

Revelation 22.6-21

The Epilogue [22.6-21]

The visions have closed. These final verses of the last chapter of Revelation form an *epilogue* which has many parallels to the *prologue* (1.1-8).

Prologue [1.1-8]	Epilogue [22.6-21]
He [God] sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John (v.1)	The Lord God... sent his angel to shew unto his servants (v.6)
Things which must shortly come to pass (v.1)	Things which must shortly be done (v.6)
The testimony of Jesus Christ (v.2)	I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things (v.16)
Blessed is he that readeth (v.3)	Blessed is he that keepeth (v.7)
The words of this prophecy (v.3)	The prophecy of this book (vv.7, 10)
Keep those things which are written therein (v.3)	Them which keep the sayings of this book (v.9)
The time is at hand (v.3)	The time is at hand (v.10)
John to the seven churches which are in Asia (v.4)	I John saw these things (v.8)
Behold, he cometh with clouds (v.7)	Behold, I come quickly (vv.7, 12, 20)
I am Alpha and Omega (v.8)	I am Alpha and Omega (v.13)

The epilogue is in *three* paragraphs (see below). Each paragraph begins with personal spoken words of the Lord Jesus. In each paragraph there is a reference to the *inspiration* (and therefore reliability) of the Revelation (e.g. v.6); the *imminent* return of the Lord Jesus (e.g. v.7), and the *individual* responsibility to respond to His word and therefore enjoy the eternal blessings that belong to His people (e.g. v.11).

The Revelation of Christ [22.6-11]

v.6. Again, **he said unto me** refers to the conducting angel that showed John the new Jerusalem (21.9-10, 15; 22.1). **These sayings** [*logoî*] do not merely refer to the visions of new Jerusalem, but to the whole prophecy of Revelation, “the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (v.7). That they **are faithful and true** describes the book as reliable, trustworthy and genuine. The same adjectives are used in Revelation as a title of the Lord Jesus (3.14; 19.11). All the words of Revelation are *true* and can be *trusted* because the same **Lord God** who inspired the **holy prophets** (cf. Luke 1.70; Acts 3.21; 2 Peter 3.2) is the same God that **sent His angel** to reveal the Revelation (cf. 1.1). MacArthur says, “*That is nothing short of a claim by John for the full and complete inspiration of Revelation. The prophecies recorded by those earlier biblical prophets were literally fulfilled, and those in Revelation will be also.*” This angel was God’s special agent sent to reveal the larger portion of the book. The use of angelic mediation lifts Revelation to the level of OT scripture, the Law having been given by the “disposition” of angels (Acts 7.53; Galatians 3.19). The recipients of the revelation are **his** (God’s) **servants** – a way of describing believers in general (1.1; 2.20; 19.5), specifically those who belonged to the seven churches (22.16). The purpose of the Revelation is to **shew** (make known) **the things which must shortly be done**. The word “shortly” [*tachos*] has only occurred elsewhere in 1.1, “things which must shortly come to pass”. Divine purpose, as revealed in this book, will be accomplished quickly (speedily), emphasising the imminency and speed with which these events will unfold.

v.7. An interjection from the Lord Jesus gives added assurance to the imminence of these events, **Behold, I come quickly** (cf. 3.11; 22.12, 20). The words literally read, “Behold, I am coming with no delay” – Christ is poised to return at any moment. In Revelation 3, this is a clear reference to the rapture, for the imminent coming of the Lord Jesus is the means by which the church at Philadelphia would be preserved from the tribulation (cf. 3.10-11). In the meantime, there is **blessing** for those who **keep** [*tēreō*] **the sayings of the prophecy of this book**. Thus, the moral demands and exhortations of Revelation, in the light of the imminent coming of Christ, should be faithfully heeded, observed and obeyed by every believer. Osborne says, “*The Christian must be ready at all times for Christ’s return, and that readiness consists of right ethical and spiritual living.*” Some of these commands include: returning to first love (2.4-5), remaining faithful to God amid persecution (2.10), refusing sexual immorality and idolatry (2.20-23), worshipping God alone (14.7; 19.10; 22.9), living righteously (16.15) and separation from the corruption of the world (18.4). Revelation is “*not simply to convey information about the future but to communicate moral demands to be obeyed in the present*” (Fanning).

v.8. **John saw** and **heard** all the things written in this book. He therefore adds his apostolic testimony to the truth of the prophecy, as well as associating himself again with the chain of revelation revealed in 1.1. This is reminiscent of the

testimony given in his gospel (John 19.35) and is virtually a legal statement. God had chosen him to be the official channel of these visions to the churches. John received revelation through the *eye-gate* (he saw) and the *ear-gate* (he heard) – just as he did during the earthly life of the Lord Jesus (1 John 1.1). As a response to the end of the visions, **John fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things**. And this was not the first time either (cf. 19.10)! The vast scope and deep significance of his total prophetic experience on Patmos had overwhelmed him (RL Thomas). Obviously, John knew angels were not to be worshipped, and he had already been rebuked for doing so (19.10). But, like Ezekiel (1.28), Daniel (8.17; 10.9) and his own experience on the mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17.6), John simply collapsed in wonder and worship.

v.9. A swift rebuke in the form of two imperatives quickly re-directed John's worship. The first imperative is negative, "Do not do this!" [NET], and the second positive, "**Worship God!**" [NET]. Angels are not to be worshipped as they are merely **fellowservants** [*syndoulos*] of God with John and his fellow **prophets**, and indeed all the saints **which keep the sayings of this book**. *Syndoulos* merely describes John (and every believer) in like terms to the angels – all are fellow slaves of God. The word does not abase angels but rather exalts John and his fellow saints! **v.10.** The angel gives John an important message: "**Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book,**" which stands in contrast to the command given to Daniel, "And thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end," (12.4). The command to Daniel does not mean that the message of his book was to be kept secret (hidden). Rather, it was to be preserved until "the time of the end" suggesting much of the revelation contained therein would be of great relevance at that time. John was not to seal the sayings of his prophecy, for the time of their relevance and fulfilment had come – **the time** [*kairos*] **is at hand**. Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains clearly, "*The revelation given to Daniel covered so much territory and expanded over such a long period of time that he was unable to understand much of what he wrote. Daniel was told to seal his book until the time when many of the prophecies would be explained and clarified by later revelation. With the Book of Revelation, much of the Book of Daniel has been clarified, expanded, detailed, and explained. So John, in contrast to Daniel, was told not to seal up his book, for all prophecy can now be understood and its fulfillment could begin at any time.*"

v.11. This verse describes two possible responses to divine revelation, specifically, the prophecies of this book. There are four imperatives arranged in two pairs – the first pair expresses an ungodly or resistant response to Scripture; the second pair embody a godly or believing response. All four contain the adverb **let him be... still** implying the continuation of a person's existing choice or course in response to divine revelation. This seems to be a powerful exhortation and warning – once a person is set in their response to God, it will carry them to their eternal destiny – see v.15. God gives a person up to the consequences of their own personal decisions (cf. Romans 1.24, 26). He **that is unjust** (disobeys the word of God) will *continue* to be unjust (do what is wrong, evil). **He which is filthy**, i.e. clings to moral pollution and impurity, will remain filthy in life, character and eternity. But, positively, **he that is righteous** in conduct, i.e. obedient to the word of God will be marked by a continued practice of righteousness (Luke 1.6). The one who keeps himself **holy**, living in separation from the moral filth of the world, will continue to be holy in character – both for time and eternity.

The Reward of Christ [22.12-15]

v.12. Up until this point, the angel has been speaking (vv.6-11). Now the Lord Jesus speaks (vv.12-13). **Behold, I come quickly** is literally, "Look! I am coming soon," [NET]. Associated with the imminent return of the Lord Jesus is reward – **my reward is with me** and this will be for the purpose of giving (paying) to **every man according to his work**. The singular "work" sums up an entire lifetime of service. Fruchtenbaum says, "*His coming at the Rapture is to reward the saints for the works done in their bodies since salvation. The purpose of the Second Coming is to render judgment for the works of unrighteousness.*" The word "reward" means 'payment for work done' and so can refer to punishment as well as reward. The Lord Jesus is assuming the role of Jehovah in Isaiah 40.10, "Look, the sovereign Lord comes as a victorious warrior; his military power establishes his rule. Look, his reward is with him; his prize goes before him." [NET]. The reward is **my reward** in the sense that it belongs to Christ and is His to give. Salvation is of grace, rewards are according to works.

v.13. The interjection of these three great titles of Christ (also used of Jehovah, cf. Isaiah 41.4; 44.6; 48.12) offer assurance, not only of His qualifications to reward every person, but also of His ability to bring all God's promises and purposes to fulfilment. Deity assures it! Christ is **Alpha and Omega**, a title embracing the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Thus, Christ holds all things under His complete and sovereign control (cf. 21.5-6) and is the sum total (A-Z) of divine revelation and truth. He is also the **beginning** [*archē*] **and the end** [*telos*], that is, the source, origin and cause of all things – as well as the goal to which all things are moving. In Colossians 1, Paul encapsulates the truth perfectly, "All things were created *by* him, and *for* him." Creation was made to serve and glorify God. Finally, Christ is **the first** [*prōtos*] **and the last** [*eschatos*] – He is before (in time), and remains after, everything else. Time is but an interlude in His eternity. Christ is unoriginated and underived, and in supreme control of every issue of life. The three titles together show that Christ is omniscient (Alpha & Omega), omnipotent (Beginning and End) and omnipresent (First and Last).

v.14. An indication of the reward (wages) given to the *righteous* (v.14) and the *wicked* (v.15) are described in these two verses. **Blessed are they that do his commandments** is probably spoken by John (as 1.3; 20.6) and is the final beatitude of the book (1.3; 14.13; 16.15; 19.9; 20.6; 22.7). Those that are obedient to the word (commandments) of God are to be equated with the righteous and holy of v.11. However, there is a textual variation in this verse. Most other translations have “Blessed *are* they that wash their robes,” [JND]. The image of washing suggests cleansing (cf. 1.5; 7.14), white linen in Revelation symbolising righteousness and purity (19.8). Every believer has been cleansed (washed) from the stain of sin by the cleansing power of the blood of the Lamb (1 John 1.7). The cleansed sinner has the **right** (authority) to partake of **the tree of life**. Adam could not be permitted to eat of the tree in his fallen sinful state. Now, in the eternal state, the tree is freely available to every saint, symbolising the full and abundant spiritual life found in fellowship with God and the Lamb. The possession of eternal life (the greatest privilege) guarantees entrance **through the gates** of new Jerusalem, every saint having full and unhindered access into the city and the immediate presence of God.

v.15. Those who are not “blessed” (v.14) are judged. These individuals were not cleansed from sin and will never have access to the city. In fact, they are **without**. This does not suggest they are living in the suburbs of new Jerusalem but describes the eternal judgment of the lake of fire, the word “without” symbolising a place of exclusion and shame. It is not that any who have ever committed these sins are excluded from eternal blessing – see 1 Corinthians 6.11. Rather, *“those who love and habitually practice any such sin, stubbornly cling to it, and refuse Christ’s invitation to salvation who will be cast into the lake of fire.”* (MacArthur). **Dogs** were viewed as despicable scavengers and is a common biblical metaphor for people who engage in depraved, morally impure behaviour (Matthew 7.6; Philippians 3.2). The “dogs” replace the “abominable” in the similar list of 21.8. These are people contaminated through long contact with the base vices that permeated a pagan society (Swete). **Sorcerers** [*pharmakos*] are those who mix, make and use drugs, and embrace the unseen world of spirits and demons. **Whoremongers** describes all who habitually engage in illicit sexual activities, and **murderers**, the unlawful killing of other human beings (who are made in the image of God). **Idolaters** describes those who refuse to give God the worship that belongs to Him and give it to another, whether, for example, emperor worship or the worship of the Beast (cf. 13.12; 17.4-5; 21.27). The list closes with **whosoever loveth and maketh a lie**, or “everyone who loves and practices falsehood,” [NET] – those who lack general integrity or honesty, and possibly, more specifically, those who have followed “the lie” of the false prophet (13.14). Again, this verse is designed to give another appeal (like v.11; 21.27) to turn away from such sinful practices and “take the water of life freely,” (v.17).

The Return of Christ [22.16-21]

v.16. The final paragraph commences with touching, personal remarks of the Lord Jesus himself. **I Jesus** is a unique and emphatic self-designation which calls special attention to these last verses. This is the only time in Revelation when the Lord calls Himself by this personal name. The final invitation of Scripture is not a human invitation, but a divine call issued personally to sinners by the Lord Jesus Christ. The “Revelation of Jesus Christ” was sent to John via the agency of **mine angel** (cf. 1.1; 22.6). His qualification as the source of such revelation is found in two “**I am**” statements – both of which confirm the Lord Jesus as the fulfilment of the prophecies of Revelation – both to *Israel* (offspring of David) and the *church* (the star). As the **root** [*rhiza*] and the **offspring** [*genos*] of **David**, the Lord Jesus is both David’s ancestor and Lord (root), as well as David’s son (descendant). He is both God and man. The allusion is to Isaiah 11.1 (cf. Revelation 5.5) which refers to Christ as a *shoot* out of the root of Jesse. Isaiah 11.10 refers to Christ as the *root* of Jesse. Christ is both the *shoot* and the *root*, that is, He is both the *human descendant* of David (shoot) as well as the *divine source* from which David sprang (root). The **bright and morning star** is a Messianic title drawn from Balaam’s prophecy in Numbers 24.17, “There shall come a Star out of Jacob, And a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel.” In modern astronomy, the morning star refers to the planet Venus when it appears in the sky *before* sunrise. This is symbolic of the rapture. The coming of Christ to the air as the “morning star” for the church (cf. 2.28) will herald the dawn of the millennial day when Christ shall arise as the “sun of righteousness” (Malachi 4.2). See 2 Peter 1.19.

v.17. This verse is an interruption of the words of the Lord Jesus to address the expected responses of the heavenly and earthly realms to the imminent return of Christ. Both the Holy **Spirit and the bride** (the church collectively) say, “**Come!**” – thus inviting His return and expressing the longing desires of their hearts. John then invites individual saints to echo the same message. Those **that heareth** are individuals who have heard and responded positively to the appeal of the book of Revelation, not least those who originally heard the book being read as members of the seven churches (cf. 1.3). John is the pattern of just such a believer, cf. v.20. The last two statements of the verse are a call to sinners – those who deny (in word or action) the imminent return of Christ, and those for whom His imminent return signals eternal judgment. It would also include those who have heard the words of the prophecy and tremble in fear of the imminent judgments or hear the descriptions of eternal bliss in the new Jerusalem and long to be part of the scene. To such individuals John says, “**let him that is athirst come.**” The metaphor of thirst is a symbol of unsatisfied desire, and here describes a person that has an earnest sense of spiritual need (cf. Isaiah 55.1). For any who is thirsty, there is an invitation to **freely take the water of life** (cf. 21.6). Jehovah is the “fountain of living waters,” graphically expressing the insatiable spring of eternal life that finds

its source in Him. The word **freely** is elsewhere translated ‘without a cause’ (John 15.25) or ‘for nought’ (2 Thessalonians 3.8). This is a gift to all who will receive it, though we know it cost the Giver an enormous price.

v.18. After a brief interlude, this verse returns to the words of the Lord Jesus from v.16. The emphatic **I testify** (bear witness) is a solemn warning with a strong legal connotation. This produces a courtroom atmosphere in which those who twist or tamper with **the words of this prophecy** are on trial. These two warnings against additions (v.18) and subtractions (v.19), in their context, are concerned specifically with the book of Revelation. The warning is very similar to that of Deuteronomy 4.2, “Do not add a thing to what I command you nor subtract from it, so that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I am delivering to you.” (cf. Deuteronomy 12.32). The two-fold warning is to any who seeks to **add** or **take away** from the words of the prophecy. It likely concerns those that John calls “false prophets” in his first epistle (4.1). Very early in Christian history, spurious revelations circulated by false prophets in the name of the apostles. Apparently, serious discrepancies existed in copies made of Revelation as early as the time of Irenaeus, AD 130-202 (RL Thomas). The warning also terminates the gift of prophecy. The canon of Scripture was closed with the book of Revelation. Any charlatan who seeks to add alleged new revelations to Scripture (such as Joseph Smith or Mary Baker Eddy) would face divine vengeance. God has told us everything He intends to reveal. The warning does not, thankfully, extend to the inadvertent mistakes of scribal copyists, or the errant misinterpretation of some of Revelation’s prophecies by an ignorant Bible expositor!

For such individuals, **God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.** This refers to the tribulation judgments, particularly the “seven last plagues” of the vials (15.1). Those who deliberately distort the word of God (by addition or subtraction) will not be delivered by the imminent coming of Christ but left for the tribulation plagues. For those who will not be alive at that time, they will be treated as unbelievers and suffer the punishments to be inflicted on the wicked. **v.19.** Again, **any man** who might **take away from the words of the book of this prophecy** describes the attempt to undermine, distort or remove the prophecies recorded in Revelation – probably with the claim of divine authority. For such individuals, who were never saved, **God** will remove any possibility of their partaking of the **tree of life** [NET] or right of entry to the **holy city**, both of which **are described in this book** [NET]. Those who have no part in this blessing are unbelievers and their treatment of the Word shows into which class they fall. As ever, God is righteous. The punishment fits the crime. Those who add, to them will be added. Those who take away, from them will be taken.

v.20. This verse shows that the Lord Jesus Himself is the source of this solemn testimony (v.18). **He which testifieth these things** refers immediately to the preceding verses, but also to the contents of the whole book (cf. 1.1-2). Revelation is divine in its origin, and John is the only human channel. The final words of the Lord Jesus in Scripture are, “**Surely, I come quickly.**” This is the clear response of the Lord Jesus to the cry of the Spirit and the bride in v.17. Jim Allen is worth quoting in full: “The word **surely** is a particle of affirmation used when the truth stated will not admit any shadow of doubt. The present tense of the verb [erchomai] dramatically pictures Christ on the way – **I am coming.** The addition of the familiar word **quickly** [tachy] that in its usage throughout this book has ever stressed the imminence of the coming shows how the Lord Himself views that moment.” The simple response of John, and indeed the expected response from all our hearts is: **Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus.**

v.21. The OT closes with the threat of a curse (Malachi 4.6). We thank God that the NT closes with the *removal* of the curse (v.3) and a reference to divine grace (v.21). John’s prayer encapsulates his desire for all his readers: **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.** The word “grace” has not been used since John’s benediction in 1.4. Now, in his closing prayer, he makes request for divine favour, and a divine supply of strength to meet the daily need of every believer. Grace is only mentioned *twice* in Revelation, opening and closing the book (22.21). Thus, though Revelation is primarily a book of judgment, it is tempered by grace. **Amen.**