Lesson Ten

(22:6-21)

THE LAMB'S SUMMARY CONCLUSION

Most people who study the book of Revelation give chapter twenty-two only cursory treatment. They are intrigued with the fast-moving, highly symbolic drama of the middle portion of the book and especially chapter twenty.

The very idea that chapter twenty-two probably contains the last words, the last revelation, to be spoken by God to man before the second coming of Christ, make these words take on tremendous importance. These last words were declared by the Revealer, God, to be soon fulfilled and would, therefore, be important to every believer of every age as an aid to understanding the early church's confrontation with the Roman Empire.

This closing chapter of the last Word of God to man is a beautiful recapitulation of the purpose of the whole Bible. It is:

- a. A message of divine authority
- b. A message of immediate importance
- c. A message of divine invitation
- d. A message of divine warning
- e. A message of divine hope

Dear student, do not neglect this lesson for in this last chapter of Christ's Revelation to the churches of Asia Minor, the Lord commissions you to use the information you have gained from it to invite all who are thirsty for the water of life to come to Jesus.

A Message of Divine Authority (22:6-9)

6 And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place. And behold, I am coming soon."

Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of his book. 8 I John am he who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; ⁹but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship of God."

vv. 6-7 And the Lord . . . has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place . . . — The Lamb himself affirmed the Revelation John had seen (the whole revelation) was trustworthy (faithful) and true. The Lamb, whose every word and deed when he was on the earth came to pass, whose resurrection from the dead confirms his every promise, is the One who attests the certainty of this Revelation. The conquest of the "beast" and the fall of "Babylon" is confirmed by its fulfillment in history (the fall of the Roman Empire). The future consummation of all things in universal judgment and eternal life we may know by faith in the word of the Lamb who is always and absolutely true and faithful.

The Lamb affirms that what John had seen and heard was from the same God whose Spirit was in the prophets (both Old and New Testament prophets). The message of Revelation is part of the fulfillment of the plans and purposes that God revealed in the prophets (especially in Daniel 7:1-27). Revelation directly plugs into Daniel, chapter seven, and shows its fulfillment (see comments Rev. 10:7). The message of the prophets is that nothing in this world or in any other world can thwart the program of God to offer redemption to mankind. The Messiah would come to earth, the kingdom of God would be established forever, and no human being or human kingdom would stop this program—not even the most "beastly" that might be envisioned. The God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel to reveal to John that what the churches of Asia Minor were soon to undergo was all in accordance with the revelations given to the prophets of old. The great tribulation coming upon the church during the rise and fall of the Roman Empire was shown to fit into the plan of God's redemptive program.

The timing of this great tribulation facing the church is important to the Revelation and the understanding of it. It was to be soon. Actually the Greek words, en tachei, literally mean, "with speed," The Greek word tacheos is the word from which we get the English tachometer, and other words related to speed. This Greek word is used in verse 6 and verse 7. Whatever was to take place "soon" was to coincide with the "soon" coming of the Lamb. Some commentators think the Lamb's "soon" coming of verse 7 refers exclusively to the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time. However, it seems more reasonable to expect it to apply primarily to the Lamb's "coming soon" in judgment upon the Roman Empire, and to apply, perhaps, as a prophetic type of his "coming soon" at the end of time. The Lord certainly referred to his "coming" in a symbolic way to judge and destroy apostate Judaism (Mt. 26:64: Heb. 10:25: Mt. 22:7). The Old Testament is filled with statements of the "Lord's coming" in judgment upon the idolatrous Hebrews. The student should study the notes in chapter twenty-four (especially Daniel 7:13), and chapter twentyfive (Mt. 24-26) for further discussions of the symbolic use of the phrase. "the coming of the Lord."

The immediate promise of his "soon coming" was to the saints in Asia Minor. He was coming to their aid speedily. Domitian died just one year after (A.D. 96) John received the Revelation in A.D. 95! See comments on Rev. 1:4, 7; 16:15, etc. At the same time, we must remember Jesus taught very clearly that believers should expect his Second Coming at any moment so the coming of the Lord in judgment suddenly or unexpectedly upon Rome may be considered a prophetic type of His Second Coming. Time is no problem with the eternal God. All time is the present with God. He is the eternal I AM! One day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day with him. Peter dealt with those who scoff at the idea of His imminent return to consummate all things (II Pet. 3:1-18). The writers of the New Testament made no mistake when they wrote to their first century readers to expect the Lord's return at any moment! We would make no mistake today to tell people to expect his "coming" at any moment. The mistake would be to not expect it momentarily.

The Lamb is promising quick relief to the beleagured saints of Asia Minor. That relief, while beginning within a year at the death of Domitian, will proceed slowly and take two more centuries to be completed (Constantine's edict of toleration, 313 A.D.). Suffering saints of every age have felt that Christ's intervention on their behalf has been slow in coming. But the Lord says those who cry out for vindication should always pray and not lose heart (cf. Lk. 18:1-8) for he will "vindicate them speedily" (see also Rev. 6:9-11). Therefore, blessing comes from the Lord to those who keep the words of the prophecy of Revelation. And what is there to keep in Revelation? There are words like "endurance," "repentance,"

"come out of her, my people," "conquer," "overcome," "open the door," to keep.

vv. 8-9 And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel . . . — John was once again overwhelmed by the presence of a supernatural being—an angel (see comments, Rev. 19:10). The angel who was sent to transmit this Revelation (Rev. 1:1) apparently was manifested along with the Lamb at this time. This angel, having spoken much of this Revelation directly to John, appeared to have great authority. John was ready to accord the angel equal authority with the Lamb and God. But the angel quickly corrected John. As authoritative as the message is, the messenger (whether angel, apostle or other human being) accrues no divine authority himself (cf. Gal. 1:8-9). It is the Author of the message who must be worshiped and served. All others are servants, be they angels or archangels or men. This Revelation to John, though it came through an angel, is divinely authoritative because it is from God—the angel is merely a messenger. Angels are fellow-slaves (Gr. sundoulos) with men and brothers (Gr. adelphon) of the prophets. They also keep the words of Revelation! Angels who serve God deliberately choose to trust, love and obey God. If angels keep the book of Revelation, men should make every effort to do so!

A Message of Immediate Importance (22:10-15)

10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. "Let the evil-doer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

12 "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay everyone for what he has done. ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. ¹⁵Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood.

vv. 10-11 ... Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book ...

— The Greek word for seal (Gr. sphragises) is a orist subjunctive. This means the action has not taken place as a fact yet, but it is desirable because of some contingency. John was told not to shut the scroll upon which he was writing the Revelation with seals (like the scroll of Rev. chapters 5-6) but to leave it accessible because of the contingency of time. The time when its message was needed was then at hand! The churches of Asia Minor needed it, primarily. It was not a message to be fulfilled two thousand

years or more after John wrote it—it was for that great tribulation. The churches of Asia Minor were being exhorted to "conquer" and "endure," Of course, the principles of God's sovereignty and the church's ultimate triumph are relevant for all ages. The consummation of all things, the judgment of Satan and the wicked, and the restoration of Paradise for the faithful is also relevant for saints of all time. But the Greek word engus ("near") is often translated, at hand. The Lord meant for this message to be read, understood, obeyed and fulfilled (for the most part) immediately after it was given.

The Greek word adikon is translated in the RSV, evildoer, but more literally means, unjust. The Greek word hrupon is translated in the RSV, filthy, but is translated shabby in James 2:2 and dirt in I Pet. 3:21. There are other Greek words for the human idea of filth—perikatharma (see I Cor. 4:13) means "scum, rubbish, despicable," and still another Greek word (skubalon) for human excrement or garbage (Phil. 3:8). What we have in Rev. 22:11 is inward evil and inward filth—unseen and often discounted by man as less condemning than outward filth. A man may clean off his outward filth and dress up his body, be accepted by the world, and still be inwardly filthy. But not with God. To be acceptable with God man must wash away the inward filth of the mind and the conscience (Mt. 15:1-20; 23:25-26; I Pet. 3:21).

The Greek word eit is translated, still, but may be translated yet more. In other words, God allows men to choose the kind of character they want to develop. And character is an ever-developing capacity of human nature. Paul wrote, "Evil men and impostors shall wax (develop) worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13). The impenitent, unjust and morally-filthy people of the Roman Empire were called to repent by the plagues God sent upon them but they did not repent! The sufferings they endured on earth did not bring repentance. But there is no repentance in the next life, only remorse, torment, and continued rejection of the Word of God (see Lk. 16:19-31). Men will continue to develop what their hearts have chosen in this life, whether evil or righteousness. One either grows in grace and stature as a Christian or sinks deeper into hardness and indifference as a sinner; there is no standing still. There is no in-between. Of course, God wants all unjust and filthy people to choose the cleansing he has provided in the blood (atoning death) of Christ in this life. God is not willing that any should perish (II Pet. 3:9). But God will not force any person to become a Christian—neither should the church attempt to do so. A person convinced against his will is of the same opinion still! The Lamb gave this dramatic Revelation to John and the churches of Asia Minor as an instrument of edification for the persecuted saints and an instrument of evangelism for the impenitent Roman Empire. Warnings and invitations are repeated throughout the Revelation. Both Christians and unbelievers

must make their choice for or against the *last* revealed word from God. This urgency applies not only to the world of the days of the Roman Empire, but to our world of the twentieth century as well. The parable of the Tares in Matthew 13:24-30 is an excellent commentary on Revelation 22:10-11.

vv. 12-13 Behold I am coming soon, bringing my recompense...—The Lamb warns about his speedy (Gr. tachu) "coming" again (see comments on 22:6-7)! This time the Lamb announces he is coming rapidly to reward (Gr. misthos, wages, honorarium, recompense) each according to his works. This is a divine promise repeated throughout the Bible (cf. Isa. 40:10; Prov. 24:12; Mt. 16:27; II Tim. 4:14; II Cor. 11:15; Rev. 14:13; 20:12, 13). To the saints in Asia Minor this promise of the Lamb meant reward for their persecution and martyrdom; to the unbelievers of the Roman Empire who chose the mark of the beast, it meant judgment for their impenitence. Jesus taught many parables about rewards according to work (Gr. ergon) (see Mt. 20:1-15; 21:28-32; 21:33-43; 22:1-14; 25:1-46; Lk. 12:35-40; 12:41-48; 16:1-13; 16:19-31; 18:1-8; 19:11-27, etc.). The Lord does not save us because of our works, but he will reward us according to our faithfulness in doing his work.

The Lamb referring to himself as the "Alpha and the Omega" is repeated three times, Revelation 1:8; 21:6; 22:13. The statement that God is "first and last and there is none other" is a favorite phrase of Isaiah (see Isa. 43:10; 44:6, 8; 45:5, 6, 12; 48:12). The emperor of Rome may claim to be a god, but he is not. There is only one God and he is eternal. Everything from beginning to end, first, last and always, owes its existence sustenance and destiny to God and his Son, the Lamb. He is the uncreated Creator, the uncaused Cause, the only Redeemer of a cursed universe. He is the only Imperative of man the moral being. It is of absolute importance that men give their total allegiance to the Lamb.

vv. 14-15 Blessed are those who wash their robes . . . — The KJV reads, "Blessed are they that do his commandments . . ." in place of the RSV reading "Blessed are those who wash their robes . . ." Bruce Metzger, in his Textual Commentary on The Greek New Testament, believes the phrase as it is in the RSV is correct and the KJV reading appears to be a scribal emmendation. The Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Alexandrinus and fifteen minuscules (cursive style manuscripts from 700 A.D. on) read, "Blessed are those who wash their robes. . . ." The KJV reading is not found in the most ancient manuscripts but only in later minuscules. Of course, the promise of blessedness for keeping the commandments of Christ is certainly a principle well stated in differing phraseology throughout the book of Revelation. But here, the right (or authority, Gr. exousia) to partake of the tree of life is conditioned upon having washed one's robes in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14). There are commandments of instructions from the Lord as to the attitudes and actions required of man in order to wash

his "robes" in the blood of the Lamb (cf. Titus 3:4-8; I Pet. 1:22-25; 3:21; I Cor. 6:11; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Col. 2:11-12; Gal. 3:26-27; Heb. 10:22; see also comments on Rev. 7:14). This washing is not something done apart from an obedience in faith to the ordinance of immersion in water. God's Word declares that this obedience accomplishes the uniting of sinful man to the atoning death of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 6:3-5), provided for man solely by the grace of God. The "washed" ones are able to partake of the tree of eternal life by the power (Gr. exousia) of the meritorious perfection of Christ imputed to them by his grace and appropriated by them in loving obedience to his ordinance of baptism (immersion) (cf. Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; 8:12-13; 8:36; 10:47; 16:15; 16:33; 18:8; 19:5, et al). These also have the authority or right to enter the eternal city of God.

Outside the eternal dwelling place of God, separated from him forever, are the dogs, sorcerers, fornicators, murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. The word "dogs" is often applied in Scripture to morally vicious people who behave like such animals (cf. Mt. 7:6: Phil. 3:2: II Pet. 2:10-22). Others who have forfeited the opportunity to partake of the tree of life and enter the holy city are discussed earlier in 21:8 (see comments there). Here, the added dimension is given to lying (Gr. pseudos) or falsehood that it is something one does as well as speaks. Falsehood is a life-style, a fundamental and basic character trait (cf. I Jn. 1:6; II Thess, 2:10-12) acquired by choice and desire. It is possible for man to love and live according to the truth, but it is also possible for man to love and live according to falsehood (cf. Jn. 3:19-21; 8:42-47, etc.). There is no place in heaven for those who do not love the truth and devote all their energies to living according to it. They have no right to be there. The truth is God's Word, the Bible. Those who wish to live in the eternal city of God must live according to the Bible, specifically, the New Testament!

A Message of Divine Invitation (22:16-17)

16 "I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star."

17 The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.

v. 16 I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. — The Revelation opened with the claim that it was the revelation of Jesus Christ. Now the very voice of Jesus attests that he is the Author of the Revelation. He undoubtedly uses the name Jesus in this final invitation to emphasize his Saviorhood. Jesus is the "Lord, the God of the spirits

of the prophets . . .'' (22:6). Jesus, the root and offspring of David, born a true human being is also truly God. The Greek preposition *epi* is translated *for* the churches, but more precisely means *in regard to* or *concerning* the churches. The "churches" are specifically the seven churches of Asia Minor. But this Revelation is as relevant to the twentieth century church as the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The significance in stressing that the Revelation was "in regard to the churches" (of Asia Minor) is that it must be interpreted and understood from that particular historical background.

The title "root and offspring of David" is Messianic and identifies the Author of Revelation as the Promised One of the Old Testament prophets; it identifies him not only as David's son but as David's Lord (Mt. 22:41-46; Mk. 12:35-37; Lk. 20:41-44); it testifies to his incarnation (see comments on Rev. 5:5).

The "bright morning star" is a title prophesied by Balaam (Num. 23:17). Apocryphal literature applied this title to the Messiah (Testament of Levi 18:3; Testament of Judas 24:1ff.). The "morning star" is a metaphor of the well-known star of the morning, brighter than all the rest, heralding the dawning of a new day. Ancient shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks by night, seeing the silent procession of the stars through the hours of darkness, knew without clock or timepiece when the dawn of the new day was near. The "morning star" became a guide for them, revealing what they needed to know to make preparations for the next day (see II Pet. 1:19).

The Savior of all mankind gave the Revelation through John in regard to what the churches must do to be prepared for the dawn of a new day. He is the Messiah predicted in the prophets, son of David and Lord of David, who came incarnate to this world and was the "morning star" who enlightens all who will give heed to him.

v. 17 The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." — The Greek verb legousin is present active indicative and denotes continuous action. In other words, the Spirit and the Bride are continuing to say, "Come." Who is the object of this plea? The Lord Jesus! The Spirit, by the revealed Word continues to state to the church (the Bride) that Jesus is coming very soon. The Bride (Gr. nymphe), which is the church, continues to pray that Jesus will come and vindicate her (cf. II Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13; II Pet. 3:15; I Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:20). Everyone hearing and believing the message of the Spirit and the pleading of the church should make the coming of the Lord Jesus his constant and personal prayer.

The Spirit, the Bride and every individual Christian must also plead with the whole world to partake of the water of life without price (cf. Isa. 55:1; Jn. 4:14; Rev. 21:6), and thus join the blessed anticipation of the Lord's coming at the consummation of all things. The invitation to join in expectation

of the coming of Christ is to those who thirst (Gr. dipsao, English derivative, dipsomania). And those who partake must be willing to do so. Those who really anticipate the coming of our Lord are those who need him as much as the human body needs water! When a person realizes he needs the life of the Spirit of God that much, he will willingly come for his "handout"; he will do whatever the Spirit reveals in his Word must be done to receive this free gift of spiritual life. It is up to the church (the Bride), by conveying the Word of the Spirit, and living the life of the Spirit, to create in all men this need. Most of Christendom has so thoroughly misrepresented life in Christ, the world has said, "I don't need that"! Therefore, most of the world is unwilling to anticipate the coming of the Lord.

A Message of Divine Warning (22:18-19)

18 I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹ and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

v. 18 ... if any one adds to them ... — Everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book is warned against tampering with it. This warning is made a number of times in God's Word (see Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5ff.; Mt. 15:6; II Cor. 4:2; Gal. 1:6-9). The principle applies to all the Word of God, but here, particularly, it refers to the book of Revelation.

Homer Hailey says, "The words of the prophecy are the thoughts, principles, judgments and messages of the book. The Lord is not speaking of an honest error in judgment and interpretation, even though this is serious. Rather he condemns the presumptuous and all who manifest a careless or flippant attitude toward the Word. As Lenski intimates, this makes writing about the book a serious and sublime matter to be pursued with the deepest of reverence for God and his truth." The same could be said of honest errors in translating from the original language. But men must not "peddle" Revelation (II Cor. 2:17). Some today have commercialized on this book for their own mercenary purposes. Men must not "tamper" with the Word of God in disgraceful, underhanded, cunning ways (II Cor. 4:2). And yet, many bizarre and impossible eschatological systems have been imposed upon this book in disgraceful and underhanded ways until there is widespread confusion among believers as to the fundamental message and meaning of Revelation.

v. 19 ... and if any one takes away ... — Anyone taking away from the words of the prophecy of Revelation will have his name blotted from

the book of life and his right to the tree of life and the blessings of the eternal city removed. Sincere mistakes about the book will be forgiven, but indifference toward it result in eternal condemnation! Every letter to every church of Asia Minor ends with the admonition: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." People who would never literally omit an English word or a Greek word from the printed text of Revelation will neglect to read the book and especially refuse to allow the book to be studied in church assemblies. In our opinion, this comes dangerously close to "taking away from the words of this book"! Christian people must not neglect this book! That is a divine warning! One of the reasons for lukewarm Christian discipleship is that the church has neglected the real message of the book of Revelation: the imperative need of the church to repent, to endure, and to have faith, because the Lamb is Sovereign in and over all heaven and earth (Rev. 11:15).

A Message of Divine Hope (22:20-21)

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.

The last Word from Christ is a promise. He is coming soon! That elicits a prayer from John who represents all who are loving Christ's imminent appearing—"Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!" The benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints" exudes hope for sinful, penitent men. The long struggle which began in Eden is shown to be resolved. Satan's pseudo claim to sovereignty is exposed for what it is—a lie. He will be cast into eternal hell along with all who believed his lie and joined his rebellion against the true Sovereign, Jesus Christ. God and the Lamb are on the throne. They are coming soon to take all who have faithfully worshiped them to eternal joy in the new kingdom of God. These who are to dwell in God's presence forever do so by the grace of God which provided the atoning death of His Son to wash away their sin. They have trusted all to Him!

After living with this book of Revelation with the intensity of a researcher and teacher for ten years, and as a writer for two years, it is nearly impossible to bring these notes to a close. But we must, and so we close (by the gracious permission of Homer Hailey) with these incomparable words:

"As the vision fades from our view and the last word spoken echoes in our souls, our hearts are wrapped in awe at the majestic sight and sounds which we have beheld and to which we have listened. Surely our faith in God and His Christ has been strengthened, our hope for victory and heaven made more precious, our love for the spiritual and eternal made to abound

beyond all previous measure, our will given a permanent determination to succeed, and our whole aim and goal of life become more fixed.

"Now that we have advanced with John from glory to glory in this drama of spiritual history, conflict, and victory, we feel that we are more than excited spectators of a divine cinema—we are a part of the drama! We continue to share with those early Christians the pressures of political power and intrigue, the subtlety of false religious appeal through human wisdom, philosophy, and tradition, and the seduction of the world of lust. Also we share with them the strength, power, and help that come from our heavenly Father through faith in the blood of the Lamb. And we shall share with them the eternal reward of victory and an inheritance in God's celestial city as the bride of the Lamb. And so with the voice of all creation, let us join the song as they sing:

Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever."

APPREHENSION AND APPLICATION:

- 1. Why is the last chapter of Revelation important? Does it impress you as containing personal obligations? What are you doing about them?
- 2. How does the soon-to-take-place events of Revelation connect to what all the prophets of the Bible predicted? Does this help you understand Old Testment prophecies?
- 3. How did the "soon" coming events coincide with the "soon" coming of the Lord? Should Christ's coming in judgment on Rome tell us anything? What?
- 4. Did the writers of the New Testament make a mistake by expecting Christ's Second Coming in their own life-time? Why?
- 5. What is meant by, "Let the filthy still be filthy . . ."? Do you think we are becoming what we shall be? Is character development an eternal capacity of man?
- 6. What has the Lord said about rewarding according to works? What is the Lord's criterion of rewarding?
- 7. How does one "wash his robes" so that he has the right to the tree of life? Is baptism all that important?
- 8. Is lying only done with words? How does one "practice" a lie? Do you know anyone "practicing" a lie? Have you tried to warn them?
- 9. To whom is the Spirit and the Bride saying, "Come"?

- 10. Would you like Christ to come back for the consummation of all things today? Would you be more ready if it were one year from today? Why?
- 11. What is "adding" to the words of the prophecy of this book? Are there some doing so today?
- 12. What is "taking away" from the words of the prophecy of this book? Do you know anyone who might be doing this?
- 13. After studying this magnificent revelation from God do you feel like you are more than a spectator? Why?