

## 30. Maranatha!

2/6/2005

If I get a phone call from the White House and the secretary of the President George W. Bush says, "The President would like to meet you and stay with his family in the White House for a few days. And we will send you his Gulfstream Jet to pick you up from the Tucson Executive Terminal." Can you imagine how I get excited about that?

But I have an appointment with someone far greater than the President of the United States of America. I am going to meet the Creator of the universe who keeps the entire universe and who created everything with His words and will be with Him for eternity. There is no one can stand against Him, no one can fight and win over Him. He is the ultimate Ruler and the Final Authority. His name is Jesus, the Son of God, God Himself.

As we are about to finish one of the most controversial books in the Bible, I am more excited about our new home in heaven where we will see our Savior and Lord and see all the saints including Moses, John the Baptist and Daniel, my favorite Bible character after Jesus.

Yes, the heaven sure beats the hell out, literally. But I am mostly excited about being with Jesus my Savior and my God who took my sins away and died for me so that I may live in Him. Knowing that I will be able to hold His pierced hands and feet and worship Him throughout the eternity is more than I can possibly imagine.

### A. THE RIVER OF LIFE

*Revelation 22:1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

God's provision in the New Jerusalem is described with pure, absolutely unpolluted waters. This river of origin comes right from God's throne. Because it comes from God, it cannot be anything other than pure and abundant.

It is fascinating to me that Ezekiel's account in chapter 47 provides not only prophetic information, but practical application.

*Ezekiel 47:3-6 And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water came up to my ankles. 4 Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; the water came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; the water came up to my waist. 5 Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed. 6 He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river.*

Folks, our God won't force us to go any deeper in Him than we choose. But He will take us as deep as we wish in the relationship with Him. Some get their feet wet up to their ankles. They are standing on the promises, born again, saved. But they won't see the depth of His grace, mercy and love. They will not grow deep in Christ.

Others, wanting to go deeper, go up to their knees that speaks of prayer. "I want to do more than get my feet wet, Lord," they say. "I want to be part of what You are

doing. Use me in prayer.” And they get involved in intercessory ministry – praying in the Spirit.

Others, wanting to go deeper still, wade in to their waists which is signifying reproduction. Not only are they standing on the promises, or up to their knees in intercessory ministry, they are adding to the kingdom by witnessing to their family, friends and neighbors.

But there comes a point where some are just over their heads, saying, “Lord, I’m going to just let go. Have Your way in my life. I’m giving it to You without reservation. I don’t know where You will take me, but I’m Yours totally. Do what You want to do in and through me for Your glory.” These people become mature in the Lord.

Maybe right now you might be in the stagnation in your walk. If so, I encourage you to launch out into the deeper waters of faith. But I guarantee you won’t regret it. I’m so glad that the water of life flows right through heaven because it means that the Holy Spirit is on the move even there and that we can continue going deeper and deeper in Him throughout eternity.

## **B. THE TREE OF LIFE**

*Revelation 22:2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

The Bible begins with a tree of life in Genesis 3:22-24 which man was not allowed to eat from ‘the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’ and ‘the tree of life’. But now we see the tree of life again.

Some people wonder if we will eat in heaven. I hope so. The best answer is that we can eat, but will not have to. In His resurrection body, Jesus enjoyed food by eating bread and fish. Angels ate with Abraham in Genesis 18:6-8 before they went to Sodom to meet Lot. The great heavenly “reunion” between Jesus and His people is described as a marriage supper. No more low carb diet, you can eat as much as you want without worrying about cholesterol. No wonder why they call it ‘heaven’. Everyone says, ‘Hallelujah!’

Why do the nations need healing? The word for ‘healing’ is ‘therapeia’, from which the English word therapeutic is derived, almost directly transliterated from the Greek. Rather than meaning ‘healing,’ it should be understood as ‘health-giving,’ as the word in its root meaning has the idea of serving or ministering.

## **C. NO LAYING AROUND ON THE CLOUDS**

*Revelation 22:3-5 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. 4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.*

Some Christians have this notion of heaven: First few days, we would be excited about being in heaven and flying around. But after that we would be sitting on the top of clouds 40,000 ft. above and playing harps with fat naked baby look-alike angels. That is not the heaven scene I find in this chapter.

In heaven, the curse is gone. Since the fall, man and creation have lived with the effect of the curse described in Genesis 3:16-19 – pain in childbirth for women, hot flash for ladies, conflicts between the sexes, the necessity of hard and often futile work for man to survive and most of all death. Instead of the curse, the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it. That’s quite a change for the better.

What will we do in heaven for all eternity? Certainly, we shall praise the Lord, but we shall also serve Him. In heaven our service will be perfect. As we seek to serve the Lord here on earth, we are constantly handicapped by sin and weakness. But all hindrances will be gone when we get to glory. Perfect service in a perfect environment!

What will this service be? We are not told, nor do we need to know now. It is sufficient that we know what God wants us to do today. Our faithfulness in life prepares us for higher service in heaven.

Heaven will be a place where we see Jesus clearly because care and worry are done away with.

Heaven will be a place where God’s people will forever be identified with their God.

Heaven will be a place where the darkness of this age will be forever gone. The light is not artificial, not even from the sun. Because God Himself is the light.

As the Bible opens with the story of ‘Paradise Lost,’ so it here closes with the story of ‘Paradise Regained.’ We see the return of Paradise in the ideas of a river, a tree of life, revocation of the curse, intimacy between God and mankind restored, and reigning resumed.

#### **D. THE TIME IS NEAR**

*Revelation 22:6-7 Then he said to me, “These words are faithful and true.” And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. 7 “Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”*

As apostle John reminds us of the suddenness of these events, Jesus Himself breaks in with a reminder to all that He is coming quickly. It has been about 2,000 years since He told apostle John about His returning. Was Jesus wrong here?

The word ‘quickly’ in the ancient Greek which is ‘tachu’ isn’t exactly the same as our word for “quickly.” The word ‘quickly’ should have been rendered ‘suddenly.’

To us, a period of two thousand years doesn’t seem ‘quickly’, but since to the Lord, one thousand years is as a day, according to His timetable in 2 Peter 3:8, He’s only been gone two days.

The prophecies of God give us a word to keep, not merely material for interesting discussions and debates. The main intent of prophecies is to lead us to trust and obey God, and apply His truth to the way we live.

#### **E. NO ANGEL WORSHIP**

*Revelation 22:8-9 Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. 9 Then he said to me, “See that you do not do that.*

*For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."*

No created being should ever be worshiped. This is in contrast with Jesus, who receives the worship of angels and of men throughout the Scripture.

If it was wrong to worship this glorious heavenly messenger, how can it be right to worship and pray to the Virgin Mary who is none other than another sinner like the rest of us? I have a great respect for Virgin Mary who bore our Savior Jesus and our Catholic brothers and sisters, but we must worship only God, not angels, not Virgin Mary, not any human.

Angel worship is a very popular movement among New Age believers and other cultic groups. You find many of those la la land people in Sedona, AZ and Santa Fe, NM.

Contrary to the popular Hollywood movie producers' theology, dead good people don't become angels, nor angels become humans either.

## **F. NO TIME TO CHANGE YOUR MIND**

*Revelation 22:10-11 And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. 11 He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."*

Does Revelation 22:11 suggest that God does not want men to repent and change their ways? No, that would be contrary to the message of Revelation and of the Gospel itself. The angel's words must be understood in light of the repeated statement, "Behold, I am coming quickly" in Rev. 22:7 & 12, as well as his statement, "For the time is at hand" in Rev. 22:10. Jesus Christ's coming will occur so quickly that men will not have time to change their characters.

Revelation 22:11 is a solemn warning that decision determines character, and character determines destiny.

## **G. THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA**

*Revelation 22:12-15 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." 14 Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. 15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.*

The titles "the Alpha and the Omega" and "the First and the Last" are irrefutable proofs that Jesus is Yahweh, the Lord in the relation with Isa 41:4.

## **H. FROM BEFORE THE BEGINNING TO AFTER THE END**

*Revelation 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."*

The Book of Revelation is written to the churches. This book is not for a small private group of spiritual elites, but it is for all believers. It's also worth noting that this is the first reference to the church since the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3.

'The Root and offspring of David' is a precious Messianic title. It shows that Jesus is both the Creator of King David and His descendent. One speaks of humility, the other of majesty and glory.

## **I. AN OPEN INVITATION TO EVERYONE**

*Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*

This is an open invitation to receive salvation from Jesus. He will not exclude anyone who comes to Him. An invitation is both an opportunity and a responsibility. If we decline an invitation, we have only ourselves to blame.

Anyone who desires salvation in Jesus Christ can come to Him and take the water of life freely.

All of this world's religion can be summed up in the idea that you must bring something to give unto the gods. The essence of Christianity is summed up in the idea that God invites us to take the water of life freely. You can't bring anything to save or justify yourself before God, but you can take the salvation He offers.

## **J. A SOLEMN WARNING**

*Revelation 22:18-19 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

This means that there is an extreme high price to pay for tampering with the Book of Revelation specifically, and the Scriptures in general.

What a solemn warning this is to critics who have tampered with this book and other portions of Scripture in arrogant self-confidence that they are equipped intellectually and spiritually to determine what is true and what is not true in the Word of God. I don't want to be them on the Judgement Day of the Great White Throne.

## **K. LAST WORDS**

*Revelation 22:20-21 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

The Book of Revelation contains many prophetic events, but the Book closes with John's longing for the return of Jesus for His people – he wants the rapture of the church.

John uses an Aramaic expression that was well known in the ancient church: Maranatha!

The Book and the Bible ends with a word of grace, and grace for all.

## **L. APPLICATION**

**1) To the believers of Jesus Christ, heaven should not only be the destination, but also a motivation to live the life in Christ Jesus.**

Yes, those who are in Christ Jesus will go to heaven, but there is more than just

going to heaven. The journey on the way to heaven should bring glory and honor to our King Lord Jesus Christ. It should motive us to live for Jesus.