

Revelation 22.1-5

- Paradise lost, paradise renewed -

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Introduction

- ❖ Is there an afterlife? Is there a paradise? Is immortality possible? Who can reach immortality? Is digital immortality an option? These questions have inspired many to write books, to create movies and scientific programs. See below.
- ❖ Revelation 22:1-5 depicts a paradise, the promise of eternal life, healing, and life in full communion with God, sharing his glory.
- ❖ The purpose of Revelation 22:1-5 is fourfold:
 - It is meant to comfort and encourage Christians who suffer due to persecution and oppression.
 - It is also a strong invitation to come to believe in Jesus Christ.
 - Revelation 22:17: “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘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.” For the water of life: Revelation 22:1-3.
 - It shows the Christian church what is important for life in this age and in the age to come:
 - The water of life.
 - The rule of God and the Lamb
 - The eternal life that God will provide; whereby eternal life is life in communion with God to serve God and to share in the glory of God and reign forever and ever.

- The healing of the nations. All the nations suffer in the present age.
 - The promise that there no longer will be any curse.
- ❖ This passage can be best understood against the background of the imagery of the tabernacle, especially verses 4 and 5.
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Revelation to John. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a stand-alone. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

Context

- ❖ The book of Revelation is like a painting. It is impossible to study one passage without looking at the book as a whole.
- ❖ A brief outline of the Book of Revelation:¹

Introduction (Rev 1:1-3)	
Rev 1:1-3	The origin of and the command to write this Revelation.
The Book of Revelation (Rev 1:4-22:21)	
Rev 1:4-8	The opening liturgical setting.
Rev 1:9-3:22	PART 1
Rev 4:1-22:6	PART 2
Rev 22:7-21	The closing liturgical setting.

- PART 1: The risen and exalted Christ sends his seven messages to the seven churches in the Roman Province Asia.
- PART 2: The heavenly courtroom and the judgment of God, ending with the descent of the new heaven and earth.
 - PART 2: Three main stages can be distinguished in this part of Revelation. Each stage is introduced by a vision of the heavenly courtroom where God resides as the Creator-King and Judge of all creation.

¹ This outline for sermons is very brief and does not discuss all the (many) different theories about the structures and outlines of the Book of Revelation. Beale (1999) provides a detailed outline. For discussion see Garrow (1997).

Part 2 (Rev 4:1-22:11)	
Stage 1	Rev 4:1-7:17 > the first six seals.
Stage 2	Rev 8:1-11:14 > (the seventh seal) and the first six trumpets.
Stage 3	Rev 11:15-22:11 > (the seventh trumpet) and the seven bowls of God's wrath > the two cities: Babylon versus the New Jerusalem.
Stage 3 (Rev 11:15-22:11) – in more detail	
Rev 11:15-16:21	<p>The war between Christ and the powers of Satan, the Beast, the false prophet, and Babylon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev 11:15-19 > The heavenly courtroom. • Rev 12:1-14:20 > The war between Christ and Satan, the victory of Christ. • Rev 15:1-16:21 > The seven bowls of Gods wrath, the victory over and the destruction of Babylon.
Rev 17:1-21:8	<p>The destruction of Babylon and the final judgement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev 17:1-19:10 > The fall of Babylon. • Rev 19:11-21:8 > The final judgement.
Rev 21:9-22:5	The vision of the New Jerusalem and the New Creation.

- Revelation 22:1-5 is the closing part of the vision of “the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God” (Rev 21:9, 10).

The final vision: The bride of the Lamb (Rev 21:9-22:5)	
Introduction <i>(Rev 21:9-10)</i>	One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.
Its shining glory (Rev 21:10-21)	
A. The glory <i>(Rev 21:11)</i>	It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

B. The wall, the gates and foundations
(Rev 21:12-14)

It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

C. The size of the city
(Rev 21:15-17)

The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using.

B'. The wall, the gates and foundations
(Rev 21:15-21)

The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

A'. The glory
(Rev 21:11)

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light,

Entering the city (Rev 21:24-27)

and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour (glory; ESV) into it.

On no day will its gates ever be shut,
for there will be no night there.

	<p>The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it.</p> <p>Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.</p>
The inner city (Rev 22:1-5)	
<p>The water and the tree of life (Rev 22:1-2)</p>	<p>Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse.</p>
<p>The servants of God (Rev 22:3-5)</p>	<p>The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.</p>

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

The purpose of Revelation

- ❖ The purpose of the Book of Revelation is fourfold:
 - 1. Revelation: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known" (Rev 1:1).

- 2. Promise: “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” (Rev 22:14).
- 3. Warning: “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” (Rev 22:19).
- 4. Call: “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘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” (Rev 22:17).
- ❖ Revelation 22:1-2: “the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life.”

The character of the book

- ❖ The Book of Revelation is Trinitarian (God – Holy Spirit – Jesus Christ; Rev. 1:4-5) in character.
 - God is the first and the last (Rev. 1:8) – Jesus Christ is the first and the last (Rev. 1:17).
 - Jesus Christ speaks to the churches (Rev. 2:1-6) and the churches are summoned to listen to what the Spirit (Rev. 2:7) says.
 - Note the Trinitarian character of Rev. 5:
 - God, Creator residing on his throne;
 - The Son, the Lamb, standing in the midst;
 - The seven spirits, sent by the Son to the corners of the earth (East, West, North, South), who is identical with the Holy Spirit of God.
- ❖ The Book of Revelation is foremost a liturgical book with prayers, doxologies, confessions, prophecies and visions. It shows the heavenly liturgy in images and this liturgy affects the history of this world when the plagues of God strike this earth. Rev. 4:11 explains why: **“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”**
 - This is the first priority in the life of every human being: to glorify God.
 - This liturgical book reminds us of the liturgy in the tabernacle (especially) and the temple of the Old Testament. This explains the many references to the altars and the priestly appearances of Christ and some of his angels.
 - Revelation 5 contains three songs of glorification and one acclamation “Amen”.
- ❖ The book of Revelation is also a prophetic book about the past, the present and the future. It sheds light on the past, the present situation of the seven churches in Asia Minor, and the future, culminating in the promise of the new heaven and the new earth.

- From chapter 4 onwards the judgment of God is the dominating theme. He will do justice (Rev. 4-5; Rev. 6:10; Rev. 21:1-15 and other passages).

Reading and Understanding

- ❖ Reading and understanding the Book of Revelation requires:
 - Profound knowledge of the Old Testament.
 - Especially the books of Exodus and Numbers, Ezekiel and Daniel are important for study. These books are related to oppression and deliverance of the people of God (Egypt and Babylon). Genesis 2-3 and 1 Kings 6 provide the necessary background for understanding Revelation 21:9-22:5.
 - Knowledge of the Greek-Roman world of the first century.
 - Knowledge of figures of speech, because of all the metaphors and other figures of speech.
 - Knowledge of the structure of Revelation (see above).
 - (Elementary) knowledge of Hermeneutics.

Christ revealed

- ❖ John received this Revelation from Jesus Christ and at the same time, this Revelation reveals the risen and exalted Christ, who holds the keys of (life and) death and Hades (Rev. 1:17). John understood the words he heard, the visions he saw, though sometimes they needed to be explained to him (Rev. 1:19-20).
- ❖ John wrote down what he heard and saw in this book and sent it to the seven churches in Asia Minor, an important province of the eastern part of the Roman Empire. In these seven messages to the churches of Asia, Jesus Christ addresses major aspects of church life. He praises and rebukes them and gives them promises of the life to come. Christians, members of these churches, understood these messages. Twice are people mentioned by name and they were warned against a movement called the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6; 2:15), active among the churches. These Christians were far more familiar with the figures of speech used in the Revelation than we are today.
 - Figures of speech are not always easily understood by 21st-century readers. Sometimes they are explained, more often not. Figures of speech allow more than one explanation and application. That explains the multitude of commentaries and theories.

Hermeneutical traditions

- ❖ In the process of explaining and applying the prophecies of this book, the interpreter should ask himself two questions:
 - To which exegetical tradition do I belong? There are a plethora of traditions, especially in the Anglo-American World. To mention only three:

- Amillennialism;
 - Postmillennialism;
 - Premillennialism.
- Secondly, the interpreter should be aware of his situation and the local Christian community. What is my political-religious situation and how does this situation affect my reading and understanding of the Book of Revelation?

Verse 1, 3

- ❖ **“The lamb” = “ἀρνίον”**: the crucified, resurrected and glorified Christ.
 - The Lamb refers to the exodus out of Egypt (Ex 12; Jn 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7).
 - The Lamb is introduced in Revelation 5:6 “Then I (John) saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne.”
 - “looking as if it had been slain” refers to the crucifixion.
 - “standing” refers to the resurrection
 - “in the centre of the throne” refers to glorification.
 - The Lamb is worthy to take the scroll (5:1) and to open its seals (Rev 5:5, 9; 6: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1): “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!” (Rev 5:12; 17).
 - This scroll is probably the Book of Life (Rev 3:5; 13: 8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27).
 - “The Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Rev 7:17).
 - Those who wear white robes “have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14; see also Rev 12:10).
 - The Lamb is victorious: “There before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads” (Rev 14:1; see also Rev 17:14).
 - The church is the bride of the Lamb (Rev 19:9, 21:9, 21:14). After the final judgment, all those whose names were written in the Book of Life will live forever in communion with the Lamb and with God (Rev 21:22, 23).

Genesis 2:8-10, 15 and Revelation 22:1-5 compared

Genesis 2:8-10	Revelation 22:1-2
Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he	Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from

had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden stood the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters.

the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

- What is similar? In both passages are mentioned: “the middle,” “the river” and “the tree of life.”
- What is different?
 - “garden” < > “city”.
 - “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” < > “the throne of God and of the Lamb”
 -
 - This difference is interesting. The “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” is also the “the tree of wisdom”: “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom.” Only God is the source of true wisdom. Christ is the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:30). The “tree of the knowledge” represents God. The “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” is now replaced by the throne of God and of the lamb.

Exposition

Verse 1-2 (The inner city)

- ❖ **“Then the angel showed me.”** This angel was introduced in Revelation 15:7. He is one of the seven angels who will carry out the wrath of God (Rev 16). One (two) these angels showed John the fate of the city of Babylon (Rev 17:1, 2) and the bride of the Lamb (Rev 21:9).
 - The picture reminds the hearer of Genesis 2:8-10. See above for a comparison.
- ❖ **“The river of the water of life, as clear as crystal.”**
 - Genesis 2:10: **“A river watering the garden flowed from Eden.”** See also Ezekiel 47:1-9 and Zechariah 14:8.
 - **“clear as crystal.”** See also Rev 4:6. “Clear as crystal” implies healthy unpolluted water.

- The “living water” image does not symbolize the Holy Spirit (Jn 4:10-24). In Revelation 22:17 the Holy Spirit is clearly distinguished from the “living water.” Also, the Holy Spirit does not flow from the throne.

❖ **“flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb”**

- In Ezekiel 47, the living water flows from the temple, though now God and the Lamb are the temple (Rev 21:22). “Though the Holy Spirit may be in mind, the water metaphor primarily represents the life of eternal fellowship with God and Christ.”²
- **This is a major change in Revelation.**
 - Compare this with Revelation 4:5: “From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.” (See also Revelation 8:5; 11:19; 16:19; Exodus 19:16-18.) The flashes of lightning and the other signs refer to God’s power and his judgment.
 - Both in Revelation 4:5 “came” as in 22:1”, the same verb “ἐκπορεύομαι” is used. The contrast with Revelation 4:5 is significant: “From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder.” These were the signs of the coming judgment.
 - Lenski remarks: “What is shown to John is the whole tide of eternal life going out from the throne or the eternal power of God and the Lamb. It is the life of glory for the blessed who are now in eternal, glorious *union* with God and the Lamb, a veritable ‘river,’ ‘brilliant as crystal’”³
- The throne of God and of the Lamb replaced “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” See above. This tree of knowledge symbolized the prerogative of God, the source of all wisdom.
- God said to John: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. **To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life**” (Rev 21:6; Isa 55:1-3).
- **“throne”**: see below verse 3-5.

- ❖ **“Down the middle of the great street of the city.”** It is not necessary to make a visual representation. Suffice to say, that the river of living water is not flowing to a remote corner but in the centre of the city, accessible for everyone to come and to drink (Rev 22:17).

² Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 1104).

³ Lenski, R. C. H. (1935, p. 649).

- **“Great street.”** Christians living in Asia Minor (Ephesus) in the first century CE were familiar with the **“great street”** of towns. In Ephesus, the **“great street”** ran from the harbour up to the grand theatre. **The great street was impressive of pure gold, like transparent glass** (Rev 21:21).

❖ **“On each side of the river stood the tree of life.”**

- The (first) tree of life was planted by God in the middle of the garden of Eden, the Paradise. The tree of life was also represented on the walls of the temple by **“palm trees and open flowers”** (1 Ki 6:29). Revelation depicts more than one tree.
- The fruit of the tree of life is promised to: **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God”** (Rev 2:7). The access to the tree of life had been forbidden: **“The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever”** (Gen 3:22).
- **“Bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month.”**
 - The number twelve corresponds with the twelve gates (Rev 21:12).
 - Ezekiel 47:12: **“Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river.** Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.”
 - Normally a fruit tree will yield its fruit during the harvest season. The tree of life will bear fruit every month of the year. Remember that this is an image. Time has received a new meaning, the seasons of the year (dry – wet season; summer – autumn – winter – spring) (probably) don't exist as they existed during the old order. Genesis 8:22: **“As long as the earth endures, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”**

❖ **“And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”**

- **“Leaves.”**
 - This was already foreshadowed in Exodus 15:26: He said, **“I am the LORD, who heals you.”** God will wipe every tear from their eyes (Rev 21:4; also Rev 7:17).
 - Christ **“himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed”** (1 Pet 2:24).
 - The image of the leaves doesn't mean that the nations need healing forever because the old order has passed away (Rev 21:4). It shows what the nations need when the present age comes to an end: healing from all kinds of oppression, abuse of power, war, economic and social oppression, racism, slavery.

❖ **“No longer will there be any curse.”**

- **“Curse”** = “is a person or a thing that God declares unacceptable. Such a person or thing is put under the ban, that is, is banished, condemned to destruction.”⁴
- **This means that God will never destroy the city again. See also Zechariah 4:11.**⁵ Death has been thrown in the lake of fire (Rev 20:14).
 - The death of man came into the world because they had eaten “from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Gen 2:17). This was effected in the curse of Genesis 3:17-19. “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; **for dust you are and to dust you will return.**” God didn't allow a man to eat from the tree of life. “The LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever’” (Gen 3:22).
- The curse of Genesis 3:17 (Adam) and 4:12 (Cain) has been taken away.
 - Genesis 3:17: “To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ **‘Cursed is the ground because of you;** through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.” Genesis 4:12: “When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”
 - Man as a “restless wanderer on the earth” will finally find rest.
 - “There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev 21:4). And: “the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Rom 8:21, 22).
- By Christ:
 - Because “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’”
 - The salvation by Christ has been completed: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Rev 7:10).

Verse 3-5

❖ **“The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city”**

⁴ Bratcher, R. G., & Hatton, H. (1993, p. 113).

⁵ See for further discussion Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 1112).

- There is only one throne which symbolizes the unity of God and the Lamb. They also share the same titles: “Alpha and Omega” (1:8; 21:6; 22:13)⁶
- The throne of God is a metaphor for the presence and sovereignty of God and of the Lamb. This throne will be no longer in heaven separated from the earth but in the centre of the city, which is the new creation, the heavenly earth. “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God” (Rev 21:3).
 - Remember the promise given by the glorified Christ: “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Rev 3:21).
- The throne of God refers to his majesty. He is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Judge, the King of this earth.
 - One of the major expects of the Revelation are the songs that glorify God and the Lamb. Revelation 5:13 is an example: “Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!’” See also Revelation 4:11; 5:12; 7:12; 19:1.

❖ **“and his servants will serve him.”**

- **“servants.”** The servants are the recipients of the Revelation: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place” (Rev 1:1; see also Rev 10:7; 22:6).
- The heavenly worship, depicted in chapters 4 and 5, and the earthly worship on earth will become one unified worship.⁷
 - “The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Heb 9:14; also: Rev 1:6).
 - “Therefore, ‘they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them’” (Rev 7:15).
- serve = **“λατρεύω”**: carrying out of religious duties,⁸ “worship”. Jesus said against Satan: “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

⁶ Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 1113).

⁷ Boxall, I. (2006, p. 311).

- This service was foreshadowed in the Old Testament by the tabernacle (Heb 8:5) and temple, and in the New Testament by the church service.
- “Then a voice came from the throne, saying: ‘Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!’” (Rev 19:5).
- **“They will see his face.”** During the old order, seeing the face of God was impossible. Once, Moses asked to see the face of the LORD. “‘But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.’ Then the LORD said, ‘There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen’” (Ex 33:20-23). And John writes: “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known” (Jn 1:18). In the Old Testament times, people have only heard the voice of God (Deut 4: 12, 15).
 - “God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen” (1 Tim 6:15, 16).
 - Jesus promised to see God (Mt 5:8; see also 1 Jn 3:2; Heb 12:14; 1 Cor 13:12). This promise will be fulfilled fully in the age to come.
- **“and his name will be on their foreheads.”** The servants were already marked by “a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God” (Rev 7:3; 14:1; 3:12). stands in sharp contrast with Revelation 13:16, where everyone is forced, “small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead.” (Rev 13:16).
- This is a sign of dedication and devotion. “It is beyond coincidence that God’s name was written on the high priest’s forehead in the OT. This expresses further the priestly nature of God’s new people.”⁹ See also Exodus 28:36–38.

❖ **“There will be no more night.”**

- “They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light.” See also Revelation 21:22-25. This is foreshadowed by the lampstand in the tabernacle and the temple (Ex 27:20, 21; Lev 24:2-40). These lamps were burning during the night. In the tabernacle, there was no darkness.
 - The new heaven and earth will be the new tabernacle and temple (Rev 21:9-27).

⁸ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 587).

⁹ Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 1114).

- See also the promises of Isaiah 60:19: “The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.”
- “In the OT, the ‘shining face’ of God is a metaphor for divine favor (Ps 4:7; 31:17; 44:4; 67:2; 80:4, 8, 19; 89:16; 119:35).¹⁰ The priestly blessing: “the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you” (Num 6:25).

❖ **“And they will reign for ever and ever.”**

- This reign is different from the reign during one thousand years (Rev 20:1-6). This reign was associated with the judgement.
- Revelation 5:10: “You (= the Lamb) have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Rev 1:6).
- This promised reign must be understood against the situation of oppression, persecution, economic and social deprivation (Rev 13; see also 2 Tim 2:12).
- “They exercise sovereignty over the new creation in a way similar to how Adam was to rule ‘over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”¹¹

Application

Contemporary context

- ❖ Which ideas, beliefs do people have about paradise?
 - The following entries can be used for a start.
 - Afterlife.¹²
 - Immortality.¹³ Some people believe in digital immortality, their bodies will die but their data will remain and ‘live’ on in eternity.¹⁴
 - Paradise.¹⁵

¹⁰ Aune, D. E. (1998, p. 1181).

¹¹ Beale, G. K. (1999, p. 1116).

¹² Afterlife. (2021, August 18). Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afterlife>

¹³ Immortality. (2021, August 21). Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immortality>

¹⁴ Digital immortality. (2021, July 09). Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_immortality

¹⁵ Paradise. (2021, June 26). Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise>

The purpose of Revelation

- ❖ Explain the purpose of Revelation:
 - The glorification of God and the Lamb.
 - A call to Christians, especially those who suffer persecution and oppression, to be faithful.
 - A call to faith. See also Revelation 22:17.
 - Revelation 22:1-5 summarizes what is important in faith and life:
 - God is King and Creator. He governs this world and the world to come.
 - The Lamb, Jesus Christ, the Saviour. See Revelation 1:4-6.
 - The river of water of life, the life-giving water – the Word of God.
 - The healing of the nations (see below).
 - To see the face of God and to share in his glory.
 - To worship God. See also Revelation 1:6. The heavenly worship and the earthly worship coincide.

Glorify

- ❖ God as Creator-King-Judge. He is faithful to his purposes and his plan. Genesis 2:8-15 (the Paradise) will finally encompass the whole world, the new creation.
- ❖ Christ as the Lamb. He gave his life. He conquered death and Satan and will rule in eternity.
 - God and the Lamb are the source of life (living water; the tree of life) and they will heal the nations.

Verse 1-2

- ❖ The “Paradise” is the new creation of God, a gift to his children.
- ❖ “The river of water of life.” Strongly invite people to come and drink (Rev 22:17).
- ❖ “Healing of the nations.”
 - See also Revelation 21:4.
 - Stress the importance of healing for the nations.
 - Comfort people who suffer due to all kinds of injustice, racism, sin, persecution or oppression due to their Christian faith (Mt 5:10).

Verse 3-5

- ❖ The church services in this age foreshadow the coming age: the devotion to God and the Lamb.
 - See also the priestly blessing (Num 6:25): “the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.”

- Christian Baptism foreshadows Revelation 22:1-5.
- Eventually explain the continuity of worship: Genesis 2:8-15 – Tabernacle – Temple – Church – the New Jerusalem. The light of the lamp harks back to the lampstand (Tabernacle – temple – the church as a lampstand (Rev 1:18-20)).
- ❖ To see the face of God = to life in communion with God, his perfect love and glory.
 - **“THE VISION OF GOD IS THE REWARD OF FAITH.** PRIMASIUS¹⁶: This implies that there is in store for us a reward for our faith, that vision that John had in mind when he said, “When he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him just as he is.” For, of course, *face* is to be understood not as the kind of face we now have as part of our body but as a manifestation of what God is.... God will be made known to and be perceived by us, in many ways. He will be seen in the spirit (whereby each of us will see him within ourselves and in one another); he will be seen in himself; he will be seen in the new heavens and the new earth and in every creature then existing. COMMENTARY ON THE APOCALYPSE 22:4.”¹⁷

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¹⁶ See for more information: Primasius of Hadrumetum. (2021, April 30). Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primasius_of_Hadrumetum

¹⁷ Weinrich, W. C. (Ed.). (2005, p. 392).