

• *John asks us to respond to what we have read*

The book of Revelation is drawing to a close. In these smaller units at the end, the book is appealing to us to respond to what we have read and heard from John of Patmos. God's word is faithful and true^{□1} and it is ever imminent^{□2}. Now John makes the point that the word of God will be the basis of our judgement.

□1 22:6-7
□2 22:8-10

1. The way you have lived must eventually be confirmed in what you are permanently

1. The way you have lived must eventually be confirmed in what you are permanently. The angel says: ¹¹*Let the one who is doing wrong continue to do what is wrong, and let the filthy person still be filthy. And let the righteous person still continue doing righteousness, and let the person who is holy continue to be holy.* The point of these words is that there comes a time when our character is fixed. The reward for the way we have lived is to be given permanently what we have been wanting! If a person has been persistently doing wrong, the judgement of God upon him is, 'Let him continue to do what is wrong!' God's judgement is to give us what we were living for. Equally the righteous eventually get to be confirmed in their righteousness. When Jesus comes (and even before he comes!) our basic character will be fixed. Revelation 22:11 echoes Daniel 12:10 ('the wicked will continue to be wicked') but it develops the thought further. Sinners are commanded to keep sinning! The idea is that God withdraws the opportunity to repent and hands the sinner over to their own desires. Do they want to do wickedness? Then let them have what they want! It is their choice. It is also their punishment. Whenever our Lord Jesus Christ 'comes' dramatically and suddenly in any way – even before his final 'second coming' – the righteous and the unrighteous are confirmed in what they are doing. With no further offer of repentance God says, 'Be what you want to be.' Ezekiel 3:27 has a similar idea: 'He that hears, let him hear; and he that refuses to hear, let him refuse . . .'

• *God's judgement is to give us what we were living for*

• *God withdraws the opportunity to repent*

2. The coming of Jesus is a time of final reward and final punishment

2. The coming of Jesus is a time of final reward and final punishment. Jesus says: ¹²*Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to precisely give to every person according to his work.* Judgement is in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. The One who is the Saviour comes to be the Judge. The one who has given men and women every opportunity and offer of salvation and godliness, now comes to allocate final destiny according to what has been done with his offer. Jesus comes 'quickly' in two ways. He may step into our situation at any moment with reward or with loss-of-reward. It could happen today, or even within the next few minutes. Jesus' final 'second coming' has been delayed and might be delayed even longer, yet when he comes finally, he will come very abruptly. No one will be expecting it. He will come as a thief in the night who catches us by surprise. And the event will be exceedingly swift with no further time for repentance or change. Jesus' coming is always imminent – in one way or another. Jesus comes with reward and rebuke. What he gives to us will be an exact and appropriate repayment.

• *The One who is Saviour comes to be the Judge*

• *Jesus' coming is always imminent*

• *Jesus is present in this world all the time*

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the one who superintends history. This world is the realm in which loss and reward take place. Jesus is present in this world all the time. We do not have to wait until the end before he acts, for he may act in the here-and-now. He says: ¹³*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.* 'Alpha' and 'omega' are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. It means that Jesus has always been involved in our world and our personal story. He was there at the beginning. He will be there at the end. He is the one who initiated salvation. He will be the One who brings salvation to its final climax.

Verses 14–15 explain what kind of lifestyle gets what kind of reward. ¹⁴‘Blessed are those people who wash their robes, in order that they may have the authority to come to the tree of life, and to enter by the gates into the city. ¹⁵Outside are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and makes a lie.’

3. The final judgement involves an eternal separation between two peoples

• Every Christian who fails to ‘wash his robes’ will suffer loss

• First salvation washes away all sin

• Further washing required to reach heavenly reward


• The reward is resurrection life of heaven-on-earth

3. The final judgement involves an eternal separation between two peoples. Sinners who have ‘dirty clothes’ will be punished. Those Christians who have lived lives of godliness will be rewarded. What about ‘Christians’ who do **not** wash their clothes? Some of them are not really Christians at all! They pretend to have faith but their faith is play-acting. ‘These have no root’¹⁴. Some are true Christians but are saved ‘through fire’ and are ‘hurt by’ the second death, before coming ‘through’ the fire to salvation. The question is difficult but it is clear that those who will not wash their clothes will face very serious loss. What is 100 per cent clear is that no sin will be allowed into the presence of God. Every Christian who fails to ‘wash his robes’ will suffer loss – and will suffer **some** kind of loss eternally.

Our first salvation is itself a washing away of all sin in our ‘account’ before God. We are treated as righteous in the Lord Jesus Christ, not by any righteousness of our own. But there is a further washing that God asks of us. We are to make our clothes clean ourselves! The brighter our actual righteousness, the greater will be our reward. The blood of Christ washes our robes – but John has more in mind a changed life that comes by persistent faith in Christ’s blood. We **ourselves** must wash our robes to reach our heavenly reward.

What is the reward? It is the resurrection life of heaven-on-earth. We shall ‘have access to the tree of **life**’ and be more alive than ever in the paradise of God. The reward will be **fellowship**. We shall have a doorway into the presence of God that cannot be experienced by anyone who dies loving sin in a way that shows they are not among the people of God. Everyone who ‘makes a lie’ in the way they live will suffer everlasting loss. It is the righteous and they alone who will have access to the city in which the presence of God radiates in glory.

¹⁴ Luke 8:13

		<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p> 
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