

# LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

By

H. A. Ironside, Litt.D.

*Author of Notes On Jeremiah and Lamentations; Notes On Ezekiel the Prophet;  
Lectures On Daniel the Prophet; Notes On the Minor Prophets. etc., etc.*

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### CLOSING SCENES

(Lectures 21 and 22)

IT is my desire in this final address of the present series to briefly outline the truth presented so vividly in these last two chapters.

There are three distinct divisions here.

- In chapter 21, verses 1-8 inclusive, we have the eternal issues.
- In verses 9 to 27, and the first five verses of chapter 22, we have a supplementary portion giving us a detailed symbolic description of the Holy Jerusalem, the city of God, holding sway over the earth during the Millennium.
- Then from verse 6 of chapter 22 to the end of the book, we have the divine epilogue, consisting in the main of practical messages from the glorified Lord to all those to whom this book may come in the course of time.

In regard to the first division it is important to note that prophecy does not properly relate to the eternal state. It is particularly occupied with this earth up to and including the Millennium. Only occasionally do we have any reference in the prophetic Scriptures to the unending ages that are to follow afterwards.

Here we are told, “**And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea**” (ver. 1).

This reminds us of Isaiah’s prophecy, “**For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind**” (Isaiah 65:17); and in verse 22 of chapter 66, he says, “**For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.**”

Now the two chapters from which these verses are quoted have to do with the Millennium, but I take it that we have here faith's telescope looking out, even in that past dispensation, to the unchanging and unchangeable condition that shall abide forever. I have no doubt it is to these promises that the apostle Peter refers in his second epistle, after describing the destruction by fire of the heavens and the earth that now are, he says, "**Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness**" (chap. 3:13).

This, then, is the glorious consummation to which the opening verses of our present chapter introduce us. And the most marvelous object of that unending condition, next to the blessed Lord Himself, will be the church, which has been redeemed to God by the precious blood of His Son. For, observe, the bridal condition does not cease at the close of the Millennium.

Verse 2 says, "**And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**"

A thousand years of the reign of righteousness will have rolled by ere the fulfilment of this verse, and yet the holy city is seen in all the freshness and loveliness of an adorned bride. And this happy state will abide forever, for the next two verses describe a scene of blissful communion, which is never to be terminated.

**"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away"** (vers. 3, 4).

The passage is beautiful in its simplicity, and comment would only seem to be like an attempt to paint the rose. How longingly must every believing heart look forward to that glorious day!

A voice from the throne cries, "**Behold, I make all things new.**"

And John is again commanded to write, and assured that "**these words are true and faithful.**" The voice then exclaims solemnly, "**It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.**"

It is the proclamation that all the ways of God have found their final issue in the full glory of His blessed Son, who is the first and the last.

In verse 8 we are told of those who shall never enter the holy city, who will have no part in the bright glories depicted above. But, ere giving the awful list the Lord graciously extends another gospel invitation, that all to whom these words shall come may know that there is mercy still if they will but avail themselves of it.

**"I will give unto him,"** He says, "**that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.**"

And He follows this with a word of encouragement to the overcomer:

**“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”**

The world may bid for us now, and the treacherous flesh within may seek to act in concert with that world and its god, and thus woo our souls from Christ, but who with the glorious promises of this book before him, but must long to rise above the power of present things, and, in the energy of the Holy Spirit overcome the world by faith, in view of what He is preparing for those who love Him!

How gladly would we believe that not one soul of man will fail of the joy that is kept in store for those who know Christ; but, alas, alas, sin has made this impossible of realization; so this part of our chapter closes with the tremendously solemn announcement that **“the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death”** (ver. 8).

The list includes not only those who are generally looked upon as discreditable sinners but:

The cowardly - who were fearful of confessing Christ, because, perhaps, of the sneers of professed friends, or the consequences of turning from the world; together with:

The unbelieving - who refused to credit the testimony God had given, and to rest their souls upon the work of Christ - these both are linked up with the unclean and unholy of all classes, and inasmuch as **“all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,”** there can be no difference in their final doom if Christ is rejected, though, as already noticed in our last lecture, every transgression and disobedience will receive its just recompense of reward.

Beginning with the 9th verse we have a marvelous description of the New Jerusalem.

Note that this comes in upon the conclusion of the prophetic outline. It is a kind of appendix or supplementary description. Just as one of the seven angels which had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues gave to John a vision of Babylon the Great, in the 17th and 18th chapters, so here one of the same angels now bids him come and view the Bride, the Lamb's wife.

Carrying him away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, he shows him that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Babylon was both a city and a woman - both a great system and a company of people professing to be in bridal relation with the Lamb, so here the holy Jerusalem is both a city and a woman. The city is the Bride as well as the home of the saints; just as we speak of Rome when we mean the church that has her seat there, as well as the city where she sits.

By this great city descending out of heaven from God, I understand then the diffusion of heavenly principles over all this earth during the Millennium by the heavenly saints, for it is through His saints that the Lord is going to claim His inheritance.

We may learn in this symbolic description of the city, the great guiding principles which are to hold full sway in that coming age, and which are full of instruction for us at the present time.

The city has the glory of God, and her light is described as “**like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone. clear as crystal**” (ver. 11).

The church is to be the vessel for the display of the glory of God throughout that age of righteousness, and, indeed, as verse 2 has already informed us, throughout all the ages to come.

The “**wall great and high**” speaks of *separation*, a divine principle that runs throughout the Word of God, from the time that sin entered to the close. A wall is for protection too, and the separation of God’s people is not an arbitrary principle, to their discomfort, as some seem to think, but is manifestly for their blessing, protecting from the evil without. Though the wall is great and high, there are twelve gates, the number of administrative completeness, and the gate itself, you will remember, is in Scripture the place of judgment; so the thought would seem to be that we have here righteousness reigning, and provision made for entrance and egress, holy and happy liberty in accord with the holiness of God’s nature.

At the gates are twelve angels, divine messengers, and on the gates names are written, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel; for in the Millennium government is to be maintained, as we have already seen, through God’s earthly people being restored to their own land and to unbroken fellowship with the Lord. Thus the heavens will respond to God’s earthly people, Jezreel (the seed of God), in a way that means blessing for all the world. Three gates, on each of the four sides of the city, speak of the universality of the divine government thus fully manifested.

The wall, we are told, had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. This strikingly accords with our Lord’s promise to the twelve that, inasmuch as they had followed Him in His rejection, when the day of the earth’s regeneration comes they will sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Just as in Ephesians chap. 2 the church is pictured as a holy temple, builded upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, so here the holy city rests upon the chosen messengers, who are to be the representatives of that authority in the age to come.

The angel who talked with John, measured the city with a golden reed, and the dimensions are given in the 16th and 17th verses.

“**And the city lieth foursquare,**” the length being as large as the breadth, and this, in each instance, is twelve thousand furlongs, while the wall itself is one hundred and forty-four cubits high. We are told that the length, the breadth, and the height of the city are equal. It has been suggested from this that the city is a cube, which may indeed be, but I frankly confess that I find the symbolism in that case exceedingly difficult to visualize before the mind’s eye.

I rather think of that holy city as the mountain of God, a vast pyramid resting on a foursquare base. twelve thousand furlongs each way, and rising to a height as great as its length and breadth, and the throne of God and of the Lamb, the very apex of it, from which flows the river of the water of life, winding about the mountain, in the midst of the one street of gold on either side of that river. But in either case, whether we think of a cube or a pyramid, the thought is the same: it is a city of absolute perfection.

Twelve, the number, as previously mentioned, of governmental completeness is seen everywhere. Who can attempt to depict, any more clearly than the verses themselves describe it, a city whose wall is of jasper - the glory of God; built of pure gold, like unto clear glass - the divine glory maintained by righteousness.

The foundations of the wall garnished with all manner of precious stones, answering to the stones seen in the breastplate of the high priest, tell of the particular and peculiar preciousness that each believer has in the eyes of the Lord.

The twelve gates are twelve pearls, every several gate of one pearl - thus reminding us, at every entrance-way, of that one pearl of great price for which our Lord, the heavenly merchantman, sold all that He had, with which to buy the church; for though He was rich, yet He became poor, that He might make it His own forever.

The street of pure gold reminds us that our feet shall stand on the righteousness of God forever; in His justice we shall stand and walk forever. It is not mere mercy that is the ground of our salvation, but God's glory has been fully and righteously maintained in the work of Calvary's cross, and thus He is faithful and just in receiving all who trust His Son.

Whereas on earth the church is pictured as a holy temple unto the Lord, in that day there will be no temple seen, for the Lord God Almighty and the lamb are the temple of it. Nearness to God will be what will characterize every saint; none will be shut out. Our Lord said, "**Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me**"; so that we can sing even now,

"So near, so very near to God,  
I could not nearer be;  
For in the person of His Son,  
I am as near as He."

And when we get home there will be no separating veil, there will be no outer court, beyond which we dare not come, but we shall all be at home with God and the Lamb forevermore. That city will have no need of created light-bearers, such as sun and moon to shine in it. These are for this world, not for that which is to come. The glory of God will be the light, everywhere displayed, and the Lamb Himself the lamp thereof. The glory of God is the light, and the Lamb is the One on whom that glory is centralized; He is the lamp from which it all shines. The glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus is our light even now, a light that has shone into our darkened hearts, and that light we will enjoy eternally in the home of the saints above.

The nations who are spared to enter the millennial kingdom shall walk in its light, and all earth's rulers will bring their glory and honor unto that throne city, and light their tapers at that celestial fire.

The gates, we are told, shall not be shut at all by day, and night will be unknown there.

I do not dwell on this now, for we have the same expression repeated in the next chapter.

In that city of holiness and blessing, no unclean thing shall ever enter in to defile. No deceiving serpent shall enter into that paradise of God, nor any who manifest kinship with Satan, the father of lies; only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life - and all who have judged themselves in the presence of God, and put their trust in Him who shed His precious blood for our sins on that cross of shame, may rest assured that in His book their names are written even now, and shall be there displayed, in the holy city.

Passing on to chapter 22 we read,

**“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”**

David sang of a river, the streams of which shall make glad the city of God. This river is the Holy Spirit's testimony to the glory of Christ. It proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb, for the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Who that has tasted on earth of that refreshing stream but longs to drink to the full of its living stream throughout the unending day!

When man sinned in the garden on earth, God drove him forth, and set the cherubim with a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life, lest he should eat and live forever. But that sword of flame has been sheathed in the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And now the blessed truth is made known that He who died and rose again is that tree of life, the leaves of which shall be for the healing of the nations during Messiah's glorious reign, and the fruit of which shall be for the refreshment and gladness of His redeemed saints, as they gather by that river of joy.

There the curse shall be unknown, for the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be established in unquestioned authority, and His servants will find delight in ever serving Him who, in the hour of their deep, deep need, served them so faithfully. Not as hirelings, seeing not the Master's face, shall they serve, but with holy gladness, in His presence, beholding the light of His countenance, and His name stamped upon their foreheads.

The wonderful description closes with the 5th verse: **“There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”** Oh, the nights of darkness and of anguish many of God's beloved people have known in this poor world! The night is the time of mystery, the time of suffering too, and of unfulfilled desire. The day will bring the glad fruition of all our hopes, and, in the full blessing of that uncreated light, we shall reign in light through the ages of ages - at home in the city of God!

The closing verses need not detain us long. They are so plain, so simple, that they require but little comment, if any. And yet, they are so intensely solemn, we must not pass them lightly by, but would desire that each added message might sink in deeper into our hearts.

The 6th verse links us again with the opening of the book.

**“He said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.”**

How soon may all be fulfilled that we have been studying of late! Three times the Lord speaks announcing His near return.

- In verse 7 He says, **“Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”**

- In verse 12, **“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”**

- And again, in verse 20, the last word sent down to us by our Lord from heaven, ere the canon of Scripture was closed, was this: **“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly,”** to which John, as representing all the saints, replies, **“Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”**

We can scarcely wonder that a second time the beloved apostle, overwhelmed by the abundance of the revelation given to him, fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed him these things, but again, as on the previous occasion, he is forbidden so to do, and the angel declares he is a fellow-servant both of John and of his brethren the prophets, and of us, in like manner, if we are among those who keep the sayings of this book. **“Worship God,”** he commands; and in worshipping our Lord Jesus Christ we worship God: **“For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”**

Daniel’s prophecy closes with the admonition, **“Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end”**; and, in a former verse, the word to him was, **“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even until the time of the end.”** But to John the angel says, **“Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.”**

In the 11th verse we have set before us the great truth that science itself demonstrates, equally with the Word of God, namely that character tends to permanence. **“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”**

It is a divine emphasis upon the solemn truth that as a man is found in that coming day, so shall he remain for all eternity. In this world God is calling men to repent. Here, and now, He waits to renew, by divine grace, those who commit themselves to Him. But in the eternal world there will be no power that has not been in exercise here, to make the unjust righteous or the filthy clean.

The 14th verse says, **“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.”** The promise rests on no legal grounds. It is not doing that gives one title to that home of the saints. It is only the precious blood of Christ, by which the acts of the saints (however well intentioned) must be washed, that fits any for entrance there.

Outside, forevermore will be the false, apostate teachers, designated as dogs, with those

trafficking with evil spirits, the unclean, and all murderers and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. They will be outside because they would not prepare to enter inside while God was offering mercy through His Son's atoning work.

It is worthy of note that, when the blessed Lord introduces Himself by His personal name, and declares His official title in connection with Israel, and His special title in connection with the church, the Spirit and the bride alike are aroused to send up the invitation shout, "**Come.**"

We read, "**I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David.**"

He is the root of David because David sprang from Him - David's Creator and Lord, who called him to guide His people Israel. And He is the offspring of David, for as man He was born from a daughter of David. And He is "**the Bright and Morning Star.**"

Immediately the Spirit and the bride respond, saying, "**Come.**" It is an invitation to Him to return to shine forth and gather His own to Himself. And all that hear are urged to join in this cry, "**Come.**" To all those who do not yet know Him, the gospel invitation, for the last time, goes forth in view of His near return, "**Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.**"

In the 18th and 19th verses, in unmistakable solemnity, the glorified Lord Himself testifies 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."**

Oh, how unspeakably awful must be the fate of those who reject this testimony, and reject its message! Better far, never to have been born than thus to refuse the Word of the living God.

Surely every believing heart can join with the apostle in the prayer, "**Even so, come, Lord Jesus.**" But while we wait for His return, we would still seek to make known the message of His grace to a guilty world.

And so, with the apostolic benediction, this book, and with this book the entire canon of Scripture, comes to a close, "**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.**"

~ end of book ~

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