

22:6-20, Epilogue
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Overview

1. Correspondences with 1:1-4
 - a) 1:1; 22:6: God initiates revelation by means of an angel
 - b) 1:1; 22:6: "the things that must shortly be done/come to pass" (same in Gk)
 - c) 1:3; 22:10,18,19: "word of prophecy"
 - d) 1:3; 22:7, blessing on those who keep God's words.

2. This section is built around three promises by Christ to come quickly: 7; 12; 20a. (Out of seven in the entire book; the first three are in the letters to the churches, 2:5, 16; 3:11; the seventh is in the anonymous announcement in 16:15.)
 - a) Each of these is embedded in a section spoken by an angel in behalf of Christ (6-7; 10-13) or by Christ himself (16-20a).
 - b) Each is followed by a response by John (8-9, 14-15, 20b-21).
 - c) Development of thought through the three sections:
 - 1) 6-7, 8-9 concerns the Pedigree of the revelation
 - 2) 10-13, 14-15 concerns its Authority
 - 3) 16-20a, 20b-21 concerns our Response to it.
 - d) The first two of these are marked by two of the book's seven beatitudes: 7, 14 (the other five in 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6).
 - e) The second and third are marked by balancing curses on those who disobey or seek to alter God's word.

A. 6-9, The Pedigree of the Revelation

It is natural to assume that the "he" in v.6 is the same as the "he" in v.1, who in turn is the plague angel from 21:9. Yet part of his message is Christ's promise to come quickly (7a). Even John is confused, as his behavior in 8 shows. Yet this whole confusion is important in showing the importance of distinguishing between the *source* and *channel* of God's revelation. The same distinction is important in the third section of the epilog.

1. 6-7, The Angel

- a) 6a, The nature of the revelation itself: it is faithful and true.
 - 1) Faithful: sure, solid, a reliable base for *action*
 - 2) True: in accordance with reality; a reliable base for *faith*

- b) 6b. How did it get that way? We can trace it back through the channel to its source.
 - 1) The Lord; YHWH of the OT. Gathers up all the links from Daniel and Ezekiel (as does AV "holy prophets").
 - 2) The God of the Spirits of the Prophets. AV "holy prophets" would take us back to the OT (Luke 1:70; Acts 3:21; 2 Pet. 3:2); this reading, which is Majority, refers to NT prophecy. Cf. 1 Cor. 14:32 ("the spirits of the prophets

are subject to the prophets"); 1 John 4:1 ("try the spirits, because many false prophets are gone out into the world"); Rev. 19:10. Prophets, whether true or false, are motivated by spirits. John is no exception. His words bear more than simply his authority; they come from God by his Spirit.

- 3) "sent his angel." Over and over John has mentioned this heavenly mentor.
 - 4) "to show unto his servants," the believers, the ultimate recipients.
 - 5) Thus God sends an Angel to instruct the Prophet (John) in what he is to pass on to God's People. There is no room for error to enter in, for the Angel is God's angel, and the Prophet is empowered by God's Spirit.
- c) 7, final confirmation: the Author Himself is coming to bring blessing on those who keep his words. At that point mediation via angels and prophets will be superfluous.

Same blessing as 1:3, omitting reference to those who read and hear, since by this point the reading and hearing are almost over.

2. 8-9, John's Response: Misdirected Worship

a) 8, John's Error

John repeats his error of 19:10. Probably results from hearing the Lord's promise of return on the lips of the angel. John wrongly concludes that this is in fact the Lord, and falls down before him.

A warning to us. In John's day, there was a tendency to worship angels, but they are only the channel. Today, people still get the messenger confused with the source, and offer to some Christian leaders reverence that ought to be held for Christ alone.

b) 9, The Angel's Correction

Almost identical with 19:10, but the shift is revealing:

- 1) 19:10 defines John's brethren as those "that have the testimony of Jesus," which is further defined as "the spirit of prophecy."
- 2) Here those brethren are further defined with two phrases, which show what it means to "have the testimony of Jesus."
 - a> The prophets; that is, those who, motivated by the Spirit, give forth prophecy. --> GIVE testimony for Jesus to others.
 - b> Those who keep the words of this [prophetic] book (cf. v.7). Also a work of God's spirit. --> KEEP the testimony that Jesus has delivered to us; cf.

"testimony" as one of the terms for the OT law, Ex. 31:18 ("two tables of the testimony").

- 3) In both of these tasks, we are doing angels' work; they are our fellow servants, working alongside of us, "ministering to those who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1).

3. Application: Don't confuse the channel and the source. Worship the Lord who speaks, not the intermediaries by which he speaks.

B. 10-14, The Authority of the Revelation

The point here is that God's Word is the standard by which we shall be judged.

1. 10-13, The Angel

New quotation formula shows that this is a new section.

- a) 10, To what time does the revelation apply?
Contrast Dan. 8:26; 12:4, 9; Daniel's revelation was for people in a far distant time. John's is for now.

Application: We misunderstand the Revelation if we read it purely of future events. "Even now are there many antichrists," 1 John 2:18; "The mystery of iniquity doeth already work," 2 Thes. 2:7. The intensity of tribulation will increase; the basic nature of it will not change. It is here now.

- b) 11, To what kind of time does it apply?
Not a period of revival, but one in which the wicked keep on in wickedness, and the righteous persevere. Not all eras offer equal opportunity for turning to the Lord. God's Spirit is not always moving men to repentance.

- 1) There are seasons particularly appropriate to salvation: Isa. 55:6-7, "Seek ye the LORD *while he may be found*, call ye upon him *while he is near*: 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Cf. also 2 Cor. 6:2, "the accepted time ... the day of salvation"
- 2) There are also periods when God hardens men's hearts: Isa. 6:9,10, "Go, and tell this people, 'Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.' 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."
- 3) In particular, the period of Antichrist's manifestation will not be one of great conversion. Cf. Dan. 12:10, where the same closure of the two groups (wise and wicked) is mentioned. Note that this verse must concern "the time of

the end," for Daniel, though wise, "understood not" (12:8).

c) 12-13, The Consequences of this Moral Choice

- 1) 12, Christ will come and reward each according to his works. (Every promise of Christ's return in this book is associated with either blessing on the faithful or judgment on the wicked, or both.)
- 2) 13, His decision is ultimate. There is no higher court. One cannot go back before him, or appeal beyond him.

2. 14-15, John: Echoes the Blessing and the Curse

MT puts this on John's lips, not the Lord's ("his commandments"). Those who keep the Lord's commandments have access to the city and its blessings; those who do not are shut out. For the list of sins, cf. 21:8, 27.

3. Application: Our response to this revelation matters eternally.

C. 16-21, The Response Due the Revelation

Returns to the contrast between source and channel of revelation that was so important in 6-9.

1. 16-20a, The Lord speaks directly.

Chiastic: begins and ends with reference to the communication event (from Jesus to his people, whether through the book or personally), and in the middle discusses acceptable and unacceptable responses.

a) 16, Description of the communication event (cf. 22:6).

- 1) The Source:
 - a> Jesus--human name
 - b> Root of David--Isa. 11:1,10. Combined with "offspring" to emphasize that he is David's origin as well as his descendant. Isa. 11 gives this picture in the context of the millennial age.
 - c> Bright, morning star--Num. 24:17, Balaam's prophecy. Something one watches eagerly for in the darkest hours of the night.
- 2) The Messenger: "my angel." Cf. 22:6, "his angel." The Lord Jesus is not himself an angel, but one to whom the angels belong and are subject.
- 3) The Audience: "You" (plural), not just John but the churches to whom he has been commanded to write.
- 4) The Subject: "concerning" (not "in") the churches, cf. John 12:16; Rev. 10:11. The trials and triumphs depicted in this book are the expected lot of God's people.

b) 17, Acceptable responses: the hearer should receive and issue a request to come; should come to Christ, and desire him to come. Chiastic reciprocal invitations to "come."

- 1) 17a, summary: "the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.'"
 - a> Whenever the Spirit speaks in the book, it is to humans on behalf of Christ: so at the end of each of the seven

letters (2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22), and in comforting the martyrs (14:13). When the Spirit says, "Come," it is an invitation to the unbeliever. Grows out of Isa. 11:10, which names the "root of David": "unto him shall the Gentiles seek."

b> When the Bride says "Come," it is an invitation to Christ to come.

2) 17b, amplification

a> The Bride speaks: "let him who hears say, 'Come.'" (to Christ, as in 20b). The church's hope in the midst of tribulation.

b> The Spirit speaks: invitation to the thirsty to come and drink freely of the water of life. Challenge to choose between Christ and Antichrist; to accept the name of God in place of the mark of the beast.

3) In both cases, the book is only the intermediary between Christ and the believer, not an end in itself. In calling him to come, it demands obedience; in promising the return of Christ, it demands longing. Such obedience and longing are the response for which Christ gave it.

c) 18-20a, Unacceptable responses: manipulating the book itself rather than seeing Christ through it. Warning inspired by Deut. 4:2; 12:32. When the Word of God is unpleasant to us, do we change, or do we seek to change the Word of God? The latter course is futile, since the book is only the intermediary. We cannot change the author, and it is his will, not the text, to which we ultimately have to answer.

NB: In the MT, exclusion is from the tree of life, not the book of life. The book of life is the book of election, and never changes; the tree of life conveys the benefits of eternal life.

d) 20a, returns to the communication. Jesus not only has sent a messenger, but will himself come in person to fulfill what has been written. We may be able to change the book, but cannot change the fact of his coming in judgment.

2. 20b-21, John's close

Echos the two invitations to "come" from v.17

a) to the Lord: issues the invitation for Jesus to come.

b) to the readers: "The grace of the LJC be with all the saints" (MT). Reminds them of God's unmerited favor; the fact that they stand not in their own merit but as recipients of the Spirit's invitation to come.

3. Application: As in 6-9, focus on the one who speaks, rather than the mediary. Cannot avoid judgment by changing the message; must deal with the author.