

Revelation 22:12-21

June 3, 2007 – THE HOLY TRINITY

Blessings from the Triune God✠ **Gracious rewards from Jesus (vv.12-15)**✠ **Soul-quickening water from the Spirit (vv.16,17)**☉ **Warnings of love from the Father (vv.18-21)**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, dearly redeemed believers:

In Revelation Bible class a few years ago, it surprised me that some Christians find this last book of Bible too frightening. On one hand this may be honest acceptance of God's Word. But true fear of God can only grow as we take to heart both the warnings and promises of God. Our sinful nature should be stopped by the Law-predictions of doom and gloom for all those who reject God's grace in Christ. But our new nature thrives on the Gospel-powered promises that God will guard and keep us safe all the way home to heaven. Too many Lutherans have sinned by practically ignoring Revelation. God calls us to repent for our lack of attention, taking away from the prophecy of this book, to repent along with all the millennialists and futurists who keep trying to add their own opinions and ideas on top of God's Word. We want to bend the knee in humble awe and gratefully receive **Blessings from the Triune God**.

✠ **Gracious rewards from Jesus (vv.12-15)**

“Rewards” should not scare God-fearing Christians. Jesus says, *“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”* We are taught from childhood that we deserve nothing but God's wrath and eternal punishment. And the list of those *“outside”* the heavenly Jerusalem backs that up. Everyone is somewhere in this list *“outside”* with *“the dogs”* as Jews called us Gentiles. Maybe we don't personally *“practice magic arts,”* but have we let Walt Disney and Harry Potter entertain us into forgetting how God hates those who try to control His creation with supernatural powers? Our post-Christian society loves what God condemns, but *“sorcerers”* are *“outside”* of heaven with all *“the sexually immoral.”* That's not just homosexuals, but everyone who commits the act outside of marriage whether physically, mentally, or emotionally with actors on TV. And *“murderers”*? That's everyone who has ever had hatred in his heart for another human being, such as holding a grudge or failing to forgive. *“Idolaters”* fear, love and trust in someone or something more than God, such as job, spouse, sports and hobbies, money or the lack of it. When God says, *“All men are liars”* (Psalm 116:11; cp. Romans 3:4), His holy Law puts us *“outside”* heaven with everyone *“who loves and practices falsehood.”* How could anyone not tremble at the *“fiery lake of burning sulfur”*?

But don't run away too soon. Let Jesus finish: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”* From eternity God saw our Fall with Adam. But way back in *“the Beginning”* Jesus was volunteering to shed the only innocent blood that could wash away our *“doggie do's”* whatever form they take. To remove the stain and stench of our sins, God needs no *“Fabrise,”* just the gentle whisper of His Good News that says, *“Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.”* (Matthew 9:2 KJV) *“Blessed are those who wash their robes”* by faith in the blood of Jesus. And *“blessed”* is so much more than *“happy.”* Here on earth *“blessed”* means knowing that no matter what, God will work out everything for our eternal good and turn even our tragedies into victories. (Romans 8:28) And hereafter in heaven, *“blessed”* means being able to see and feel God's goodness in glorified bodies and all around in that holy environment freed from the curse of sin on God's perfect creation. And when everything else is gone, won't it great to see Jesus is *“the Last”*? He will still be standing when kings and kingdoms fall. Because of Christ, heaven's gates stand open wide for everyone who believes in Him. Enter and eat from *“the tree of life”* whose glories never end. No, we do not deserve **Blessings from the Triune God**, but we look forward to **Gracious rewards from Jesus**.

☩ **Soul-quenching water from the Spirit (vv.16,17)**

“Fear not,” said the angel, that first Christmas Eve when Jesus Christ was born. We know the angel’s words because the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to record his **“glad tidings of great joy...for all people”** in Luke 2. The Holy Spirit was busy inspiring apostles and prophets for over 1600 years, without error right up to the end of this last book of the Bible. He inspired John with seven visions in the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Poor John was exiled on the island of Patmos, separated from home and loved ones in Ephesus miles across the sea. But one Sunday God granted him these visions that must have tasted like the tallest, coolest, most refreshing drink on the island. Here’s what John heard as the vision was just beginning to disappear: **“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches.”** Remember how close John was to Jesus as **“the disciple Jesus loved”**? (John 13:23) It must have felt so good to hear Jesus say, **“I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”**

And you know why it felt so good. When we’re feeling sad, it simply means our souls are thirsty for the encouragement only God can give, and which the Holy Spirit pours out with such refreshing generosity in His inspired Scriptures. The Psalms brim over with spiritual liquid to soothe us deep inside. Still, we need the Holy Spirit to strengthen us to sit down and read or get out and walk while listening to the Word of God. But both **“the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!”** They want to fill our glass like every time you read a great Bible passage or hear an especially comforting sermon. Then when someone says he or she is struggling with the same thing, you know how good it feels to share the same comfort because you are the Bride of Christ, a member of His holy, invisible Church of all believers. Trusting in Christ alone, along with the Spirit, the bride says, **“Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.”**

👁 **Warnings of love from the Father (vv.18-21)**

The only time we hear this kind of emotion in American media today is when a father lost his son fighting for America’s freedom, only to find hard core ingratitude back home. Some people mock his son’s sacrifice while exercising the very right to free speech for which his son died. God the Father gave up His one and only Son in a volunteer rescue mission for every man, woman and child. That includes all the Muslims killing Christians today in the name of their “Allah.” Christ died for all His fellow Jews who persecuted early Christians and for the Romans who nailed Him to the cross. He died for all whether they believe it or not. And God our Father so intensely wants us saved through this Word that He says through John, **“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”** From beginning to end the Bible is just the way **the Father** wants it.

You see, no one is excluded from the salvation bought and paid for with blood by the Father’s only Son. God wants everyone to feel their spiritual thirst when “they hear and believe that all sinners will be kept outside the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem, that all sinners will be cast into the lake of fire unless they wash their robes in the cleansing flood that flows from the fountain opened on the cross. And if they are thirsty they are welcome to come. If they want it, they can have it, without any further conditions. It is there as a free gift, theirs ‘without money and without cost,’ as Isaiah says (55:1).”¹

Yes, God’s *undeserved love* in Christ is all we need to encourage and empower us through this great tribulation, past the gates of heavenly bliss to glory. What we could never earn by our works, the Triune God of the Bible gives freely in Christ alone: righteousness, salvation, and the hand of faith to receive it with joyful eagerness. For this indescribable gift our lips will overflow with endless praise when at last we see this little drop of time disappear in the sea of eternity. Our Savior says, **“Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.**

¹ Becker, Siegbert W. *REVELATION The Distant Triumph Song*. Milwaukee, WI: NPH, 1985, pp. 369f.