

Revelation 22: New Jerusalem and How to Read the Book of Revelation

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Abstract

In this final lecture on Revelation 21–22, Dr. Dave Mathewson examines the vision of the New Jerusalem as a comprehensive symbol of ultimate salvation where Edenic and Temple themes merge. He demonstrates that the inclusion and healing of the nations represents the complete arrival of God's kingdom and the reversal of evil, rather than a literal mathematical formula. Rather than serving as a predictive blueprint for future events, Revelation acts as a practical script for the church, urging believers toward holiness, faithful witness, and ethical resistance against idolatrous systems. Ultimately, the vision presents a call for exclusive worship, obedience, and discipleship as the church awaits the return of Jesus Christ.

Outline

I. Introduction and Context of Revelation 21–22

- A. Overview of Lecture 30 content: Revelation 22, the New Jerusalem, and principles for reading Revelation
- B. Sponsorship and institutional context: Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt
- C. Focus on the final climactic vision of redemptive history

II. The Identity and Healing of the Nations (Revelation 21:24–27; 22:1–2)

- A. The Paradox of the Nations in Revelation
 - 1. Contrast between judgment (Rev 19–20) and salvation/entry into New Jerusalem (Rev 21–22)
 - 2. Rhetorical function vs. mathematical quantification of redeemed individuals
 - 3. Complete nature of God's judgment juxtaposed with complete nature of salvation
- B. Old Testament Background and Fulfillment
 - 1. Fulfillment of Isaiah 2 and Isaiah 60 regarding end-time gathering of Gentile nations
 - 2. Transfer of kingdom subjects from the rule of the beast to the rule of God
- C. Purity and Limits of the Inclusive City (Rev 21:27)
 - 1. Inclusion of nations alongside strict protection of city holiness

2. Exclusion of impurity, deceit, and shameful practice; entry restricted to those in Lamb's Book of Life

III. Garden of Eden and Temple Imagery Merged (Revelation 22:1–5)

- A. The River of the Water of Life
 1. River flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb
 2. Dependence on Ezekiel 47 and Zechariah 14:8
 3. Absence of a physical temple because God and the Lamb are its Temple
- B. The Tree of Life and Healing
 1. Allusion back to Genesis 2:9 (restored Eden)
 2. Bearing twelve crops of fruit for continuous life
 3. Leaves serving for the healing of nations previously ravaged by the beast
- C. Historical Connection Between Garden and Temple
 1. Garden of Eden as the original sacred space and temple sanctuary
 2. Tabernacle and Old Testament Temple features mirroring Eden (engravings, cherubim)
 3. Complete suffusion of God's temple presence throughout the new creation

IV. The Reversal of the Curse and Priestly Kingship (Revelation 22:3–5)

- A. Removal of the Ban/Curse
 1. Allusion to Zechariah 14:11 regarding the end of destruction
 2. Guarantee of eternal safety through divine presence
- B. The Priestly Function of God's People
 1. Servants serving God and seeing His face directly
 2. Divine seal/name on foreheads representing intimacy and high-priestly status (Exodus 28)
- C. Eternal Reign and Royal Mandate
 1. Fulfillment of Exodus 19:6, Revelation 1:5–6, and Revelation 5:10 (Kingdom of Priests)
 2. Ultimate realization of the creation mandate given to Adam (Genesis 1:26–28)

V. Epilogue and Concluding Exhortations (Revelation 22:6–21)

- A. Literary Structure and Ambiguity of Voices
 1. Bookend function corresponding to Revelation 1:1–3
 2. Interlocking declarations from Christ, angels, and John
- B. Calls to Worship, Obedience, and Holiness
 1. Rejection of angel worship and devotion directed exclusively to God (Rev 22:8–9)
 2. Unsealed message due to present urgency and near fulfillment (Rev 22:10)
 3. Polarization of response: hardening of the rebellious vs. sanctification of the holy (Rev 22:11)

C. The Bride's Response and Warning Against Compromise

1. Prayer of the Spirit and Bride ("Come, Lord Jesus") in response to Christ's promise (Rev 22:17, 20)
2. Warning against adding or subtracting (Rev 22:18–19) grounded in Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32
3. Ethical metaphor for covenant obedience vs. idolatrous compromise with Rome

VI. Five Key Principles for Reading the Book of Revelation

A. History Has a Divine Goal (Telic History)

1. History moving toward God's sovereign consummation, not human self-effort
2. Hope grounded in Christ's return to set the world right

B. Call to Exclusive Worship and Allegiance

1. God and the Lamb alone are worthy of worship (Rev 4–5)
2. Idolatry defined as giving ultimate allegiance to government, culture, or wealth

C. Call to Witness and Mission

1. Church commissioned to model and testify to the alternative reality of the new creation
2. Kingdom of priests embodying justice, love, and righteousness in the present

D. Call to Discernment and Resistance

1. Exposing "Babylon" (human attempts to construct paradise without God)
2. Ethical resistance to societal evil, violence, and compromise through faithful witness

E. Call to Unqualified Obedience and Discipleship

1. Following the Lamb wherever He goes
2. Urgent ethical appeal driven by the expectation of Christ's imminent return