

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
November 27, 2016

Lesson Text: Revelation 22:12-21
Lesson Title: Alpha and Omega

Introduction

Revelation 21 and 22 provides a beautiful description of the believer's heavenly home. In his vision of heaven, John described it as a city, a temple, a bride, and a new heaven and a new earth. However challenging and strange John's visions may have been throughout Revelation, he wants his readers to know everything he has written is "*faithful and true*" (Revelation 22:6). In Revelation 22:8, John adds, "*And I John saw these things, and heard them.*" In other words, everything in Revelation was firsthand testimony. It is accurate and reliable.

Greater than John's firsthand testimony and declaration that everything he has written is true, John magnifies Christ's words, "*I am Alpha and Omega*" four times in Revelation (Revelation 1:8,11; 21:6; 22:13). God is saying if anyone thinks the things John has written will not come to pass, I just want to remind you who is in charge of everything. It is the sovereign God of the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ, the "*Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending...which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*" (Revelation 1:8).

Christ's Encouraging Words (Revelation 22:12-14)

Verse 12

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

John has already announced the coming of the Lord in Revelation 22:7. This is the second announcement, preceded again with the word "behold." John wants his readers to sense the urgency and surety of Christ's return. The coming of Christ here seems to be referring to Christ's coming for His church rather than His Second Coming to earth, though both are in the larger context. "Quickly" means "speedily, without delay." The word denotes a future event with impending action. This truth should cause us to examine ourselves concerning our readiness for Christ's return (2 Corinthians 13:5).

When Christ returns, he will also bring His "reward." This verse has in view the judgment seat of Christ as it relates to believers (2 Corinthians 5:10-11). The word "reward" means "pay for service." Christians often think "reward" is an

impure motive for serving the Lord. It is not a bad motive. To serve Christ for “reward” is an honor! “Reward” from Christ for our service to Him is His plan and believers should be excited to be a part of anything He has ordained.

Verse 13

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”

Although the means of communication to John seems to be through the angel, it is Christ who is speaking here and in verse 7. Christ again repeats He is “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” “Alpha” is the first letter in the Greek alphabet and “Omega” is the last letter. “Alpha and Omega” are titles of deity. Christ is the first cause of all things, He is the final goal of history, and He sustains everything in between (Colossians 1:17). Christ started history and He will conclude history.

Verse 14

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

“Blessed” is the seventh and last beatitude of the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7). Happy are those who “do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” The phrase, “that do his commandments” does not suggest works are the basis of entering heaven, but rather emphasizes a life of obedience characterized by those who have come to Christ through salvation. On Christ alone do believers have access “to the tree of life” and “may enter in through the gates into the city.” The believer is surely “blessed” to have access to heaven and to the eternal benefits of the “tree of life.”

Christ’s Warning Words (Revelation 22:15-16)

Verse 15

“For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”

In contrast to those who are “blessed” to “enter” heaven is those who are “without.” The word “without” is a stark reminder that not everyone will be in God’s heaven (Matthew 7:23; Revelation 21:27). Unbelievers are characterized in this verse as “dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters, and liars.” Comparing unbelievers to “dogs” does not mean they are animals, but rather refers to their low character (Philippians 3:2). The remainder of the comparisons refers to the deceitfulness of human nature and the characteristics of life without Christ.

Verse 16

“I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”

“I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches” means the Lord speaks to affirm the trustworthiness of what is being revealed here, and in the entire book of Revelation. The sovereign God is the very God of all revelation and inspiration, and guarantees the accuracy and authority of everything written in Revelation. The Book of Revelation is nothing less than the words of men or it is without question the infallible word of God. “Jesus” sent his “angel” or messenger to “testify” it was the perfect and authoritative word of God.

“I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star” are additional titles ascribed to Christ. “The root and the offspring of David” means Christ is both the ancestor and the offspring of David. Only the God/Man can be both the “root” and the “offspring” of David (Isaiah 11:1). Christ is the One who brought “David” into existence and the One who was born in his family. Christ is the God/Man!

The “bright and morning star” is a description of the Messiah which goes back to the Pentateuch and the prophesy of Balaam (Numbers 24:17). Balaam, was brought to Moab to curse Israel but as he begins to curse the nation, out comes the blessing. In one of the blessings, he said, “...*there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth*” (Numbers 24:17). That “star” is Christ. He is light in the darkness, the living Savior who brings an end to the darkness of sin and brings in the dawn of the new age. The “bright and morning star” is a symbol of hope. All hope is found in Jesus Christ.

The “bright and morning star” also signifies a new beginning. Christ will always be leading us into new and fresh experiences. Eternal life in the new heavens and the new earth will always be a like a new fresh morning, a new beginning forever. There will never be a conclusion!

Christ’s Inviting Words (Revelation 22:17-19)

Verse 17

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

As the book of Revelation ends, the “Spirit and the bride” give a special invitation to the Lord to “come” and to “whosoever will” to “come.” First, the “Spirit and the bride” shout words of invitation for the Lord to return. The Holy Spirit and the “bride” which is the church, desire to see sin come to an end and Satan cast into the lake of fire forever. The quenched, grieved, blasphemed, and rejected Holy Spirit says, “Come.” Second, along with the “Spirit and the bride” those “that heareth,” or those who have received the gospel, also say, “come.” Third, there is a call from the Lord for sinners to come, to recognize their need of salvation, and to see the source of help for that need in Jesus Christ. The call is for “whosoever will” to come and “take of the water of life” without cost.

The invitation to “whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” is extended to every generation up to the coming of Christ. Sinners should come while there is yet time before the Lord returns and it is too late. The gift of eternal life, here called “the water of life” is free (Isaiah 55:1; John 7:37-39). It has been paid for by the death of Christ on the cross and is extended to all who come to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith.

Christ’s Closing Words (Revelation 22:18-21)

Verse 18-19

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Once again John testifies to the truth of what is written in “the prophesy” of the book of Revelation. John warns anyone who might be tempted to change anything he has written. Both sinner and saint should respond to because of the truthfulness of the words of this book. The judgment of God will be severe upon anyone who alters God’s Word. To reject the word of God is to reject God Himself (Proverbs 30:6).

Commenting on verses 18-19, Doctor Warren W. Wiersbe writes, “In John's day, books were copied by hand, and the copyist might have been tempted to edit or amend the material. Even today, people add their theories and traditions to God's Word or strike from it whatever does not fit into their scheme of theology. John's warning applied specifically to the Book of Revelation, but certainly it includes all of the Word of God.” (*Wiersbe Expository Outlines - Wiersbe's Expository Outlines – Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament.*)

“And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” These words do not mean a true believer can be saved, tamper with God’s Word, and then lose his salvation. A true Christian loves the word of God and would never add to it or take away from it (Psalm 119:97, 113, 163). This verse does not apply to teachers and preachers of Scripture who may make an error in judgment or incorrectly interpret a passage of Scripture. This verse is warning unbelievers who engage in satanic and intentional deception by altering the word of God.

These are solemn words that have often gone unheeded. God will not tolerate any tampering with that which He has revealed. The canon of Scripture has been given. There is no extra-biblical revelation. God has said all He will say.

Verse 20-21

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

Revelation closes with a final word from Christ Himself, reassuring John the promises of this book will happen. “Surely I come quickly.” John answers, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Then, he concludes: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

There is an interesting link between John's prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus,” and Paul's words at the end of 1 Corinthians, “*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha*” (1 Corinthians 16:22). “*Maranatha*” means, “O Lord, come.” That was the hope of the early church, a church suffering persecution and longing to see the Savior. But, the word also expresses the only hope for the world and the problems of life. The answer to the world's problems is not in man, but in Christ. People do not have the solution. We do not have the ability to create a better world. Christ will come and only then will sin be gone and every wrong be made right. He alone is the sovereign Lord of history.

“Amen” means “so be it.” Can you say “Amen”? John did!

Conclusion

Jesus Christ is the sovereign Alpha and Omega. Everything began at His Word and everything will end at His Word. If the Lord were to return today, are you prepared? If so, rejoice and be glad. If not, call upon the name of the Lord and you can be saved (Romans 10:13).

Illus. The story is told that John Wesley was once asked what he would do if he knew for a fact the Lord would come the following day. The story says he looked at his diary and said, "I would do exactly what I have planned to do."

Amen.