

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

God's Last Invitation, Part 1

Scripture: Revelation 22:13-17

Code: 66-86

We turn in our Bibles tonight to the twenty-second chapter of Revelation, verses 13 and following under the title, "God's Last Invitation." By the time we have reached this point, the voices from heaven have spoken, the visions are complete, the message has been delivered, the sermons have been preached and most powerful and compelling sermons they were. The preacher was the divine omnipotent God of glory. We have swept through the end of the world, through this present age to the Rapture of the church, then through the Tribulation judgments and seals and trumpets and bowls. We have seen the day of the Lord, the return of Jesus Christ in judgment power and authority. We have been escorted through the visions of the Millennial Kingdom to the great white throne. And after that into the eternal state. For the ungodly the lake of fire, for the godly the new Jerusalem in the new heavens and the new earth.

And at the conclusion of all of this sweeping panorama of prophecy and in light of its absolute certainty, the book of Revelation closes with invitations. It demands right responses. First of all, from Christians and we saw that in verses 6 through 12. Four things were requested in the light of the coming of Christ; immediate obedience, immediate worship, immediate proclamation and immediate service. And now as we come to verse 13 we come to an invitation for non-Christians. Obviously since this great apocalypse was written for the church, to be given to the church, to be read in the church, to be taught to the church, these are invitations the godly must pass on to the ungodly. But in verses 13 to 21, you have the Lord's final call, the pleading, urging invitation, begging people to come to Jesus Christ and receive the gift of eternal life before it is forever too late. This is God's final plea.

Follow as I read. "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 enter by the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices lying. I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star and the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come,' and let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come, let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if anyone adds to them God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book, if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city which are written in this book. He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen, come, Lord Jesus, the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen."

God's final call. God's last invitation. Now there are two features to be considered as we look at this text. First there is the invitation and then there is the incentive to respond to the invitation. The invitation itself in verse 17, and then all around it the incentives to drive folks to make the right response.

Now the invitation then actually comes in the middle of the passage. As you can imagine at the end of a book like this and beyond that, at the end of all of the revelation of God, the sixty-sixth book, the final chapter, the final part of that chapter, you can imagine that there is a gathering together of a number of things. And indeed that is the case. But in the middle of these final words there is a clear invitation and it is the heart of the text. We find it in verse 17. Let's go back to that verse.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come, let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."

Now the emphasis of that verse is "Come." We have to understand, however, that there are distinctions to be made in this verse because the term "come" has two distinct meanings. The first part of the verse is a prayer. The second part is an invitation. The first part of the verse is addressed to Christ. The second part is addressed to sinners. The two halves, then, do not refer to the same persons or the same coming. And that is a distinction that you need to make very carefully.

The first part is the Spirit and the bride calling for Christ to come. The second part is calling unbelievers to come to Christ. Now look at it with that in mind. "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'" That's fairly clear, the Holy Spirit and the church. The church has already been identified repeatedly as the bride. We have seen that as far back as chapter 19 where the church was identified in verse 7 as the bride who made herself ready, was clothed in fine linen, bright and clean, which is the righteous acts of the saints. And then the Marriage Supper of the Lamb was introduced and we have read about that through these final chapters.

So the bride is the church and the Spirit is, of course, the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And to whom are they saying that? Well go back to verse 7, "Blessed is he..." pardon me, the first part of verse 7, "Behold, I am coming quickly." Then verse 12, "Behold, I am coming quickly." And then as we read a moment ago, verse 20, "Yes, I am coming quickly. Amen, come, Lord Jesus." And so what we have here is the Spirit and the church answering the promise of the soon coming by saying, "Come, Lord Jesus." They want the Lord to come. It is the desire of the Holy Spirit, it is the desire of the church that Jesus come.

Now, first of all, why does the Holy Spirit desire Jesus to come? Why would the Holy Spirit be saying, "Come, come, come?" Well the text doesn't tell us but it doesn't take much to stretch our minds beyond this one text and understand why the Holy Spirit wants Jesus to come. There would be both

a negative and a positive reason. The negative reason would be that throughout the years of the age of grace, throughout the time up until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, men and women of the world have continued to reject Christ, ignore Christ, deny Christ. They've even mocked and blasphemed the work of the Holy Spirit whose task it is to point them to Christ. And even before that in the Old Testament, you remember that the Spirit of God was striving with men to lead them to the truth before the Flood, that exhausted the patience of the Holy Spirit who will not always strive with man. And then there were the forty years of wandering in the wilderness while Scripture says Israel provoked the Spirit of God, according to Hebrews chapter 3 verses 7 and 8.

And so the Spirit has labored long to bring about conviction and repentance and has been striving and fighting and agonizing over sinful men, while they have been provoking Him throughout the centuries. But nothing, I'm sure, nothing in the Old Testament era, even before the Flood, certainly after, nothing through the church age as we know it today, nothing has reached the apex of blasphemy that has been true of the time described in the Great Tribulation in the book of Revelation. And again nothing reached the proportions of blasphemy that could equal the end of the Millennial Kingdom when Satan was released and gathered all the blaspheming multitudes from across the earth for a final rebellion against the reigning Christ. By the time you come to the great white throne judgment, the accumulated blasphemy will have reached its ultimate proportions. And all along the Holy Spirit through the struggle would be wishing that Jesus would come. So when the Lord says, "I come," the striving, grieved, quenched, blasphemed agonizing Holy Spirit echoes, "Come. subdue Your enemies and Mine, judge sinners, end this long battle to produce conviction."

But then there's a positive side as well. It is the desire, it is the work of the Spirit, as you know, to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. He shows us Christ. He points to Christ. And obviously the last time the world saw Jesus lifted up, it was on a cross and He died in shame between two criminals, rejected, despised, mocked and murdered. And the Holy Spirit desires to see His fellow member of the trinity exalted in beauty and splendor and power and majesty and triumph. So it's no wonder that He says, "Come, come and take the glory due Your name."

This is a good indication that the purposes of God are the purposes of the trinity of God. The Lord Jesus says, "I'm coming." The Spirit says, "Come." The Father has laid out the plan.

What about the bride? Why does the bride, why does the church, the bride of Christ, the bridegroom say come? For obvious reasons, we too are weary of the battle against sin, as is the Holy Spirit. We too long for the exaltation of Jesus Christ. We who are the church, who belong to Christ, His sheep who love Him, who long for Him to bring us to Himself, we have been waiting and praying and hoping and watching and longing for the coming of the Lord. God's people have always longed for this. They've always longed for the day when the serpent's head would be bruised, crushed, he would be destroyed. God's people ever since in the very beginning, when God announced redemption, that there would be someone who would come and bruise the head of the serpent, God's people have

longed for that destruction to come so that righteousness could prevail and sin be destroyed.

So here you have then the Holy Spirit and the church, the people of God, the bride, in harmony, together longing for the return of Jesus Christ. They too want no more sorrow, no more tears, no more crying, no more pain, no more death. No more rebellion, all glory to God, all glory to the Lamb, a dwelling place for God's people in the Father's house, immortality, Christlikeness, the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and God dwelling among His people, the glorious new Jerusalem, eternal riches, all of that. It's not wonder that the church and the Holy Spirit long for the return of Christ.

It's what Paul talks about in 2 Timothy 4:8 when he says, "We love His appearing." In fact, I would suggest that it's incongruous for a person to be a Christian and to say they are a lover of Jesus and not to look and long for His return. We are destined for fellowship with Him and it should be that our anticipation of that fellowship is our chief joy. The church would never be satisfied until it is presented a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So the church and the Holy Spirit cry, "Come."

Then the second half of the verse. "And let the one who is...pardon me...and let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."

Now we have a change. This is an invitation not to Christ to come, but to the sinners to come to Christ. Notice it carefully. The first one says, the first phrase says, "And let the one who hears say, 'Come.'" To whom does this refer? It's somewhat difficult admittedly, but the simplest and best explanation is the one who hears the message. "He that has an ear" simply means the one who's listening, the one who is listening and believing, the one who's hearing with understanding, the one who hears the Spirit and the bride say come, the one who hears Jesus say I'm coming. Let that one say come, let that one join in. Let that one chime in and say come. And he can't chime in and say come until he's come to Christ, that's the implication.

The Bible frequently pictures unbelievers who have no ears to hear but on the other hand, there are those who do have ears to hear, and they are the ones who become redeemed. And man must desire to hear. He must want to hear the voice of God, to believe the Word of God. And when he has ears tuned to hear the voice of God, he can hear with faith and believe. That's what he's talking about. Let the one who is hearing with the ears of understanding and the ears of faith join in with the church and the Spirit. It's all those who are not yet saved, and not yet in the church. Let them join and say come. And they're kind of the transition group. They'll say come with the Spirit and the church, but they can't say it until they have come as those in the second half of the verse are invited to do. You can't say come until you've come. No unsaved man is going to say, "Come, Lord Jesus, Come, Lord Jesus." They're going to scoff and mock as they did in 2 Peter chapter 3, they're going to say, "Ah, where is the promise of His coming for since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it

was from the beginning of creation." They're going to mock the return of Christ. They're going to mock the fact that Jesus is coming.

But the one who hears, who is that? Hearing is associated with obeying. Hearing is associated with obeying. In fact, often in the New Testament hearing is synonymous with obeying. Those who obey the gospel and come will join with the church and they will join with the Spirit in longing for the return of Jesus Christ. And if you apply that, for example, to people today, if you apply it to people during the time of the Tribulation it fits, all of those of you who are outside the church and who are outside the ministry of the Spirit of God, you come and you join and say come. It's kind of a play on words. Before you can say come, you have to come. And so the end of the verse, "Let the one who is thirsty come." The one He's talking to, the one who has ears to hear, now listen, is the one who is thirsty. Let the one who's thirsty come. Let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. And so he turns to that reality that before you can say come, you have to come. But before you're going to come you have to want to come, and that's all about spiritual thirst. Here then is the invitation to sinners made clear.

What does thirst indicate? It indicates a recognition of need. When you say you're thirsty, you are identifying your need. It is only when the sinner feels the dryness of his soul, it is only when he knows his heart is parched and barren that he's interested in coming to drink. Here you have then the prerequisite of repentance, understanding one's need. And it was this that Jesus started really His ministry with. In Matthew chapter 5, very familiar words, verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied." It all starts with a spiritual hunger, a spiritual thirst. In John chapter 6 and verse 35, "I am the bread of life, he who comes to Me shall not hunger and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." And in the seventh chapter of John and verse 37, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." And all that is doing is demonstrating the reality of need. You know your soul is dry, your heart is parched and barren. That's why you're listening. That's why you're hearing.

And then he adds another dimension to it in verse 17, "And let the one who is thirsty come, let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." That's hōstheleōn, that translates, "whosoever will." Whoever wants to, whoever desires to, whoever wishes to. You're thirsty and you wish to have your need met. That, by the way, is an unlimited invitation. Typical of the gracious and wide offer of salvation that you see in Scripture. It is essentially what Jesus said in John 6:37 where He said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." If you're thirsty it's because the Father has begun to move on your heart and you've recognized your need. And if you come because you want to take the water, it's because you've been prompted to come and there's no way the Lord would ever turn you back. So whoever wants to come, He receives.

In other terms, Matthew chapter 11 and verse 28, He said, "Come unto Me, all you that labor under heavy laden, and I'll give you rest." He uses another metaphor to describe the same thing. Not thirsty, but weary, not needing water but needing rest. And all you have to do is come. If you sense the need and you're eager to come and you desire to come, then come. It's not something that you have to find out about first, like...are you qualified? Here is, by the way, human volition in salvation. I don't ever like to use the term free will because man has a will, it's just not free. But here is human volition, God saves but not apart from our desire. Salvation then is offered to those who know they are parched and barren and who desire to have that changed.

And then there's one final component. First is the recognition of need, second is the desire to have the need met. And thirdly, he says let the one who wishes, or whosoever will take the water of life. Take the water of life without cost. That's appropriation. You recognize your need, you know where the supply is, and you take it by faith. That's what "without cost" means, free to you. The only prerequisite, a recognition of need and a desire and a willingness to take. Your heart is parched for forgiveness, your mind is thirsty for truth, your soul is thirsty for purpose, and the Lord Jesus waits to quench your thirst eternally, and the water that He gives you is so fulfilling that you'll never thirst again. That's all it takes. It's without cost. As Isaiah said, "Come, without money and without price." There's the invitation. You see your need, and you see the supply and you take it by faith and not by works. The price has already been paid by Christ. Very simple terms.

And so the invitation is there in verse 17. The church, the Spirit say come, anyone who is hearing with believing ears who has come, joins in and says come, and the invitation then is extended to everyone who is thirsty, who sees where the supply is, to come and take the water of life freely. That's the invitation. Salvation is free cause the price was paid.

Now surrounding that invitation in verse 17 are the reasons to accept it, the incentives to the invitation. The invitation and then the incentives. What moves us to that invitation? To be honest with you, it is not easy to pull all of this material together, but I think the best way to understand it is that it circles this invitation. And the invitation is the heartbeat of the text and all the rest kind of surrounds it.

Now let me show you how that kind of falls together. First of all, the first incentive to accept the invitation is because of Christ's person...because of Christ's person. The first reason to accept the invitation to come and take the water of life which is eternal life, as we've already learned, the first incentive is because of who Christ is. It's because of who's inviting you, none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of heaven, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the glory of the eternal new Jerusalem. I mean, think about it. What he's going to say to us here is as simply understood as this...we get invitations to go to various places, some we accept and some we don't. I suppose our acceptance has a lot to do with who invites us, is that not true? And if whoever invites us is important enough in our judgment, we are more likely to accept the invitation.

How about if the eternal incarnate God, the King of Kings, the Lord of heaven, the glorious Lord Jesus gave you an invitation. Would you respond? Purely on the basis of who He is? A response is demanded. Verse 13, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

Now here the Lord is speaking personally...personally. And He's identifying Himself with the same terminology we found back in chapter 1 and verse 8, right at the beginning. This closing has many components from the very beginning of this great apocalypse. In chapter 8 verse 8, "I am the Alpha and the Omega." Here again He reminds us of that. Chapter 21 verse 6, He said it again, "It is done, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."

Why this? Well, the readers of the book of Revelation, the original readers were, of course, Gentiles. Because of that in that part of the world, they spoke Greek. And so the Lord in His inspiring of this designation of Christ identifies Him by the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet, Alpha being the first and Omega being the last.

What is the point of that? It expresses infinity. It expresses eternity. It expresses the boundless life of God which embraces everything, includes everything and transcends everything. And it is then explained in verse 13, "I am the Alpha and the Omega means I am the first and the last, I am the beginning and the end." Now that's just three different ways to say basically the same thing, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the beginning, that is to say the source of all things. He is the end, that is the goal of all things, the consummation of all things. He is the eternal transcendent infinite God. That kind of designation identifies completeness, timelessness and sovereign authority. He is not just another man, He is not an angel, He is not a created being, He is not some superhuman genius, He is not a distinguished martyr, He is God eternal and almighty...the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Such identifications, by the way, are also given by the prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah chapter 41 and verse 4, "I the Lord am the first and the last, I am He." And then in Isaiah chapter 43 and verse 10, again, "Before Me there was no God formed and there will be none after Me, even I, even I am the Lord."

In Isaiah chapter 44, the very next chapter, verse 6. "I am the first and I am the last." What does that mean? It means there's no God beside Me. And then over in chapter 48 and verse 12, "Listen to Me, O Jacob, I am He, I am the first, I am also the last and My hand founded the earth," and so forth and so on. He is the only God. He is the Alpha/Omega. He is the beginning and the end.

Jesus Christ is the everything. If there is an ark in which the family of Noah is saved, that ark is a picture of Jesus Christ. If there is a lamb slain at the Passover, that lamb is a picture of Jesus Christ. If there is a kinsman redeemer, that kinsman redeemer is a picture of Jesus Christ. Before time, after

time, and all during time He is the theme of everything. He is the everything. And at His designation as Lord, Paul says to the Philippians, "Every knee shall bow." To be saved is to be saved by Christ Jesus. To be a Christian is to be in Christ Jesus. To have forgiveness is to be forgiven by Christ Jesus. To have hope is to hope in Christ. To live is to live in Him.

To leave Christ out of a life is to leave the sun out the day, is to leave the moon out of the night, is to leave the waters out of the sea, the floods out of the rivers. To leave Christ out of a life is to leave the grain out of the harvest, the sight out of the eye, the hearing out of the ear, the life out of the living. He is the everything. And when He gives you an invitation, it's an invitation you ought to respond to.

Verse 16 further identifies Him in His own words, verses 13 and 16, "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star." He is the author, He is the source behind everything that's been described in Revelation. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things. The angels have brought the Word but the source is Jesus. It is Him who gives this revelation and this final invitation.

This is not a human call, is what he's saying. This is not a human call, this is the Lord Jesus calling. I cannot imagine anybody getting an invitation from the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, Jesus Himself and not responding to it. This is not a human fantasy. This is not all written by some committee. This is not a concoction of John's imagination. This is not a fake. This is not a forgery. "I, Jesus." That is a unique expression in Scripture, showing how personal this revelation and this invitation really are. My angel, they all belong to Him, all the holy angels, has brought it but it is from Me.

Now notice He says, "My angel has come to testify to you these things for the churches." Of course we note all the way through the book is written to all believers, but its message must be preached to the whole world. But believers have to preach it so it's written to them to preach to the rest.

And then to further identify Himself, the one who is the author of this and of all Scripture, says, "I am the root and the offspring of David." That is an absolutely astounding statement. What He means to say is, "I am both the ancestor, the root, and the descendant, the offspring, of David." How could you be an ancestor and a descendant at the same time? As the root, He is saying I am the source of David's life and line. That is deity, my friend. But as the offspring, He was the Son of David's life and line, and that is humanity. There you have one of the clearest statements of the fact that Jesus is the God/Man. He is the root of David's life and line, that is He is deity who created David. He is the source of David. And He is also the Son of David, and that is to say He is human, He was born into this world in the Davidic line. Only the God/Man can be both the root and the offspring of David. Isaiah talks about Him as a root, as a branch and an offspring.

And He is both. In 2 Samuel, and I would just have you turn to it for a moment because it's a text that shouldn't be overlooked. Second Samuel chapter 7 verse 12, this is that great text of Messianic promise. Verse 12 of 2 Samuel 7, "When your days are complete," speaking here to David, "and you lie down with your fathers," you die, "I'll raise up your descendant after you who will come forth from you and I'll establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." He was looking at Solomon but he was looking past Solomon to the Messiah. There was more here than just Solomon because this kingdom was going to be forever.

and down in verse 16, "And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever, your throne shall be established forever." The promise of the eternal kingdom.

Jesus then was the source of David and also the very fulfillment of David's prophecies as one born in the Davidic line, His mother was in the line of David and so was His father Joseph.

In Psalm 132 verses 11 and 12, "The Lord has sworn to David a truth from which He will not turn back of the fruit of your body, David, I will set upon your throne." Out of your loins will come kings and the ultimate King. And so it is that Jesus fulfills all messianic requirements. He is both God and Man.

Paul emphasizes that same reality in 2 Timothy 2:8 when he says, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead...that refers to His deity...descendant of David...that refers to His humanity."

Who is giving the invitation? The transcendent, eternal, infinite Lord. Who is giving the invitation? The One who brought David into existence and the One who was born in his family...the God/Man.

And beyond that, He says in verse 16, "I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star." And this, beloved, is a title with rich meaning. For a Jew to call someone a star was to exalt him. We do that even today. We say this person is a star. We even put a star in the pavement down in Hollywood. And we could debate about whether those people are really stars, but in somebody's mind they are. I guess in the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce they are. We talk about a star in athletics. We talk about a star in the music field. Someone who shines brightly for all to see.

And the Jews did that. They used that term "star" to refer to someone they wanted to lift up and exalt. For example, the rabbis used to call Mordecai a star. Mordecai, you'll remember, was the one that God used to deliver Israel from what amounted to genocide. And Mordecai was such a hero he garnered the name star.

The covetous prophet Balaam, we all remember him because his donkey talked to him, you remember that Balaam was moved by the Holy Spirit, contrary to his own wishes, and he made a prophecy. That prophecy is in Numbers 24:17. And what he prophesies is that a star will come out of Jacob. That star shining more brightly than any other was none other than the Messiah, the hero of

all heroes. That's what He means, "bright morning star," the shining one, the one who stands out against the backdrop of all others.

It says of Him, Luke 1:78, "Because of the tender mercy of our God with which the day star from on high shall visit us to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death." That's a messianic anticipation. The day star is coming, the shining one is coming. How marvelous.

Malachi predicted this. In 2 Peter 1:19 we have the prophetic word, "Made more sure by which you do well to pay attention to a light shining in a dark place until the day star...till the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts." The day is coming and the morning star is going to rise. That morning star, that day star is none other than Christ, the star of stars, the hero of heroes. And when it says in Revelation 2:28 that faithful believers will be given the morning star, it means they will be given Christ.

The morning star, by the way, is the brightest star and it announces the arrival of the day. And that is uniquely fitting for the Lord Jesus Christ because when He comes, the brightness of that star shatters the darkness of man's night and heralds the dawn of God's glorious day. The dawn of Kingdom glory. He is the morning star who appears right before the Kingdom dawns. Remember back in John 8 He said, "I am the light of the world, and whoever walks in this light will never be in darkness." This is the glorious person we're talking about. What a glorious person who has called us to drink of the water of eternal life.

And we have to ask the question, how could anyone turn this down? How could anyone turn down an invitation from the eternal transcendent infinite God of the universe, the source and goal of all that exists, the creator God and yet the Son of David, God/Man, God in human flesh, the day star who signals the kingdom of righteousness, none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the highest star in the whole galaxy of persons, the only light in the darkness who brings the glory of God? When this one says, "Come to Me and take the water of life," how can you refuse such an invitation? The invitation that I give to you as a preacher, the invitation that any believer gives to you who speaks to you about Christ is only an invitation that we offer in behalf of Christ. He said, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you rest." He said, "O everyone that thirsts, come and drink." He said, "Him that comes to Me I'll in no way turn back."

So, that's the issue. Here the invitation because of who offers it to you, because of the person of Christ. Secondly, here the invitation not only because of the person of Christ, but because of the exclusivity of heaven...because of the exclusivity of heaven. Not only because of the ultimate nobility of the person who offers the invitation and the deserving honor and glory that is His when you respond, not only because of that but because of the exclusivity of heaven. Notice verses 14 and 15. "Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city," and of course we know those things are in heaven, the tree of life, the

gates. "Outside are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the immoral persons, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying."

This section begins with the last of seven beatitudes in Revelation, a beatitude is something that begins, "Blessed are," or "Blessed is." And this is likely Jesus speaking. If I were doing a red-letter Bible, I would have made red verses 14 and 15 as well. But verse 14 said, "Blessed are those who wash their robes." Blessed are those who wash their robes. That's simply a symbol of being forgiven. Back in chapter 7 verse 14 we have that symbol defined for us. When the question by John is, "Who are these clothed in white robes and where did they come from?" verse 13. "And I said, 'My lord, you know.'" One of the elders asked the question and John says, "You're going to have to tell me, I don't know." And the elder said to me...the elder said, "These are the ones who come out of the Great Tribulation...here it is...and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." That is simply a graphic way to say they have participated in the death of Christ, right? We've been learning all about that in our study of the substitutionary death of Christ. The people whose robes are washed are those who have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, those who have been placed into Christ and He has paid the penalty for their sins.

Blessed are those who have washed their robes, who have been forgiven of their sins by being united with Jesus Christ. In Isaiah 64:6 and in Zechariah 3:3, soiled robes represents sinfulness. And the idea of removing sin by cleansing is given in Psalm 51 verse 7, and Isaiah 1:18. The writer of Hebrews also refers to the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, that is to say being immersed in His death is how we are purged from sin, how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God cleanse your conscience from dead works? First Peter 1, wonderful statement, 1 Peter 1:18 and 19, "Knowing you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers but with precious blood." That blood cleanses from sin.

And so, He says then in verse 14, "Blessed, happy, are those who washed their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life." The tree of life is where? In the New Jerusalem. That is correct. It is indicated to be in the New Jerusalem very clearly in the description of heaven, in chapter 22. "Either side of the river was the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruits."

And so, what He's saying is the only people who are going to be in heaven eating the tree of life are the ones who have a right to it. The only ones who have a right to it are the ones who have been forgiven of their sin, who have been cleansed, who've been immersed into the death of Christ, whose blood is therefore satisfied God as an atonement for their sin.

And then He adds, in verse 14, "And may enter by the gates into the city." Back in chapter 21 and verse 21, the twelve gates were twelve pearls and, of course, they were the entrance into the new Jerusalem, the capital city of the new heaven and the new earth. So what He's showing you here is

simply heaven and the capital city, the tree of life, the gates and the only one who will go through the gates and eat the fruit is the one who has been cleansed. They're the only ones who have the right to enter and the right to eat. Nobody else. That is the exclusivity of heaven.

If your sins are not forgiven, you won't be there. It's that simple. You have an invitation, it is offered to you by the Supreme Being of the universe. He has prepared an eternal home that is only for those who have been forgiven, who have been washed, who have been cleansed, who have been purified, whose sins have been removed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. And if your sin is not dealt with, you can't come in.

So now we have extended these magnificent images. We started out with thirst and water meeting the thirst, that's a felt need and that's part of coming to Christ. Being overwhelmed with your sin and knowing your soul is barren and parched and wanting to have a quenched...a quenching water for that thirst. But that...that's to satisfy us. Now we're coming to the side of redemption that is to satisfy God, and those who enter into that place are not only those who sought for their own soul satisfaction but for whom God has been satisfied, because in putting their trust in Jesus Christ their sins were covered by their atonement. And heaven is exclusively for them.

Well, there's more to say but I'm going to stop at this point because I can't finish and I want to leave enough for another message. Verse 15, I believe our Lord is still speaking, continues the discussion of heaven's exclusivity by saying, "Outside are the dogs, and the sorcerers and immoral persons and murders and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices lying." Boy, there are some fascinating things there. Just a hint, the word "dogs" refers in Deuteronomy 23:18 to homosexual male prostitutes who were considered the lowest of the low in terms of perversion. There are many other things in those terms that describe who won't be there if their sins are not forgiven.

But I want to close, in case someone listens to what I just said, by saying this, even a male homosexual prostitute can be forgiven and cleansed because in 1 Corinthians 6 the Apostle Paul writes that there are some people who are not going to make it into the Kingdom and here they are, "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers shall inherit the Kingdom of God." Listen to the next verse, 1 Corinthians 6:11, "And such WERE some of you but you WERE washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." It can happen to anyone who comes.

The invitation is from the Supreme One of the universe, how can you turn it down? And heaven is exclusive. On the inside are those who have been washed. On the outside are those who haven't. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we acknowledge that we are not worthy to be considered as citizens of heaven because we don't deserve it. We should be on the outside, actually we are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and idolaters and the ones who love and practice lying, but we've been washed. That washing took place when we were so profoundly thirsty and burdened over our own sin and we saw that there was forgiveness in Christ and we came and drank like a thirsty man. And all we had to do was come and take freely. And we know You offer us the water of life, the water of salvation. You offer us forgiveness and cleansing from sin. You offer to any who will come to Christ, confess their sin, accept His sacrifice on their behalf, repent and submit all to Christ. And let the one who is thirsty come, let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. What an invitation. No cost, free. And all that's required is that we want it and that we ask and receive. May that be the response of many hearts in the name of Christ. Amen.

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