

Institute 11-17-20 *Revelation 21-22 The Celestialized Earth* (Last Class until Jan 12, 21—Happy Thanksgiving +Christmas)

Outline of John's Apocalypse

Vision:	Throne Of God	Seven Churches	BC 4000- AD 1000	AD 1000- AD 2000	AD 2000 Last Days & Second Coming	Millennium 20XX-30XX	Final Scenes	Celestialized Earth
Chps:	1, 4-5	2-3	6:1-11	6:12-7:3.	8:1-19:2	20:1-6	20:7-15	21:1-22:6
Verses:	36	51	11	14	201	6	9	33

Chapter 21

The eternal drama continues to unfold chronologically as we are shown the celestial city of the New Jerusalem. God promises to bless His people in this celestial city. Another contrast unfolds as we earlier saw the mortal and flawed seven churches of Asia; we now see the eternal and perfect Church of the Firstborn in its celestial glory.

Richard Draper pointed out that the first five verses form a chiasm pattern in Greek, with the holy city at the center (Draper and Rhodes, *BYU NTC: Revelation*, 792).

- A) 21:1a New heaven and earth
- B) 21:1b First heaven, earth, and sea pass away
- C) 21:1c The sea exists no longer
- D) 21:2 The Holy City descends from heaven
- d') 21:3-4a God dwells with His people
- c') 21:4b Death exists no longer
- b') 21:4c First things have passed away
- a') 21:5a God creates everything new

Earth Receives Celestial Glory

Rev 21:1 “I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and . . . earth have passed away, and the sea is no more” (NR) John’s vision skips through galactic time past the millennium, to see a new celestialized heaven and earth. Although this globe is to be purified by fire and the “elements to melt with fervent heat,” it will not be annihilated. The Lord showed other prophets this same event, “the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me” (Isaiah 66:22; also 2 Pe 3:10-13; Lk 17:39, JST). As “the flood,” cleansed the earth, symbolically baptizing it with water, so, too, a baptism of fire will make it ready for a celestialized state of righteousness. God may dwell among men to commune with them as He did before sin entered the world. The lack of sea may be symbolic of a lack of chaos or division of unrest. The seas will be changed because “the islands shall become one land . . . and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided” (D&C 133:23-24).

Rev 21:2 “I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (BSB) The image of God being the bridegroom or husband, who is married to Zion or Jerusalem is sprinkled through the Old Testament. (Israel is referred to as God’s offspring or son.) For example Hosea 1:2,

KJV

Plead with your mother, plead: for she *is* not my wife,
neither *am* I her husband: let her therefore put away her
whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from
between her breasts;

NIV

Rebuke your mother, rebuke her,
for she is not my wife,
and I am not her husband.
Let her remove the adulterous look from her face
and the unfaithfulness from between her breast.

This powerful symbolism stems from the intimate and important covenant of marriage as an allegory to our relationship with God. To become covenant Israel we promise God to always stay with and serve Him, similar to marriage covenants, in sickness and in health. We are to endure and keep our covenants with Him through the hard times in life. If we break our covenant with God it is likened to a divorce, as the Lord told Isaiah in chapter 50:1,

Thus saith the LORD, Where *is* the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

Rather than referring to those who break God's covenant as unfaithful, liars or idolaters—worshipping false gods—instead, the Bible often calls it adultery: “Indifferent to her own infidelity, Israel had defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees” (Jeremiah 3:9, BSB). This personification helps we humans to see the seriousness of breaking our covenants with God.

This allegorical interpretation of a marriage between God and His children of the covenant, also trickles into the New Testament when John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the bridegroom (John 3:29), when Jesus refers to himself as the groom (Mt 9:5) and in the parable of the Wedding Feast (Mt 22:2-14).

Rev 21:3-4 “I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘See the dwelling place of God with men . . . and God himself will be with them. And he will wipe away every tear’ (NR) When this happens, we will experience the fulfilment of Christ's name, Emmanuel, “God is with us” to the degree that God is with women and men. We assume “God” includes both Christ and Heavenly Father by D&C 76:92, “the celestial . . . where God, even the Father, reigns.” We know God created worlds without number and that He lives near Kolob, so we do know how often He will dwell on the celestialized earth (Abraham 3:3-4, 9, 16).

Rev 21:5-8 “He who sat on the throne said . . .” (NR) Throughout the entire Book of Revelation, it appears that the silent person on the throne is God the Father. If that is the case, this is the first time that He speaks. Although, the text can be read for both the Father and Son, as God uses the same title that His Son used in Rev 1:8 (also in 3 Nephi 9:18; and John 4). The seven statements spoken from the throne follow (remember seven is a significant number meaning whole or complete):

1. **“See, I am making all things new”**
2. **“Write for these words are trustworthy and true”**
3. **“They are done!”**
4. **“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end”**
5. **“I will give to those who are thirsty freely from the fountain of living water”**
6. **“He who overcomes will inherit these things and I will be his God, and he will be my son”**
7. **“But as for the cowardly . . . liars, their portion will be . . . the second death”**

I appreciate the universality of the NIV translation of Rev 21:7 “Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children” (NIV). In modern revelation both genders are referenced as well: “Sons and daughters of God” and “all that my Father hath shall be given unto him” (D&C 84:38). They “overcome” (KJV), or “conquer” (ESV) the natural man, sin, and satanic temptations.

Rev 21:8 “. . . the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur . . .” (NIV) In contrast to the inheritors who have sought the will of the Father in all things, those who leave God's service become fearful and unbelieving, murderers and liars. They lose their God given conscience or light of Christ, and become spiritually dead. They will not continue in their eternal progression but will be damned or stopped (also see 2 Nephi 9:10-14; Helaman 14:15-16; D&C 76:106). Yet through our Savior's redemption, once they complete their probation, repent, and accept their Savior, they will also receive a merciful judgment and inherit a kingdom of glory, the Celestial Kingdom (D&C 76:98-113).

The Bride of the Lamb: Celestial City of Jerusalem and Church of God (Rev 21:9-14)

Rev 21:9 “One of the even angels which had the seven bowls . . . spoke with me . . . ‘Come, I will show you the bride, and wife of the Lamb’ (NR) In the past the bride was the church, and the bride takes on the OT symbol of the city of Zion. John uses an interesting literary parallel as emphasis here. In this verse, the entire opening phrase up until, “the bride,” is identical to Rev 17:1. The changed two verses separate their two women—chapter 17 is the whore, and here the woman is the Lamb's bride. John's constant contrasts help to emphasize their total opposite nature. Everything in this section is of the symbol of God's celestialized city or Church of the Firstborn.

Rev 21:10 “He carried me away in the Spirit onto a great and high mountain . . . the holy city of Jerusalem descending out of the heaven from God” (NR) The Spirit transported John to a high mountain to see this portion of the vision, which also represents a spiritually high perspective. The timing appears to be after the millennium, battle of Gog and Magog, to depict the earth in its celestialized glory. The *Holy Jerusalem* come from heaven—but this is different than past cities of Jerusalem.

Rev 21:11 “It had the glory of God. Its radiance was like a very precious stone . . .” (NR) John describes the city in three sentences. It is filled with light—it even sounds like a Urim and Thummim type of explanation of precious stones. It symbolizes the celestialized earth in a state of constant revelation. The green color represents life, but here it is a clear crystal-like green, which represents its purity and value. In Rev 4:2-3, John associated jasper with God the Father. In Greek “jasper” referred to a broad category of precious gems (ibid., 806). The stones represent the value of the city as a place of eternal ordinances—life giving power.

Rev 21:12-13 “It had a massive high wall with twelve gates . . . twelve angels . . . named of the twelve tribes of Israel. On the east . . . north . . . south . . . west three gates” (NR) In the ancient world, walls represented the safety of a city. Here the walls receive a lot of attention, including their openings, or the city gates. Brigham Young also taught that angels guard the entrance to heaven and require those who want to enter to provide “signs and tokens” before entering.ⁱ Each gate had the name of an angel written there with three gates on each side. John uses his numbers symbolically again—God’s order or priesthood organization (twelve), geographic wholeness (four), and the Godhead (three).

Rev 21:14 “The walls of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (NR) God’s bride or city has an apostolic foundation, which included John’s name on one of the twelve stones. (Mathias, Barnabas, or Paul perhaps took the place of Judas Iscariot.) Ephesians 2:20; 4:11 also speaks of apostles and prophets as the foundation of God’s church organization.

Measuring God’s City, Walls, and Gates (Rev 21:15-21)

Rev 21:15-17 “The angel . . . held a golden ruler to measure the city and its gates and its walls. And the city was laid out as a square . . . twelve thousand stadia” (NR) Previously, John was asked to measure the temple (Rev 11:1). Now the angel uses a golden “reed to measure” (KJV) to symbolically show the perfect nature of the celestial New Jerusalem. The numbers represent perfection, as a perfect cube. The Holy of Holies was also a perfect cube as the math literally works out to 12,000 *stadia*, or 1,400 miles in each direction.ⁱⁱ That covers most of the USA, plus extends about a million stories high. It encompasses about 2.7 billion cubic miles of living space in the New Jerusalem. Symbolically, it is the perfect center of a temple with space for all who choose to enter God’s presence (Mormon 9:3-5). The entire city is the temple sanctuary, because God dwells there.ⁱⁱⁱ

Rev 21:17-18 “Its wall . . . was one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement . . . made of jasper, and the city of pure gold as clear as glass” (NR) The city is secured by the symbol of twelve-squared—meaning God’s full authority and organization. The angels speak and measure in a way that can relate to people’s understanding. This would have represented the most beautiful, valuable, and amazing thing imaginable to John. It speaks of the complete security and beauty that God has provided for the inhabitants. It also speaks of purification through great heat and pressure that is required to make pure gold, polished gems, or glass.

Rev 21:19-20 “The foundations of the walls . . . were decorated with . . . precious stone . . .” (NR) The description of the protective wall is a foundation of fabulous colors, longevity, and value. They reflect the twelve tribes of Israel, and the high priest’s stones worn in his breastplate (Ex 28:17-20). Another list of twelve colorful stones is in Ezekiel 28:13. Although the three lists differ in order and a few names, they share the symbolism of a brilliant means of reflecting the Light of the World:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Jasper | 5. Sardonyx (onyx) | 9. Topaz (citrine quartz) |
| 2. Sapphire (lapis lazuli) | 6. Sardius (carnelian) | 10. Chrysoprasus |
| 3. Chalcedony | 7. Crystallite | 11. Jacinth |
| 4. Emerald | 8. Beryl | 12. Amethyst |

Rev 21:21 “The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate being made of a single pearl” (NR) Pearls were the most valuable gem of all at that time. They were used as a sign of wealth and often valued more highly than gold. To find a pearl the size of a gate is the most beautiful and valuable imaginable. As a comparison, from the time of the NT, Cleopatra supposedly had a pearl worth 6 million sesterces (the equivalent of 1.5 million days-of-labor at minimum

wage, or billions of dollars).^{xxvi} From the OT, Job uses pearls as a comparison to what he valued the most: “the price of wisdom is above pearls” (Job 28:18, ESV). Also pearls are also the product of long suffering and polishing.

“The main street of the city was pure gold, as clear as glass” (BSB) The city has a street of pure gold—just as the Holy of Holies in Solomon and Herod’s temples. The gold has a unique quality of being like “transparent glass.” This may refer to being able to see clearly, like a Urim and Thummim, into the past, present, or future.

Divine Light for the City (Rev 21:22-27)

Rev 21:22 “I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, as is the Lamb” (NR) The city is a living Temple. All is holy. Earthly temples were patterned after the Heavenly Temple (Heb 8:4-5; 9:1). In God’s presence, there is no need for a special place of sacred worship.

Rev 21:23 “The city had no need for the sun or the moon . . . for the glory of the God illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb” (NR) God is the source of Light because He is “the power thereof by which it was made” (D&C 88:7).

Rev 21:24-27 “The nations will walk in its light . . . the gates of the city will never close . . . and nothing unclean will come into it . . . only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (NR) The gates will always be open and others will receive its light. John mentioned previously that only the most righteous whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life are allowed in (Rev 13:9). Parley P. Pratt recorded his thoughts on the saints who will live in the celestial city:

A Saint, who is one in deed and in truth, does not look for an immaterial heaven, but he expects a heaven with lands, houses, cities, vegetation, rivers, and animals; with thrones, temples, palaces, kings, princes, priests, and angel; with food, raiment, musical instruments, &c.; all of which are material. Indeed, the Saints’ heaven is a redeemed, glorified, celestial, material creation, inhabited by glorified material beings, male and female, organized into families, embracing all the relationships of husbands and wives, parents and children where sorrow, crying, pain, and death will be no more. Or to speak still more definitely, this earth, when glorified, is the Saints’ eternal heaven. On it they expect to live, with body, parts, and holy passions; on it they expect to move, have their being; to eat, drink, converse, worship, sing, play on musical instruments, engage in joyful, innocent social amusements, visit neighboring towns and neighboring worlds (Orson Pratt, “The Saint’s Heaven,” *Millennial Star*, vol. 28, Nov 17, 1866, 722).

Whether or not Orson Pratt envisioned celestial life correctly, the details about life after death restored through the Prophets Joseph Smith and his nephew, Joseph F. Smith, have multiplied what we learn from the Bible many times over.

Chapter 22

John moves inside the celestial city to describe more of its paradisiacal beauty. The Apocalypse closes and Jesus speaks personally to John promising to return and offering a formal conclusion. It closes with a warning to any who alter his record.

The Waters and Tree of Life (Rev 22:1-5)

Rev 22:1-2a “He showed me a river of living water, shining like crystal that flowed out from the throne of God and the Lamb down the center of the main street of the city” (NR) The chapter continues with an angelic tour of the Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 21:2). A crystal-clear river of water, the symbolic source of life, runs continually from the throne shared by the Father and Son. The river of living water can refer to potable water, as well as “living / zóé / life, both of physical (present) and of spiritual (particularly future) existence” (*Strong’s Concordance*). In John’s Gospel, he recorded Jesus’ description of His own “living water” as running water or a “spring of water welling up to eternal life” (Jn 4:10, 13). The waters of life are also described in 1 Nephi 11:25 as God’s love:

I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God; and I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God.

In the Holy City, God’s love refreshes, nourishes, and gives life.

Rev 22:2b “A tree of life extended over the river on both sides producing twelve kinds of fruit, each month . . . and the leaves of the tree are for healing the nations” (NR) This huge tree of life, spanning both banks of the river grew twelve different crops symbolizing nourishment and abundance. The “tree of life” is mentioned thirty-six times in the scriptures and even more in legends from extra-canonical writings.^{iv} Hugh Nibley wrote:

Many hundreds of books and articles have been written on the Tree of Life as a symbol and a cult-object, but in no land on earth is the sight of a real tree, and especially a fruit-bearing one, greeted with more joy and reverence than in

treeless Arabia, where certain trees are regarded as holy because of their life-giving propensities” (*An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1988), 255).

It is a favorite theme from Eden. In Moses’ Tabernacle the Menorah represented a “tree of life.” In Lehi’s dream we learn we can reach it and eat of its fruit if we hold to the “word of God” or iron rod. Jesus himself represents the Tree of life, as the offeror of Eternal Life. His cross is sometimes drawn as a tree of life. The fruit has been likened to to Eternal Life. An independent biblical scholar, Margaret Barker, described an old version of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden:



The tree that had been intended in Eden for human food, was the Tree of Life, and the perfumed oil of that tree anointed humans and made them like angels—Sons of God. That was the tradition of the ancient priests in the temple, who thought of *themselves* as angels—messengers from heaven. The Tree of Life gave wisdom and eternal life, but the human pair disobeyed and chose knowledge that could be used for good *or* evil. Only then did they discover that they were barred from the Tree of Life. . . .

Satan’s deception in Eden was to imply that *both* trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, had the same benefit—that both made humans like angels. It was the disobedience that was the problem, not the state they aspired to; and, they had to be barred from eternal life because they had disobeyed. In the Book of Revelation, this is reversed, the faithful Christian is promised access again to the Tree of Life, and this meant access to the angel-state (Margaret Barker, “Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion,” *The Worlds of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2006).

Rev 22:3 “No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him” (NIV) The curse may be referring to the one from Eden, or possibly a general reference: “any accursed thing” (NR). God the Father and the Lamb will be there. Their servants will follow Jesus’ example serve God (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; Lk 22:26; Jn 12:26; 13:1-17). God is often translated as a singular “him,” but in the Greek it can also be used for third person, “*autos* / them” (Strong’s #846).

Rev 22:4 “They will see his face, and his name will be upon their foreheads” (NR) Earlier in Revelation 7:3, John recorded that the servants of God were “sealed . . . on their foreheads” (ESV; also in Rev 2:17; 3:12). Now we learn that the name of God is on their foreheads (which is the opposite of the counterfeit mark of the beast). Those who served God on earth will continue to serve Him in heaven, but in the celestial city, face to face. Just as Jesus taught, it is those who serve who will be exalted (Mt 23:12)

Rev 22:5 “There will no longer be night . . . because the Lord God will illuminate them” (NR) God is the source of light (see Rev 21:23 and D&C 84:46; 88:6-13; 93:28, 36-37). This refers to multiple levels of illuminations. Those who share Christ’s light will also share in His power. When we want to receive more light and power we must adopt His nature. His nature is filled with love; “In God, we meet love in its purest form” (Draper and Rhodes, *BYU NTC: Revelation*, 837)

John and His Angelic Guide

Rev 22:6 “The angel said to me, ‘These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord . . . sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place’ (NIV) The “angel / *aggelos* / messenger” (Strong’s #32) for God has also visited other servants (or prophets) to tell them of the future (also Amos 3:7).

Rev 22:7 “I am coming quickly. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of prophecy in this book” (BSB) The angel says “I” in reference to the Savior. This happens often in scripture as prophets speak for God. We refer to it as God’s divine investiture of authority (i.e. “Whether by mine own voice or the voice of my servants the prophets it is the same” D&C 1:38). This is the seventh beatitude that John has recorded. The whole message is finished and the promised blessing promised for those who guard this sacred message.

The word “quickly” or “soon” (NIV) is not giving a time-table of the eternities from our perspective. The word also means “without any delay” or “properly.” God’s judgments and His work with humanity are all around us all the time or “quickly.” It is often motivating to have a deadline, even for God’s judgment. The phrase “I come quickly” is found three times in these last few verses of the Book of Revelation, and ten times in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Rev 22:8-9 “When I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel . . . And he said . . . ‘See here, do not do that! I am a fellow servant . . . of your brethren the prophets . . . keep the works of this book. Worship God” (NR) John reacts as if not just the message, but also the messenger was the Lord. This is the second time he makes that mistake (Rev 19:10). He may not have recognized the “I” was not God. But the angel immediately corrects him and identifies himself as a fellow servant. Messengers of God on either side of the veil are empowered by the same source. They carry God’s message to obey and to prepare to meet the Lord whenever His coming happens.

Rev 22:10 “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near” (NR) Unlike Nephi, Daniel, Ether, and other prophets who had this vision, John was told that he had the assignment of writing the Apocalypse for all to study. His time was nearer to the Second Coming than the other prophets who saw the vision (1 Nephi 14:24-26; Dan 12:4, 9; Ether 3:25-27). “Time” could be translated, “the era is near,” as the Greek word for “time / *Kairos* / fitting season, opportunity, occasion, time” has a broader definition (Strong’s #2540).

Rev 22:11-12 “Let those who do evil continue . . . I am coming soon, and my reward is with me to pay to each according to his deeds” (NR) When the time comes for the judgment, it will not be the time for repentance. However, repentance is the message of our dispensation, “Say nothing but repentance unto this generation; keep my commandments” (D&C 6:9; 11:9). When the judgement does come, Jesus will individually judge each person “according to what they have done” (NIV). The reward for the righteous will be the visitation with God. President Nelson has also recently prioritized daily repentance.

Rev 22:13 “I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (NR) Even the names chosen to describe God communicate opposites. The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet express an unchanging God—a sense of eternity. Whether the Lord has come to speak or John’s angelic guide is still relaying God’s message, the promises are the same.

Rev 22:14 “Blessed are they who wash their robes so they will have the right to the tree of life and will enter into the city through the gates” (NR) Significantly, this is the seventh time, “blessed are,” has been included in Revelation (Rev 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7). The blessing associated with this beatitude is to eat from the tree of life. We wash our robes by applying the Atonement in our lives through repentance. There was an OT tradition of washing one’s clothes before the Lord appeared (Ex 19:10-11, 14; Num 8:7). Also, the priests washed and clothed before serving the Lord in the temple (Lev 8:13). The word atonement shares the roots of cover, which adds meaning to washing one’s clothing “in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14). The atonement allows the Lord to cover repentant saints in “robes of righteousness” (2 Nephi 9:14; 4:33).

Rev 22:15 “Outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie” (NKJV) Outside the holy city are the unrighteous. As mentioned earlier, to the Jews, a dog was an “unclean” animal, and in most of the ancient world a despised predator or scavenger. Also, “dog” in Greek can mean, “a man of impure mind” (Strong’s #2965). A sorcerer is often described as a person using witchcraft, but it is also one who worked with drugs. The drug cartels are a major source of evil in our generation. These immoral liars are not welcomed into the city of God.

Witnesses, Warnings, and Exhortation (Rev 22:16-21)

Rev 22:16 “I am Jesus who sent my angel to testify to you all concerning these things . . . I am . . . the bright morning star” (NR) It appears that this is not the voice of the angel, but Christ Himself. When the change between angel and Lord occurred, we do not know. Jesus testifies that the apocalyptic visions were given to John under His direction. John is told of his next mission, which was to testify to the early churches and share this vision with them. Whether he is to do it after his incarceration on the Isle of Patmos or perhaps from there via a letter, is unknown.

The titles that Jesus uses to describe Himself are first filled with Messianic promises—the “Seed of David,” and, “the Morning Star.” He is the “star that shall come out of Jacob” (Num 24:17). As discussed earlier, Jesus is also the power of the sun. It is also an ironic contrast to Satan’s premortal name, “son of the morning” (Isa 14:12; D&C 76:26; 2 Ne 24:12).

Rev 22:17 “The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who is thirsty come” (NR) The Holy Spirit and the Bride (referring to God’s covenant children or the city of Zion) join as two more witnesses to invite John’s audience to come unto Christ and be cleansed by Him to enter into the heavenly city. The living waters are available for free to all who want to drink enough to come unto Him! It is our true and earnest desires that led us where we go in life.

Rev 22:18-19 “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of the book: If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues . . . and if anyone takes away . . . God will take away his share of the tree of life” (NR) I do not know

if this is Jesus' or John's warning. The severe penalties sound as if it were the Lord's words. This verse may also speak to people within the church who know of the Apocalypse and try to intentionally pervert it. It specifically refers to John's scroll of the Book of Revelation. Similar warnings are also found in

- Deuteronomy 4:2
- Deuteronomy 12:32
- 2 Nephi 29:3-14

The curse for altering scripture is great because so much is at stake. Millions may be led astray, so the punishments are eternal.

Ironically, this verse is often quoted as an attack against accepting the Book of Mormon as scripture. It is a misunderstanding of how the books of the NT were collected and canonized. Those who claim this assume John's warning refers to adding anything to the entire Bible. Yet, none of the Epistles and Gospels were gathered into a scriptural canon at that time. In fact, even the scrolls that were used to make the OT and NT were an open canon for three centuries after John's writing. Many more scrolls were accepted as scripture, but not canonized by the Christian councils until 393 AD. Even then it was not put in the same order we know it today. John's revelation is not necessarily the last book written, but placed at the end in our version of the Bible because it speaks of the end of times.

Rather than this verse being a deterrent to accepting more scripture, it can show that John knew that sacred texts would be changed. There were precious things taken away from Holy Writ. This verse opens the way to explain the apostasy.

Rev 22:20a “He who is a witness of these things says, ‘Yes! I come soon.’ Amen” (NR) This may be John or Jesus speaking, but the message is that He will come. The futuristic tense leaves the timing is open for anytime; and we have record of made many visitations that our Savior continues to make to seeking disciples. (D&C 93:1). This message motivates disciples to prepare to for that visit whether in this life or beyond. The best way to prepare for this reunion was given by Mormon:

My beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure (Moroni 7:48).

Rev 22:20b-21 “Come, Lord Jesus: The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all of you” John closes with his witness that the Lord is coming. John's and Moroni's last words share this theme: “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him . . .” (Mor 10:32). John's phrase is found in other Christian writings to express “the urgency of the speaker” (Draper and Rhodes, *BYU NTC: Revelation*, 861). In addition to praying for the Second Coming, it is also interpreted as calling on the Spirit, the Second Comforter, and a call for the Lord to help John or the saints. John's epilogue voices his desire that the saints will seek to understand the Lord's message. The best way to end all admonitions, includes a call to remember our Redeemer.

Conclusion

These are the last canonized words in our NT, but John's voice is heard again in restored scripture. In April 1829, during the early translation of the Book of Mormon, the Spirit revealed more of John the Beloved's conversation with the Lord while the two were still on the earth together, “he has undertaken a greater work; therefore I will make him as flaming fire and a ministering angel; he shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth” (D&C 7:6).^{vi} The revelation notified the young Prophet Joseph that Peter, James and John held the “power and the keys of this ministry until I come” (D&C 7:7). That message prepared Joseph to receive John the Beloved himself, sometime between May 1829 and April 6, 1830, when the three Apostles restored the keys to the Melchizedek Priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery (D&C 128:20).^{vii} Three years later the Prophet Joseph also received a revelation that announced “the fulness of John's record” would be given in the future (D&C 93:6, 18). I pray it comes soon! But even more that we will prepare as a Bride for the wedding Supper of the Lamb. Come Lord Jesus, Come!

ⁱ Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855), 2:31. When President Brigham Young dedicated the cornerstone of the Salt Lake Temple on April 6, 1853, he taught the saints about the role of angels in connection with their endowment. “Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell.”

ⁱⁱ In Greek the word is “*stadion*,” equivalent to 607 feet or 202.3 yards, which was used for a 600-foot sprint. The KJV translation used “furlong” which is 660 feet, or 220 yards.

ⁱⁱⁱ We also learn from Abraham 3:9 that God also lives in Kolob. We do not understand now, but perhaps without time, like the Spirit's witness, God can be experienced as many people do simultaneously.

^{iv} In a third century AD synagogue in Dura-Europos, Syria, a painting of the tree of life was found right over the main shrine. It is filled with birds and animals, bearing all sorts of fruit. The patriarch Jacob and his posterity of twelve tribes sit underneath it. They portray a father blessing two sons—probably Joseph blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, or Isaac blessing Jacob and Esau. For other examples of legends of the tree of life outside of scripture, see Draper and Rhodes, *BYU NTC: Revelation*, 128-129.

^v Strong's #3035; "*tachu* (an adjective, used adverbially, and derived from 5036 /*taxýs*, "promptly") – properly, *swift* (quick), without *unnecessary delay*; used of God's *promptness* characterizing how He has ordered all physical scenes of life to happen on *His perfect timetable without unnecessary "delay"* (Rev 1:1, 22:6)." <https://biblehub.com/greek/5035.htm>.

^{vi} Donald W. Parry, ed., *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, 488-489. "Heirs of salvation are those who have been called and elected, but who still dwell in the telestial world (D&C 7:6-7; 76:88; 77:11)." Moses, Enoch's people, and other translated beings, minister to those who are now "heirs of salvation" (Heb 1:14).

^{vii} My dates are broad enough to include every possibility after May 13, 1829 when Joseph received the Aaronic priesthood, and before the power of the Melchizedek priesthood was first used April 6, 1830 (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 1.74). The higher priesthood had to be restored before the gift of the Holy Ghost was first confirmed, which occurred at the organization of the church in Fayette, NY. Richard Bushman and others have found historical information that fits into the category of "The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river" (D&C 128:20). Yet I disagree with their options that fall after the first use of the Melchizedek priesthood, April 6, 1830.