Saints and prophets under the altar of God in chapter 6:9-10

# I Am Coming Quickly 22:20-21



- This is the anchor and hope of the faithful, the sound of an alarm and a warning cry to the wicked. Amen
- *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.,*  
Without the "grace of our Lord Jesus" none of us would be saved
- It reminds us that whatever be the dangers or difficulties, the afflictions or persecutions which have been pictured in the book, there is strength and love in the Lord



# Discussion

- How must we understand the leaves of the tree of life that are for the healing of the nations?
- Explain the significance of God's name on the forehead.
- Why is no night there? Explain
- Who may enter this city? What privilege will they have there, and where else have we read of this?
- Many groups deny obedience is necessary to receive eternal life. How would you respond?



# Discussion



- What is the difference between this reign of God and the Lamb in chapter 22 and the millennium reign of chapter 20?
- Why is the phrase *"I am coming quickly"* repeated three times in this chapter? How is it that Jesus can say He is coming quickly? It has been 2000 years! Is this quick? How should this word be understood?
- As it has throughout the book, Revelation ends with both warning and promises. What are these warnings and promises?