

Rev. 22:12-14,16-17, 20-21 – The reward in trusting Jesus' sacrifice

The water of life is freely available to all who choose to receive

12 "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.

"I am coming soon" — in this epilogue, Jesus the Sovereign Lord comes for faithful believers, with a different recompense for those who refuse Him. "What they have done" — believing or unbelieving.

13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

"Alpha and Omega" — this title of Jesus shows Him to be sovereign over history, Rev. 1:8.

14 "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.

"Wash" — in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. 7:14.

16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright Morning Star."

SUMMARY The last word of the last book of the Bible holds out the prize for believers of the salvation promise, to all made right with God through trusting Jesus. Although the word "reward" is used it is expressed as the right to life and the free gift of the water of life — always God's grace, never man's achievement..

APPLICATION For us, this is more about attitudes than action — drawing near, believing, and receiving a glorious destiny!

QUESTION *How does it help us, to see everyday life against an eternal timescale?*

PRAYER (attributed to founder of the Jesuit order, Ignatius of Loyola)

Lord, teach me to be generous, to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and not to look for any reward, save that of knowing that I do your holy will. Amen.

The Living Word online, with active links, an article and a video, is published during the week for the following Sunday

<https://www.thelivingword.uk>

also on Medium www.medium.com/the-living-word and on Facebook

See also <https://www.freshbread.today> which offers a less structured, more immediate approach around one verse or short passage

"Bright Morning Star" — a name for the Messiah, who ends mankind's night, Num. 24:17, 2 Peter 1:19.

17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes, take the free gift of the water of life.

"Come..." — invitation repeated for emphasis. The bride is the Church, the believing people of God, those who are thirsty for the living water, see Rev 21:6 and 22:1; Ps 42:1; Isa 55:1; John 4:10-14.

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

"Soon" — but with time for the Church to proclaim salvation in Jesus to an unbelieving world.

"Come Lord Jesus" — *marana tha*, "Our Lord, come", 1 Cor. 16:22, an Aramaic prayer of the early church.

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

"Grace... be with God's people" — John's desire that readers and hearers would be enabled to hear and obey.

The Living Word

Find the full version ONLINE at www.thelivingword.uk

PRINT EDITION

Bible readings for May 29, 2022 commentary & references

Non-denominational Bible study for Sunday, May 29 (Revised Common Lectionary readings)

Prepare: read the Bible passages beforehand. Reflect: re-read to think about the message preached

Theme: Embracing the gospel brings eternal reward at some cost now

Psalms 97 — sets the scene

John 17:20-25 — Jesus prays His followers' reward of seeing His glory

Acts 16:16-34 — Faithful obedience to the gospel brings its own fruit

Rev. 22:12-14,16-17, 20-21 — The reward in trusting Jesus' sacrifice

John 17:20-25 — Jesus prays His followers' reward of seeing His glory

The Lord intercedes for us to be one in Him, our witness to the world

20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message..."

"Not for them alone" — Jesus moves from His close disciples to all who will respond to their proclamation.

21 "... that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me.

"May they also be (one) in Us" — the Holy Spirit's sanctification, a growing alignment with God and each other.

• For further study, see John 14:20, 23; 1 John 4:13.

22 "I have given them the glory that you gave Me, that they may be one as We are one —

"The glory that You gave Me" — Jesus, humble in incarnation, noble in death, exalted in resurrection, showing God's excellence. Believers grow to show others this character, as those who are "in Christ Jesus", 1 Cor. 1:2, 30.

23 "I in them and You in Me — so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.

"I in them and You in Me" — how interactions of Father, Son and Holy Spirit empower believers.

"May be brought to complete unity" — spiritual oneness in the shared spiritual experience of salvation and new life in Jesus, 1 Cor. 12:12-13, Eph. 2:14-22.

24 "Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am, and to see My glory, the glory You have given Me because You loved Me before the creation of the world.

"Before the creation of the world" — Father, Son and Holy Spirit pre-existed the material universe, showing Jesus' love to have deep, eternal roots.

25 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know You, I know You, and they know that You have sent Me."

"Righteous Father" — betrayal and suffering are imminent but Jesus emphasises that God is righteous and just e.g. Ps. 116:5, 119:137, Jer. 12:1.

Setting the scene — verses from Psalm 97

1 The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice...

10 ...Let those who love the Lord hate evil, for He guards the lives of His faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

11 Light shines on the righteous and joy on the upright in heart.

12 Rejoice in the Lord, you who are righteous, and praise His holy name.

SUMMARY Jesus' prayer gives us a picture of how Father, Son and Holy Spirit have always been distinct but in indivisible relationship and perfect harmony, in heaven's glory.

APPLICATION God intends those who are in relationship with Him, to live in relationships which reflect the unity and glory of heaven, as Jesus' prayer for all believers emphasises. He wants the world to know this heavenly unity and glory – through us.

QUESTION *How would you explain how we are in Christ Jesus, and that we also have Him in us?*

Acts 16:16-34 – Faithful obedience to the gospel brings its own fruit

Paul and Silas get a taste of rough justice but also gain a strategic convert

16 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.

"A spirit by which she predicted the future" — literally a 'python' spirit. She was a medium with a demonic spirit, deceiving people by speaking enough truth to appear plausible. See Deut. 18:10; 1 Sam. 28:8; 2 Kings 17:17; Micah 3:11

17 She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved."

"Most High God" — *El Elyon*, a common title among both Jews and Greeks, also used by the man in the grip of an impure spirit, Mark 5:7.

18 She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

"Paul became so annoyed" — he could not let a fortune-teller masquerade as his partner in the gospel.

"I command you to come out" — like Jesus, Paul speaks directly to the demonic spirit, as Jesus instructed His disciples to do, Matt. 10:8, Luke 10:17.

19 When her owners realised that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them

into the marketplace to face the authorities.

20-21 They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

"Before the magistrates" — there were two in each colony who upheld Roman law.

22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods.

"Beaten with rods" — before trial, a hasty and illegal punishment under pressure from the crowd. Paul later reflects on his outrageous treatment in Philippi, 1 Thess. 2:2.

23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully.

"Guard them carefully" — extra severity with the torture of the stocks, a rash action against fellow citizens, vv. 37-39.

24 When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

"Praying and singing hymns:" — joy for the honour of suffering in the name of Jesus is a frequent theme in Acts, Acts 4:24-30. Despite imprisonment and pain they experienced a

strong presence of the Holy Spirit giving them joy and praise, 1 Peter 2:19—21; 4:12-14.

26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.

"A violent earthquake" — tremors were common, but this was a miraculous intervention following Paul and Silas' praise in the face of adversity.

27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.

"About to kill himself" — preferable to the penalty for losing a prisoner.

28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

29-30 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

"What must I do to be saved" — the jailer knew Paul and Silas were preachers of salvation, verse 17, and had heard their praises about salvation through Jesus Christ.

31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord

Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household."

"Believe in the Lord Jesus" — a concise, true expression of the way of salvation, which comes in one simple way, through believing the Good News about Jesus Christ.

• *For further study*, see Acts 15:7; Mark 1:15; Rom 1:16; Acts 8:12, 11:17, 19:4, John 3:16, 36, Romans 3:22.

32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.

"Spoke the word of the Lord" — in coming to believe, he had questions.

33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptised.

He... was baptised" — this followed his understanding of who Jesus was and (we can assume) declaring his own faith and trust. Others in the household made their own response, v.34 below, therefore none were infants.

34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole household.

"Filled with joy" — the NT word is *agalliao*, which describes deep spiritual joy, Matt. 5:12, Luke 1:46-47, 10:21, Acts 2:26, 1 Peter 4:13. Joy always accompanies genuine, personal conversion.

SUMMARY After Lydia the Gentile cloth dealer had given her life to Jesus, Paul and Silas face the challenge of a slave girl with a demonic 'familiar spirit' following them and calling out, as if she was with them. Paul, calling on Jesus' name, cast the spirit out of her. Her owners, resenting their lost income, complained and got Paul and Silas arrested. The magistrate took the law into his own hands, and had them beaten and put in stocks in prison. Despite their pain, Paul and Silas praised God and gave glory to Him, whereupon an earthquake released them and the other prisoners. The jailer, amazed that they didn't escape, asked what he should do to be saved, received the Good News of Jesus with his family – and all were baptized there and then as believers

APPLICATION The devil, the prince of this world who holds people's souls captive and blinded, doesn't give them up to new life in Jesus without a fight. There is joy and peace in the assurance of eternal life – and there can be less welcome 'rewards', too. But note how God presences Himself through the praise of Paul and Silas to bring an unforeseen and glorious kingdom outcome.

QUESTION *What is your reflection about the cost of being a follower of Jesus?*