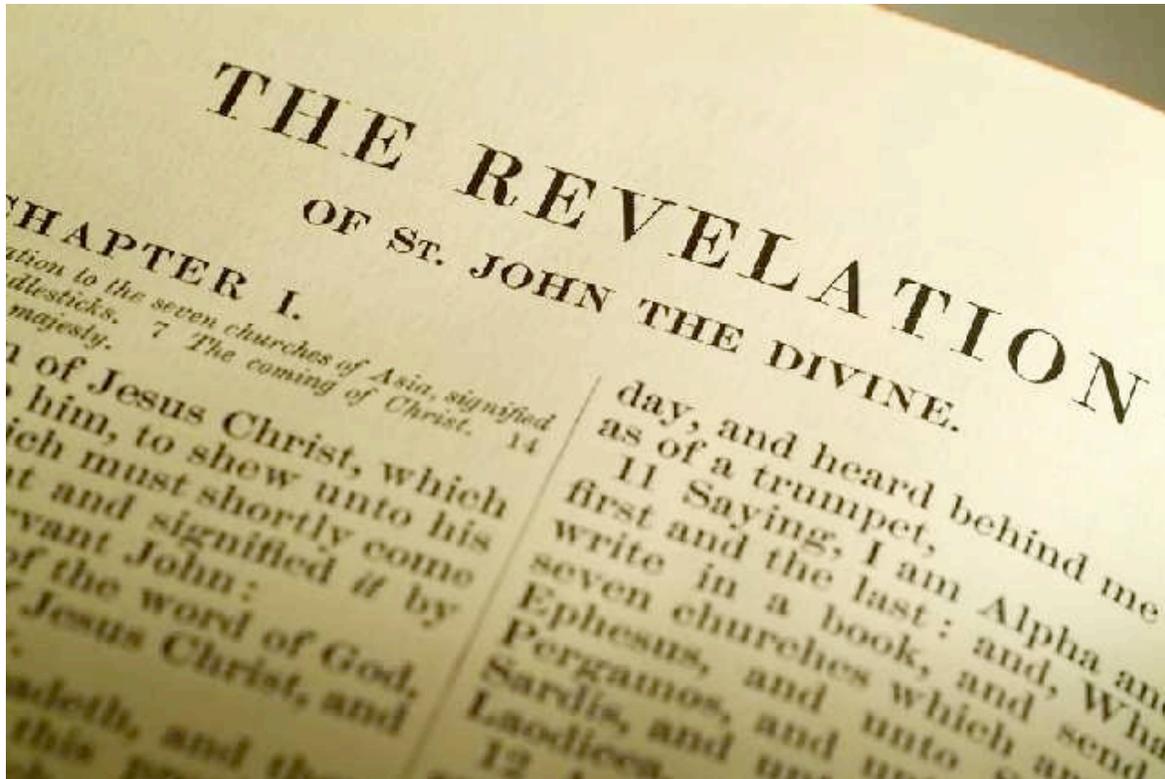


THE SEVENTH FACET: REVELATION 21, 22



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

T. M. MOORE

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Revelation: The Seventh Facet
Revelation 21, 22

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The book of Revelation comes to a brilliant, glorious, hopeful conclusion in this seventh facet. John is shown a bright, expansive, inviting vision of our future hope, and invites us to glimpse its being realized, if only in part, in the here and now.

The Lord is preparing a new heaven and new earth for us, and He calls us to practice patient endurance, as priest and kings, against and amid all the tribulations we experience in this life. Glory awaits us, and the more clearly we see that glory, the more we will long for it, and the more strength we will draw from it as we press on, conquering and to conquer.

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We hope you find this study of Revelation a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Home at Last!

Week 10, Monday: The New Heavens and New Earth

John's vision reaches beyond time as we know it to time as it will be forever. And what a blessed prospect! Only the barest outline is provided, but just the right words are given to the Apostle to make us long for this homeland which is yet to be.

The seventh and final facet of Revelation opens with a brilliant glimpse into the glory that is to come.

Read Revelation 21

Meditate on Revelation 21.1-8

1. There are several indicators in this passage that we're dealing with the eternal estate of the redeemed. For example, how is this suggested in verses 1, 4, 6, and 8? Time as we know it will end. But time as such does not end for us, because we are creatures, and creatures are made "into" time, which is itself a creature of God. Only God is without time, beyond time, and through all time. How does this passage provoke your curiosity concerning the nature of "eternal" time? In what ways will it be like time as we know it now? How will it be different?
2. The new heavens and new earth are likened to the tabernacle Moses constructed in the wilderness (v. 3). What does this suggest about the nature of our experience of God during eternal time? But John seems deliberately to be playing on his own words in John 1.14, where the Greek root for "dwell" and "tabernacle" is the same. How does this add to our understanding of eternal time and how we will experience it (meditate on 1 Cor. 15.28 and Eph. 1.23)?
3. Meditate on verses 4-7. What is promised in these verses? How does this address our need for "patient endurance" ("overcomes") amid the tribulations of this world?
4. This is the "hope of glory" toward which all look and long who truly belong to Christ. Why is this such a hopeful and glorious prospect? Ah, but look at Romans 5.1 and 2. Paul says we "stand" in this "hope" *right now!* What are the implications of our promised "then and there" for our daily "here and now"?
5. The ground and basis for all this glorious hope is what is declared in the first part of verse 6. Does this help to explain all the constant singing and praising and bowing and rejoicing in heaven? Explain.

My Reflection

As a Kingdom citizen and follower of Christ, what is your great and blessed hope? How does this hope inform your exercise of patient endurance amid the tribulations of your daily life?

The Glory of God

"And He said to me, 'It is done!'" What is done? What has Jesus done so as to be able to offer this great and glorious eternal hope to all who overcome?

Glory to Glory

You long for the glory to come, and you stand in that glory today. How does this "hope of glory" affect your daily walk with the Lord?

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Memorize

Our memory verses for this week are Revelation 21.6, 7. Write these verses on an index card, using your preferred translation of the Bible. Carry this with you throughout the week, and spend some time each day working to memorize this passage. How should these verses encourage you in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Closing Prayer

Compose a prayer expressing the hope of glory as you look forward to it and as you stand in it today and every day.

2 The City to Come

Week 10, Tuesday: The Bride and the City

John's vision is now directed toward the glory of the Bride of Christ, which is also the New City of Jerusalem. This juxtaposing of two images brings together a wide variety of Scriptural referents in an expansive vision of what we are to become as a result of the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is important that we remember John is being shown visions, images of what is to be, and not the literal reality. Images *suggest*, they do not *describe*. So it's important that we let these images do their work. As we do, we will see them connecting, expanding, and increasing, so that the sense of what Christ is preparing for us – and preparing us for – becomes even more desirable, justifying the longing of all who love the Lord's appearing (2 Tim. 4.8).

Read Revelation 21

Meditate on Revelation 21.9-21

1. John used the image of the Bride of Christ to represent the redeemed of the Lord in Revelation 19.6-10. Paul used the same image in Ephesians 5.25-33. How does the idea that we as a people – redeemed by the Lord, His Bride – lead us to think about the life of faith? What does this image suggest about our daily walk with and work for the Lord?
2. John dwells at greater length on the image of the City (vv. 10-21). Read verses 10-21 aloud, slowly, dwelling on each feature of the overall image. What feelings are stirred within you as you contemplate what we are to become because of the finished work of Christ?
3. Meditate on Psalm 48. Compare this with Hebrews 12.22-24. We are *becoming* the City of God, but we are *already* that City. In what ways can the vision of what we are to become guide us in thinking about the calling and character of a local church – how the Lord sees us, what He expects of us, what our potential is for His glory here and now?
4. The City of God is adorned with various precious gems, like the breastplate of the high priest of Israel. Here another image is “patched in” to the image of the Bride and the City. This image has been alluded to already, in Revelation 1.6. How does this image inform our understanding of what God is calling us to be as we patiently endure amid the tribulations of the world? What does this require of us? What does it suggest about our experience in eternal time?
5. Imagine that you have been asked to help a new believer get off on the right foot in his or her discipleship. How would you use today's text to give that new believer a vision of what to expect and what to strive for in working out his or her salvation (Phil. 2.12, 13)?

My Reflection

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 = Very much, to what extent does the vision of Revelation 21.9-21 guide your daily planning and living for the Lord? Why did you choose the number you did? What might you begin to do that would allow you to move that number more toward 10 by this time next year?

The Glory of God

The Bride/City of God is described as “having the glory of God” (v. 11). How does this lead us to think about the glory of God – what it is, how we should experience it, what its effects on us ought to be?

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Glory to Glory

What can you do today in order to fix the vision of God's glory, coming in and through you, more firmly in your life?

Memorize

Let's look more closely at our memory verse, Revelation 21.6, 7. Recite your memory verse aloud. Where does this verse go in a presentation of the Gospel?

Closing Prayer

Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts;
Look down from heaven and see,
And visit this vine
And the vineyard which Your right hand has planted,
And the branch *that* You made strong for Yourself.
It is burned with fire, *it is* cut down;
They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance.
Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,
Upon the son of man *whom* You made strong for Yourself.
Then we will not turn back from You;
Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.
Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved!

Psalm 80.14-19

3 The Glorious City

Week 10, Wednesday: Glory All Around!

This passage partakes of both “not yet” and “already” aspects. It has much in common with a passage like Micah 4.1-8. John is clearly seeing into eternal time, but he seems also to be glimpsing some aspects of present history. The City of God is coming; but it’s not just coming then and there.

It’s coming here and now as well.

Read Revelation 21

Meditate on Revelation 21.22-27

1. What kind of “light” is John describing here (vv. 22-24)? Paul says we are children of the light, and that we should “walk” in the light (Eph. 5.8, 9). Jesus said we should “work” while it’s still “light” (Jn. 9.4, 5; Jn. 14.12). John wrote that the light has been increasing in the world since the days of the apostles (1 Jn. 2.8). Is this merely a “then and there” calling? What are the implications of this “end result” for our “here and now” walk with and work for the Lord?
2. In what sense do the “kings of the earth” have “honor and glory” to bring into the City of God (vv. 24, 26)?
3. The “gates” of God’s City have the names of the 12 tribes of Israel written on them (Rev. 21.12). This points us back to the Old Covenant and the promises made to Abraham (Gen. 12.1-3). The covenant motto – “I will be your God and you shall be My people” (cf. v. 3) is placed on this Bride and City. Evidently, people enter through the “gates” of God’s promises in order to take up citizenship in the City of God. Those gates must never be shut (v. 25). In what sense are you called to be a “gatekeeper” in the City of God?
4. What is forbidden in the City of God (v. 27)? In eternal time, this will not be a threat (cf. v. 8). But it remains a threat in time as we now experience it. How can we guard ourselves, our families, and our churches from such a threat, while at the same time, keeping the gates to the City open to others?
5. Here’s a meditation exercise that I find, frankly, exhilarating: The source of light in the City of God to come is neither the sun nor the moon. What brings light to the City in eternal time? Since that light shines everywhere, without obstruction, will there be a place for shadows in the City to Come – for even the remotest hint of darkness? What will that be like? What does this suggest about what it means for Christ to be our Light here and now? For us to be His lights in the world?

My Reflection

Meditate on Matthew 5.13-16. What does it mean for you to be the light of Christ in your Personal Mission Field? What can keep you from “shining” that light?

The Glory of God

What are you learning about the glory of God, what it is, how we should expect to experience it and to hope for it, and what Paul intends in 1 Corinthians 10.31?

Glory to Glory

How will it be evident today that the light of Christ and the glory of God are shining in and through you?

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Memorize

Recite your memory verse aloud: Revelation 21.6, 7. Share it with a Christian friend. Share any way that this verse has begun to affect your daily walk with the Lord, or any questions you may have regarding the understanding of this verse.

Closing Prayer

Those who trust in the LORD

Are like Mount Zion,

Which cannot be moved, *but* abides forever.

As the mountains surround Jerusalem,

So the Lord surrounds His people

From this time forth and forever.

For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest

On the land allotted to the righteous,

Lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity.

Do good, O LORD, to *those who are* good,

And to *those who are* upright in their hearts.

Psalm 125.1-4

4 Like What We See

Week 10, Thursday: The Lord Face-to-Face

In the new heavens and new earth – the City to Come – the servants of the Lord will “see” Him “face-to-face.” But, given that God has no visible form, but is a most pure Spirit, we must ask ourselves how this can be.

More importantly, we should ask ourselves what this will be like.

Read Revelation 22

Meditate on Revelation 22.1-5

1. The “river of life” mentioned in verses 1 and 2 is a theme with long-standing Biblical roots (cf. Pss. 1; 46.4; Jer. 17.7, 8; Ezek. 47.1-12; Jn. 7.37-39). What does this image represent? How should we interpret what we read in verse 2?
2. This bearing of fruit from the trees which draw refreshment from the river of life is a perpetual fact of the new heavens and new earth. What does this suggest about life in eternal time?
3. The “leaves” of the trees that are nourished by the river of life “are for the healing of the nations” (v. 2). But surely, in the new heavens and new earth – where there is no more death or sorrow, and no more curse (Rev. 22.3) – all the nations will already be “healed”? Do you suppose this verse intends to reflect back into historical time? Explain.
4. We cannot see God as He exists in His pure spiritual essence. Meditate on 1 John 3.1-3. How will it be that, in the City to Come, we will “see His face”? Does the book of Revelation provide any counsel on what we should expect when we “see His face”? How should the prospect of this affect us in the here and now?
5. In the new heavens and new earth the “servants” of the Lord, who “see His face”, will “reign forever and ever.” What will that reigning entail? Can you see how this suggests that, even in the new creation, in eternal time, we may expect to know progress, development, cultivation, and the making and enjoying of new things? What does such a “reign” suggest for our lives here and now?

My Reflection

Much of the book of Revelation points forward to our coming hope at the same time it seems to point to our life in the Kingdom here and now. To what extent, and in what specific ways, does this represent your outlook on life? Is this how you go about “conquering and to conquer” in your Personal Mission Field? Should it be?

The Glory of God

We can never exhaust the glory of God. Even in eternal time He will shine with unending, inexhaustible radiance, and we will be ever engaged in growing in Him and in cultivating the new heavens and new earth to refract His glory. And He will daily and moment-by-moment refresh us by His Spirit for ever-new and ever-more joyous experiences of His glory. Should we expect at least a foretaste of this in our lives here and now? Explain.

Glory to Glory

Meditate on 2 Corinthians 3.12-18. Paul says we are being transformed from glory (revealed in the Word of

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God) to glory (expressed as likeness to Christ) in the here and now. Thus we fulfill God's purpose of making His glory known throughout the earth (Hab. 2.14). What place does the book of Revelation have in that process?

Memorize

Recite Revelation 21.6, 7. How do you understand the words "overcomes" and "all things" in these verses?

Closing Prayer

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
Let the sea roar, and all its fullness;
Let the field be joyful, and all that *is* in it.
Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the LORD.
For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth.
He shall judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples with His truth.

Psalm 96.11-13

5 A Word to the Blessed

Week 10, Friday: Keep the Word!

The Lord impresses on John the importance of the visions he has seen and the Word that has been entrusted to him. We should take His words and warnings to heart.

Read Revelation 22

Meditate on Revelation 22.6-11

1. What does the angel mean by saying the words spoken to John are “faithful and true”? How would you summarize the message of the words John received in the book of Revelation? What does it mean to you that this message is “faithful and true”?
2. We note the sense of urgency this passage conveys: “shortly take place”, “quickly”, “the time is at hand.” Keeping in mind Acts 1.7 and 8, how should we interpret this sense of urgency, and what are the implications of it for our daily lives?
3. Based on all we’ve seen in Revelation, what does it mean to “keep” the words given to John in this book? How does “keeping” the message of Revelation relate to such matters as our overall outlook on life, how we plan our days, what to expect in the world, and the mission appointed to us (Jn. 20.21)?
4. We saw that the book which the Lamb unsealed was filled with power to affect all aspects of life in historical time. John is commanded not to seal up the book of Revelation (v. 10), but to urge its being read and understood (cf. Rev. 1.3). What is your role in keeping the book and message of Revelation “unsealed”?
5. Verse 11 is a reminder of what to expect as we “unseal” the book of Revelation and go forth to carry out its words. We are citizens of the Kingdom of God, and we stand in the hope of His glory. But we live in a world where spiritual forces of wickedness rule in the hearts of many. Should we expect everyone to be converted by the message of the Gospel? Should we expect the progress of the Kingdom to bring a “heaven on earth” throughout the world? What *should* we expect (Rev. 1.9), and what is our calling in the face of this?

My Reflection

How has the message of the book of Revelation affected your outlook on and approach to your daily walk with and work for the Lord?

The Glory of God

Meditate on the last words of Revelation 22.9: “Worship God.” This has been a constant theme of Revelation from the beginning. Why should we worship God, and how can worshipping God more consistently and truly help us to know His glory here and now?

Glory to Glory

Meditate on Revelation 22.1 and question 5 above. How would you counsel a new believer to prepare each day for “the tribulation and Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1.9)?

Memorize

Review Revelation 21.6, 7. These verses point to Jesus in all His work, from beginning to end (“Alpha and Omega”) and as the Giver of life by His Spirit. Write a prayer that summarizes the work of Christ as that

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work is suggested in this verse. You might want to review, for example, John 1.1-5, John 17.4-6, 1 John 3.8, and perhaps other verses as you compose your prayer:

Closing Prayer

Pray the prayer you wrote from your memory verse. Write it on a card and carry it with you to pray it over and over today. Let your prayer become a “shield of faith” and “helmet of salvation” to embolden and protect you in your walk with and work for the Lord (Eph. 6.16, 17).

6 “Come!”

Week 10, Saturday: Maranatha!

Our passage for today makes it quite clear that working out our salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2.12) is an important aspect of preparing for the return of the Lord. We must do the good works for which we have been redeemed (Eph. 2.10); however, not in order to *earn* salvation, but to *express* and *complete* it.

A wedding feast is being prepared, and they who are not clothed for it will be shut out from it (Matt. 22.1-14).

Read Revelation 22

Meditate on Revelation 22.12-17

1. The message of the book of Revelation is the same as all the rest of Scripture where the matter of works is concerned: We're not saved *by* works, but we're not saved *without* them. Explain.
2. According to Revelation, where should we look to discover the works Jesus expects of us (cf. Jms. 1.22-25; Rev. 12.17; 22.14)? How does Psalm 1 counsel us concerning this? How about Matthew 5.17-19?
3. The good works believers do gives them “the right” to a place in the City to Come (v. 14)? The Greek word here is “authority.” Obedience to God’s Law gives believers a certain “authority” with God. But as we set out each day to do these works, what must we always bear in mind (Rev. 22.1, 2; Phil. 2.12, 13)? How should this affect our view of the good works we are able to do (cf. Rev. 4.10, 11)?
4. Verse 16 reminds us that Jesus is the “last word” on the book of Revelation, as on everything else. He cites two forms of divine revelation to reinforce the truth of His sovereign rule. One of these derives from Scripture, and one from the revelation of God in creation. How does each suggest and bear witness to the authority and sovereignty of Christ?
5. A day of judgment is coming, and our works will feature in it. Yet John indicates that, with the Spirit, our attitude should be one of eagerness (v. 17). Why? How does the second part of this verse “dip into” the hope which is to come (vv. 1, 2; cf. Rev. 21.6) and bring it from the there and then into the here and now?

My Reflection

What opportunities for expressing and completing your salvation do you anticipate today? How can you prepare for these so that, when the opportunity arises, you’ll be sure to make the most of it (Eph. 5.15-17)?

The Glory of God

Meditate on Matthew 5.13-16. On the day of judgment, how will our good works make it clear that we have “the right” to a place in the City to Come? What are the implications of this for our lives here and now?

Glory to Glory

Revelation 22.15 mentions several hindrances that can keep us from realizing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God – keeping us from entering more fully into the City to Come in the here and now of our lives. How might you expect to encounter each of these hindrances during a typical week? How should you prepare to recognize and resist these, so that you can continue “overcoming” for Christ and His Kingdom?

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Memorize

Recite Revelation 21.6, 7. Share this verse and what you've learned from it with a fellow believer today.

Closing Prayer

The LORD has done great things for us,

And we are glad.

Bring back our captivity, O LORD,

As the streams in the South.

Those who sow in tears

Shall reap in joy.

He who continually goes forth weeping,

Bearing seed for sowing,

Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,

Bringing his sheaves *with him*.

Psalm 126.3-6

7 A Final Warning

Week 10, Sunday: Until He Comes

John ends his Revelation with a solemn warning as to the importance of this Word from the Lord.

Read Revelation 22

Meditate on Revelation 22.18-21

1. What does it mean to “add to” the things revealed in Revelation and all the rest of Scripture? How can we know when someone is doing this (cf. Acts 17.11; 1 Cor. 4.6)?
2. What does it mean to “take away” from the things revealed in Revelation and all Scripture? What did Paul do to make sure the people in Ephesus would not be guilty of this (cf. Acts 20.26, 27)?
3. How would you counsel a new believer to start making sure that he neither “adds to” nor “takes away” from anything in the Word of God?
4. Meditate on verses 18 and 19 and the warnings expressed there. How serious would you say the Lord is about our relationship to His words (all His Word)?
5. Why does John think we need the “grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”? How does His grace relate to what the book of Revelation requires of us? How can we make sure that grace is available to us each day?

My Reflection

What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from Revelation about your own walk with and work for the Lord?

The Glory of God

In what ways has Revelation helped to clarify your vision of Christ and your understanding of the Lord and His will?

Glory to Glory

What evidence do you see that the message of Revelation is having a positive effect in your daily life? In what ways are you beginning to realize more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God?

Memorize

Review all your memory verses for this series. Use the 3 x 5 cards you wrote them on to aid in your review. Spend some time meditating on each of these verses and how they help you in understanding and applying the message of Revelation.

Closing Prayer

Use your memory verses to lead you through a time of prayer, seeking the grace of the Lord and giving Him thanks and praise as He reveals Himself in Revelation.

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Week 10: Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. Summarize your vision of the City to Come. What role should this vision play in your daily walk with and work for the Lord?
2. How would you respond to someone who insists that focusing on “works” is not relevant to being saved?
3. How can believers help one another to maintain the sense of urgency, expectancy, and preparation that we see in Revelation 22?
4. What are the most important lessons for you personally from Revelation 21 and 22? Summarize those lessons:
5. How are you beginning to implement those lessons in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.