

# The Trinity: Genesis to Revelation

Soli Deo Gloria at the End of the Ages

**Revelation 22:6** And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

<sup>7</sup> "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

<sup>8</sup> I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me,

<sup>9</sup> but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

<sup>10</sup> And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

<sup>11</sup> Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

<sup>12</sup> "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.

<sup>13</sup> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

<sup>14</sup> Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

<sup>15</sup> Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

<sup>16</sup> "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

<sup>17</sup> The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

<sup>18</sup> I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book,

<sup>19</sup> and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

<sup>20</sup> He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

<sup>21</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

(Rev 22:1-6-22)

---

## A History of “Trinity”

“**Trinity**,” say the heretics. “It’s not in the Bible.” To which I respond, “Neither is *trinite*, *trinitatem*, *trinus* (“threefold, triple”), *trini* (“three at a time, threefold”), *tres* (“three”), or for that matter *trionnoid*, *trindod*, *trinität*, or *prines* (pronounced thrines). “You are proving our point,” respond the heretics. To which I counter, “No, I’m not. I’m trying to explain to you that the Bible wasn’t written in Old French, Late Latin, Irish, Welsh, German, Old or modern English. Who why would we expect to find any of those words in it?”

It is **bad theology** to do a word search in an English Bible and conclude that a doctrine is not in it because a word is not in it. Theology doesn’t work like a dictionary. Theology

takes concepts and ideas derived from the Scripture and synthesizes using new terms that concisely convey the meaning of the ideas. Our English word “Trinity” is an early 13<sup>th</sup> century word that derives from an older French word which derives from an older Latin word which comes from an older Greek word.

The earliest known use is found in Greek (Τριάδος, *triados*) in the Second Century by [Theophilus](#), the [Patriarch of Antioch](#) (in office from 169-182 AD). Commenting on the days of creation in Genesis 1 he says, “[In like manner also the three days which were before the luminaries \[Day 4\], are types of the Trinity, of God, and His Word, and His Wisdom.](#)” ([Theophilus of Antioch](#), *Theophilus to Autolytus* 2.15). The note in the *Church Fathers* edition is very informative. “[The earliest use of this word ‘Trinity.’ It seems to have been used by this writer in his lost works, also; and, as a learned friend suggests, the use he makes of it is familiar. He does not lug it in as something novel: ‘types of the Trinity,’ he says, illustrating an accepted word, not introducing a new one.](#)”<sup>1</sup>

[Tertullian](#) (155 – 220 AD) is the first known Christian to defend the doctrine.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, vol. 2, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 101 n. 2.

We, however, as we indeed always have done (and more especially since we have been better instructed by the Paraclete, who leads men indeed into all truth), believe that there is one only God, but ... that this one only God has also a Son, His Word, who proceeded from Himself, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made. Him *we believe* to have been sent by the Father into the Virgin, and to have been born of her—being both Man and God, the Son of Man and the Son of God, and to have been called by the name of Jesus Christ; *we believe* Him to have suffered, died, and been buried, according to the Scriptures, and, after He had been raised again by the Father and taken back to heaven, to be sitting at the right hand of the Father, *and* that He will come to judge the quick and the dead; who sent also from heaven from the Father, according to His own promise, the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost. That this rule of faith has come down to us from the beginning of the gospel, even before any of the older heretics, much more before Praxeas, *a pretender* of yesterday, will be apparent both from the lateness of date which marks all heresies, and also from the absolutely novel character of our new-fangled Praxeas.

(Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 2)

You can easily hear the strong **creedal language** in Tertullian's apologetic. It's as if he is reading off of the *Apostle's Creed* itself. Summarizing it in later definitions, Tertullian is saying that there is only **one uncreated God**, but that this God exists in **three distinguishable Persons**, each being the one uncreated God, yet distinct from one another. One God. Three Persons. Each Person is God. And, he tells us, this is the doctrine or "rule of faith" that has come down to us from since the beginning.

Given this, it is **not surprising** to hear even **first century Christians** outside of the Bible defending this doctrine. **Clement**, Bishop of Rome (d. 99 AD) seems to be alluding to **Ephesians 4:4-6** when he writes, "**Do we not have one God, and one Christ, and one gracious Spirit that has been poured out upon us, and one calling in Christ?**" (**1Clem 46:6**). **The Didache**, a teaching tract perhaps written prior to some of the NT books says, "**Concerning baptism, thus baptize ye, 'Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water'**" (**Did 7:1**). Ignatius, writing at the turn of the century as he is on his way to die a martyr's death, tells the church to the Magnesians, "**Study, therefore, to be established in the doctrines of the Lord and**

the apostles, that so all things, whatsoever you do, may prosper both in the flesh and spirit; in faith and love; in the Son, and in the Father, and in the Spirit; in the beginning and in the end; with your most admirable bishop, and the well-compacted spiritual crown of your presbytery, and the deacons who are according to God” (1Mg 13:1).

Yet, though the doctrine of the Trinity is found from the very beginning of the church, *is it in Scripture?* The answer to this is a resounding *yes*. Of course, a detailed study of this is not possible today. And, we are still in Revelation, although we are at the very end of our study. And yet, it is the end of this study that directly causes me to end our look at this book with this topic. For indeed, *the Bible ends with this doctrine* and not in some abstract sense either, but in a *very practical* manner it ties this most basic of all Christian teachings directly to you in its final call to follow God and be his disciple.

But, it is not just the end of the book. The entire Bible does this. This is how God has revealed himself to us. Therefore, in our study, nothing can be more important than ending with him. This is what we mean by *Soli Deo Gloria*—To God alone be the glory. Today I want to use our many links within the book itself, with John’s Gospel,

and even **with Genesis** to ground our faith in the Triune God in all of Scripture, especially its beginning and end. Yes, the Trinity is not merely a doctrine to be found in the NT, but even as far back as the first few verses of the Bible itself.

I've been inspired in this regard by **a structure**, whether consciously written by John or not, that links the end of Revelation to the beginning of Genesis together via a chiasm that highlights this self-revelation of God as Triune and his great work of salvation, which is in effect a new creation wrought by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and which centers upon, of all the things, his grace to any who would come:

- A. **Jesus** ... the **bright morning star** (Rev 22:16)
- B. The **Spirit** and the Bride say, "Come" (22:17)
- C. **God** will add to him the plagues ... God will take away his share in the tree of life (18-19)
- D. **Amen** (20a)
- E. Come, **Lord Jesus!** (20)
- F. The grace (22:21a)**
- E<sup>1</sup>. ... Of the **Lord Jesus Christ** be with you all (21b)
- D<sup>1</sup>. **Amen** (21b)
- C<sup>1</sup>. In the beginning **God** ... (Gen 1:1)
- B<sup>1</sup>. And the **Spirit** of God moved upon the face of the waters (1:2)
- A<sup>1</sup>. And God **said**, "Let there be **light**. And there was **light**" (1:3)<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> **Nigel**, "Revelation 22:17[16]-Genesis 1:2[3], *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* (Jan 24, 2016), <https://www.chiasmusxchange.com/2016/01/24/revelation-2217-genesis-12/>. Someone else

# The Triune God of Revelation

I'm going to be going through this **theologically** rather than verse-by-verse, because it makes more sense to help us think through it that way. All Trinitarian thinking begins by grasping the most basic truth that there is only **one uncreated Being** who, as the catechism puts it, is “**a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth**” Only one entity in the entire universe is like this. This is the Being that we call “**God.**” It's not that there aren't other beings that might be called “*gods,*” as Paul says, “**Indeed there are**” (**1Co 8:5**). It is that there is only One Being that is like this. All others were created by him. One Being alone is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in these seven ways.

---

(Annette, July 20, 2020) noted in the comments that you can extend this backward and forward even further (I'll come back to this later. See n. 9):

A. (Rev. 22:13) I AM ALPHA AND OMEGA, THE **BEGINNING** AND THE **END**, the **FIRST** and the last.

B. (Rev. 22:14-15) Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and **MAY ENTER** in through the gates into the city. **FOR WITHOUT** are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

...

B'. (Gen. 1:4) And God saw the light, that it was good: and **GOD DIVIDED THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS.**

A'. (Gen1:5) And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the **evening** and the **MORNING** were the **FIRST** day.

<b>Shorter Catechism's Definition of God<sup>3</sup></b>			
	<b>Transcendent Adjectives</b>	<b>Condescendent Nouns</b>	<b>Summary Referent</b>
	infinite	being	
	eternal	wisdom	
spirit		power	
		holiness	GLORY
	unchangeable	justice	
		goodness	
		truth	

All others are **finite**, **created**, and **mutable**. This includes animals. It includes humanity. It includes angels, which the Scripture often calls “gods.”

## *One God*

The word “**God**” appears in Revelation 22 a curious **seven times**. “The throne of *God* and of the Lamb...” (22:1, 3). “The Lord *God* will be their light” (5). “The Lord, the *God* of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel...” (6). “Worship *God*” (9). “*God* will add to him the plagues described in this book” (18). “*God* will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city” (19). In the **last three** you hear unmistakable language that there is one God. In

<sup>3</sup> Chart in **Robert L. Reymond**, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998), 164.

this case, there is one God with the power to remove anyone from his presence. Therefore, **God alone is to be worshiped.**

In fact, in the context, we have **one of these creatures** whom people have often called gods. John calls him an angel. He speaks to John who is again so overwhelmed at the sights and sounds of the visions that he **“fell down to worship at the feet of the angel...”** (8). And yet, this was no wicked creature who would take worship to himself like Zeus or Baal. Instead, he said, **“You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God”** (9). There are indeed many servants among the host of heaven who have remained loyal to God alone, who obey him, who carry out his will, and in days when it feels like God is the only supernatural entity not against humanity, it is good to remember this truth.

## *God the Father*

But this term “God” is used in at least **the first three** instances, and perhaps in the fourth, in a way that must be clearly describing ***the Father***, for we have distinguished here “God” from “the Lamb,” whom we know is Jesus. Now, at

the beginning of Revelation, the “Father” appears four times, either as Jesus’ “Father” (2:27; 3:5; 21) or his “God and Father” (1:6). “Father” does not appear after ch. 3. Yet, here he is, because nothing is more common in the NT, including John’s other writings, than simply calling the Father “God.”

For example, someone has noticed that the first few verses of Revelation 21 are among “the most touching scenes of the entire book.” And though he is simply called “God,” in them we “undoubtedly have reference to the Father God who is portrayed as doing the fatherly thing—wiping ‘away every tear from their eyes.’ His very comforting presence seems to have completely banished ‘death,’ ‘sorrow,’ ‘crying,’ and ‘pain.’”<sup>4</sup> “I will be his God and he will be my son” (Rev 21:7). There, as here, Jesus is distinguished from God, thus from the Father.

We of course find the same thing at the beginning in the inverse parallel of John’s Gospel. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with* God...” (John 1:1). In other words, the Word, which it goes on to tell us is Jesus, is distinct from God, that is, from the Father. We also find it in the direct parallel at the end of John’s Gospel. “I am

---

<sup>4</sup> Woodrow W. Whidden, “Trinitarian Evidences in the Apocalypse,” *JATS* 11/1-2 (2000): 257. 248-60. <http://archive.atsjats.org/JATS11-23Whidden.pdf>.

ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17).

And, indeed, we find the same thing at the very beginning of Genesis. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). While it is true that this word often describes the One uncreated Being, I would argue, because of what follows, that here it is focusing in on the Father. We will see why in a moment. The point is simply to show that God the Father is indeed found at the beginning and the end of the Bible. And of all the heresies, about the only one I can think of that has never really been a problem in the church is the idea that God the Father is not in fact God. Of course he is. Everyone recognizes and believes this.

Before moving on, let’s conclude our discussion of this Person by simply noting the title: Father. The term will not allow you to think of God as an abstraction, as an impersonal Brute Force, as a sheer Power, as an aloof Watchmaker. God is a Father. But not a fallen father. This is no wife-beating bully, no despotic home dictator, no absentee dad. He is the loving, caring, protecting Father who has children he has gone to the ends of the world to love, forgive, save, raise, mature, bless, keep, shine, be gracious, lift up, and give

peace. Anyone who would not come to God out of fear or pride does not understand what it means that he is Father. Only when the First Person of the Trinity is understood rightly, will the other two Persons make sense. So see that God is in fact the heavenly Father and trust him as such.

## *God the Son*

As the sheer volume devoted to him in the creeds all demonstrate, the greatest [theological controversies](#) in Church history have always revolved around [God the Son—Jesus Christ](#). The most obvious question raised by what we've seen so far is that if Jesus is distinguished from “God,” then he must not in fact be God! For how can you have Jesus not be God and yet say that he is God? How could it say, “The throne of God and of the Lamb” if the Lamb is actually God? They must be different.

There are multiple ways of answering this question. First, let's return to the [angel refusing to accept worship](#). That's what any creature would rightly do, because they realize that they are not worthy of worship. To accept worship when you are not God is the act of Satan. And yet back in [22:3](#) we are told that the throne of God and the

Lamb is in the city and his servants will worship him. Beale comments, “That ‘they will serve *him*’ likely does not refer only to God or only to the Lamb. The two are conceived so much as a unity that the singular pronoun can refer to both ... That both are sitting on only one throne and together form one temple (21:22) enhances their perceived unity ... Such statements ... were among those that gave rise to later trinitarian formulas.”<sup>5</sup>

We’ve actually seen this throughout Revelation. Let’s not forget Revelation 5:8 where the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb in worship. This is identical to what they do to the one seated on the throne—the Father, in the previous chapter (4:10). In the direct chiastic parallel in Revelation 1:17, it says, “When I saw him [Jesus], I fell at his feet as though dead.” It’s the same response as ch. 22. But in chapter 1, Jesus *accepts* the worship and simply says, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore.” The same is true in the parallel at the end of John, Thomas comes face to face with the risen Christ, puts his hands into the marks left by the crucifixion, and

---

<sup>5</sup> G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 1113.

worships saying, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). Again, Jesus accepts the worship. Therefore, he is either utterly wicked or he is God.

That he is God is demonstrated at the very beginning of John’s Gospel where the Word is not only “with God,” but “the Word *was* God” (John 1:1). Later in the same chapter, “No one has ever seen God; the only God who is at the Father’s side, has made him known” (18). You see? Jesus is called God. He is equated with God. The two have the same throne. Even though there is only one God, both are worshiped. Yet, they are distinct. All of this is found merely in the parallels of our passage in John, let alone so many other places in the Scripture.

But where does John get the idea that the Word was with God in the beginning? Clearly, he is alluding to Genesis 1. Many Christians like to go to Genesis 1:26 to demonstrate the Trinity: “Let us make man in *our* image.” The “our” they say is the Trinity. For a long time I believed this verse did reveal the Trinity. Then I came to think that it did not, because the “us” here clearly refers to the divine council filled up with created beings. But now I’m comfortable saying that it does reveal the Trinity, because in fact Christ is on the Divine council, along with the Father. So the “us”

here does in fact include the Triune God, with the Spirit moving.

Yet, I think **an even better place** to see Christ is in at least **vs. 3** if not also in **vs. 1**. In vs. 3 we have God the Father creating. But it says, “**And God said, ‘Let there be light, and there was light.’**” What is God using when he “says” this? He is using **the Word**. In other words, the Word is creating. At the very least, this is where John (and others, see **Col 1:15-18**) is getting it from. In the same verse, we can also think of the light. Now, it isn’t that the light here is God. But in the structure of Rev 22-Gen 1, Jesus, the bright morning star (light; 22:16) is parallel to “let there be “light.” I’ll say a little more about this later on.

We can also go to **Genesis 1:1**, “**In the beginning...**” The verse can also be translated, “**In the first**” or “**In the firstborn, God created the heavens and the earth.**” The word translated as “**beginning**” (*reshith*), can also mean “**first**” (**Num 24:20**) or “**firstborn**” (**Gen 49:3**). Many early Christians such as **Jerome** and **Tertullian** believed this was a viable translation. Even the Jews did, as the Targums read, “**From the beginning with wisdom the Memra [Word] of the Lord created and perfected the heavens and the earth ... And the**

*Memra of the Lord said: ‘Let there be light’; and there was light according to the decree of his Memra.”<sup>6</sup>*

We can say even more about Jesus and the Trinity in Revelation 22. There is a chiasmic structure that binds Rev 22:6-20 together.

- 1a) “Behold, **I am coming quickly!**” (Rev 22:6b-9)
- 1b) **the words of the prophecy of this book**, Rev 22:10-11
- 1c) **I am coming to you**: Rev 22:12
- 1d) “**I AM** the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last;” Rev 22:13
  - 1e) Blessed are **those who do His commandments**;<sup>7</sup> Rev 22:14a  
central axis) Rev 22:14b, That they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city;
  - 2e) **dogs, sorcerers, sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters**, whoever **loves + practices a lie**; Rev 22:15
- 2d) **I AM** the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star;” Rev 22:16
- 2c) **You come to Me**;: Rev 22:17
- 2b) **the words of the prophecy of this book: the words of the book of this prophecy** Rev 22:18-19
- 2a) **I am coming quickly.**” Rev 22:20<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *The Aramaic Bible Volume 1A: Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, Kevin Cathcart, Michael Maher, and Martin McNamara, eds., trans. Martin McNamara (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 52.

<sup>7</sup> Smith uses something like the KJV here (“do His commandments” ποιῶντες τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ). There is a textual variant here which is why the ESV reads, “wash their robes” (πλύνοντες τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν). Metzger gives the ESV reading an “A” rating, meaning that it was almost certainly the original. I’ll say more about this later.

<sup>8</sup> **Christine Smith**, “Revelation 22,” *A Little Perspective* (Dec 29, 2016), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/revelation-22-2016/>.

In this structure, Jesus is said to be **the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,<sup>9</sup> the First and the Last (22:13), the Root of the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star (22:16)**. While we could tie both of these together thematically as simply “lists” that describe him, there is a common phrase found in both. It is the phrase, “**I Am ...**” This is classic John. In the Gospel of John, there are seven “I AMs”:

1. “*I am* the bread of life.” (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51)
2. “*I am* the light of the world.” (John 8:12)
3. “*I am* the door of the sheep.” (John 10:7,9)
4. “*I am* the resurrection and the life.” (John 11:25)
5. “*I am* the good shepherd.” (John 10:11, 14)
6. “*I am* the way, the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6)
7. “*I am* the true vine.” (John 15:1, 5)

Seven is that symbolic number of perfection found throughout Revelation. We’ve even seen it today in the seven uses of “God” in ch. 22. But this phrase “I AM” is so much more. For in the OT, this is the name by which God reveals himself to Moses.

---

<sup>9</sup> “beginning and end” and “first and last” is parallel in the larger Rev-Gen chiasm with the “first” day with its “morning and evening.” See n. 2.

“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And he said, ‘Say to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex 3:14). The thing is, the “God” revealing himself this way was the Angel of the LORD (vs. 2), that is the Son of God. Importantly, in the days of Isaiah, the LORD (this is the name I AM), tells us, “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god” (Isa 44:6). First and last or Alpha and Omega (same thing). This is what Jesus is called here with this “I AM” language in Revelation 22. This is the same thing he was called back in Revelation 1 in the parallel in the book when John fell at his feet in worship (1:17). In other words, yes, Jesus is distinct from God. But everywhere we look we find that Jesus is also God, and yet there is only one God. Hence, we use the term Trinity to describe what we are seeing.

There is also the more light imagery. In the city, there shall be no night there, they need no lamp nor light for the Lord God gives them light (Rev 22:5). This is parallel to the first chapter of John, “The light shines in the darkness ... He [Jesus] was the true light which gives light to every man” (John 1:5, 9). And, of course, what did we just see in Genesis 1:3? “And God said, ‘Let there be light...’” The light created

by the Word was a reflection of that very Word who is Light.

As we finish our thoughts about the Second Person of the Trinity, as we did with the Father, let's think about what this means for us. The Second Person is the *Son* of God. But back in **Rev 21:7** we learned that “I will be his God and he will be my son” refers to *believers*. This in turn makes believers “brothers” of Christ, and therefore, brothers of God. This is adoption into the royal heavenly family. As it says, “He is not ashamed to call them brothers” (**Heb 2:11-12**).

But we can only be brothers with Christ if he is like us. This is the vital importance of the incarnation. For though “the Word was God ... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (**John 1:1, 14**). God became man. Jesus became human. Jesus took on a new nature, adding it to his own—fully God, fully man. Therefore, God in Christ is that much less aloof and far away even with the term like Father. For we see that God the Son—very God of very God, is utterly immanent “with us” (Immanuel), here, one of us, subject to all that it means to be a human being. These truths are subject of eternity of contemplation. But for you, now, it is put before you as the Gospel. See that God is in fact the Son and trust him as such.

## *God the Holy Spirit*

It is common to see Father and Son together in the Scripture. But to find the **Third Person** there with them, at least openly and explicitly, this is much rarer. And yet, this is precisely what we find in Revelation 22. **There is a call** to believe in the God of the Apocalypse for all that he says he has done and will do. This call comes through the voice of two persons. One is the **Bride**—the Church. “**Come,**” she says. The other is **the Spirit (Rev 22:17)**. “**The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’**” This refers to **the Holy Spirit of God**, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.

Now, it seems to me that the Holy Spirit was **explicitly mentioned** back in **21:10**. “**He carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.**” This has happened several times in the Apocalypse (see also **1:10; 4:2; 17:3**). The voice of the Spirit is also not unheard of in Revelation. **Seven times** it is his voice that speaks the final word to the churches (**2:7; 11; 17; 29; 3:6; 13; 22**). There’s that number again. We also find the Spirit speaking near the middle of the book. “**And I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from**

now on.’ ‘Blessed indeed,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!’” (Rev 14:13). I’ll come back to this last part in a moment, because we actually find a parallel here at the end of the book.

But first, I want to ask a question about the Spirit. When reading the last couple of chapters, this call of the Spirit seems to come out of nowhere. He hasn’t really been talking at all, at least not explicitly. Suddenly he jumps in at the end and says, “Come.” Is this really coming out of nowhere?

The call continues, “... Let the one who desires take *the water of life* without price.” Recall that earlier in the chapter there was this river of the water of life (Rev 22:1). That’s where the water of life is coming from. The thing about this water is, Christianity has long understood that this is *an image of the Holy Spirit* (many also see it as an image of Christ, but remember, the Two are also One). Some have recalled, for instance, a passage like Isaiah 44:3, “I will *pour water* on the thirsty land, and the streams on the dry ground; I will *pour my Spirit* upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.”<sup>10</sup> Or Ezekiel, where God sprinkles clean water which is closely identified with the Spirit and creates a heart

---

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentaries on the Old Testament: Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952): 2:360.

of flesh (**Ezek 36:24-27**).<sup>11</sup> Of course, John regularly puts the Spirit and Water together (**John 3:5; 4:10-14; 5:8-10**). In one place Jesus says, “**He who believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of *living water*.**” Yet, he spoke these things about *the Spirit* (**7:37-39**).

In Jewish writings, the **Dead Sea Scrolls** (1QS 4:21), the **Rabbis** (Peskita Rabbati 1, 2), and the **Pseudepigrapha** (OdesSol 6:7-18) all speak the same way. Very early on, **Andrew of Caesarea** wrote, “**The river that flows from the church in the present life indicates the baptism of regeneration that is made effective through the Spirit ... *the river of God*, filled up with waters, namely, *the Holy Spirit*, flows through the Jerusalem above, flowing from God the Father through the Son.**” (**Andrew of Caesarea, COMMENTARY ON THE APOCALYPSE 22.1–2**). **Beale** seems to like this interpretation saying, “**If the waters symbolize the Spirit, as in the similar portrayal in John 7:37-39, then Rev 22:1 is an early picture of the later Christian confession that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.**”<sup>12</sup> The point is, the Spirit telling anyone who has ears to hear to come and drink from the water of life is not coming out of

---

<sup>11</sup> Widden, 259.

<sup>12</sup> Beale, 1104.

the blue. He's been present here, in some way related to the waters, since the chapter began.

In a fascinating parallel, this is also what we find in **Genesis 1:2**. “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” There, at the primordial creation, it was not merely the Father, not only the Father and Son, but **all three Persons** are to be found in the first three verses of the Bible. The Spirit's work was to infuse life into the creation being wrought by the Word. He is the very **Breath** of God, and as the Father spoke his Word, the Breath gave all things life. Hence, God “breathed” into Adam's nostrils the “breath of life,” and the man became a living creature (**Gen 2:7**).

But again, in places where we would expect to find it, we see the Spirit's work doing the same thing in the new creation. The **inverse parallel** in John 20 shows us Jesus “**breathing**” on his disciples. When he breathed upon them he told them, “**Receive the Holy Spirit**” (**John 20:22**).

Again, before moving on, we must consider this Third Person. That God is the Holy Spirit demonstrates his omnipresence. We can't help but localize “Father” and “Son” words. But Spirit is a word that, like the Wind, can't be so easily confined. Indeed, Jesus said it is better that he would go so that he could send the Spirit to be present where

he, in human flesh, could not. When the Spirit arrives at Pentecost, he descends not into one localized temple, but into the hearts of each Christian who now become little temples of God.

The Spirit also has these great works: counselor, comforter, convicter. He is the intercessor that takes our unspoken words and brings them to the Father. He is the sanctifier, the one who purifies us and washes us and makes us clean. God the Spirit may proceed from the Father (and the Son), but he is himself God, the Third Person. You are to see that God is in fact the Holy Spirit and trust him as such.

## The Triune God Welcomes You to Faith

So now we can see that [the Trinity](#) is found in [Revelation 22](#). It is also found in [Genesis 1](#). The first and last chapters of the Bible also teach us about our God who is the First and the Last. We've seen how this is no accident. Trinitarian language is found in the parallel in [Revelation 1](#). It is found in the Parallel in [John 1](#) and in the inverse parallel in [John 20](#).

But I said earlier that this revelation of God by God of his nature as Triune is [not merely here to teach us about him](#).

Rather, it is here to *lead us to him*. Remember how we saw, “‘Blessed indeed,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!’” (Rev 14:13)? Deeds following the blessed ones is the word of the Holy Spirit. The deeds follow them because the Holy Spirit has blessed them. It is not the other way around. They are not full of good deeds and then become blessed for it. Rather, *they are blessed and thus become full of good deeds*. This is the work of the Spirit, the One who gives the Fruit of the Spirit to those who are made alive in the Branch of the Vine—who is Christ.

Let’s recall our two structures again. The one that connects Revelation back to Genesis, thus completing the 66 book “ring,” tying the end to the beginning as it comes full circle, has as its center “*the grace*.” Look at the obvious chiasm in the last two verses of the Bible:

- A. Amen (20a)
- B. Come, Lord Jesus! (20)
- C. The grace (22:21a)
- B<sup>1</sup>. ... Of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all (21b)
- A<sup>1</sup>. Amen (21b)

*Grace is the center* of the very last structure in the Bible!  
*What is grace?* Grace is this idea that God gives to people

something that they do not deserve, namely mercy, kindness, forgiveness, salvation, redemption, sanctification, glorification. This grace comes the plan of the Father, from the ministry of Christ, and from the work of the Holy Spirit. It does not come from the work of a mortals, otherwise, man is glorified rather than God. It is the **grace of Christ** that is being spoken to all who hear the words of the prophecy of this book. And this is what I just said is what it means that the **Holy Spirit blesses** people with good works. First they are blessed; this is grace. Then their deeds follow them; but this too is grace! If we reverse it, then it is not grace, but **wages** given in return for work. But it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not of works so that no man may boast (**Eph 2:8-9**).

Why would God do this? There's only one ultimate reason. So that he may be **praised and glorified**. *To God alone be the glory*. That's why we worship him. Anything else means that man is worshiped and praised, and this as we saw with the angel, would be the ultimate act of evil—to accept or demand worship because of what we do.

Let's us remember now **the second structure**. It has as its center the greatest blessing this book has to offer: **eternal life**: “**That they may have the right to the tree of life, and**

may enter through the gates into the city” (Rev 22:14b). Again, that’s grace. Therefore, grace is at the center of everything we are looking at today. While God reveals himself as Triune on either side of the structures, he does it so that he might show grace through this self-revelation. Grace necessitates a Triune God, a Godhead that eternally knows how to glorify the other Persons.

This particular form of grace comes through the tree of life. But let’s look at either side of this statement. Just before it we read, “Blessed are those who wash their robes” or “Blessed are those who do his commandments” (22:14). There is a textual variant here.<sup>13</sup> In Greek, the two phrases sound very similar. The latter seems to have become an interpretation of what it means to wash their robes (the original), based largely upon the identical statement of the Holy Spirit in 14:13.

The washing of robes is the making white of filthy garments. This could refer to being justified by faith in Christ, with overtones of baptism. Or, it could refer to sanctification where the doing of the commandments is an image pictured by white robes, as we see back in 3:4, “Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not

---

<sup>13</sup> See n. 7.

soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.” Either way, we know that God’s grace is given so that we might be “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10).

Just *after the tree of life* we read the opposite. “Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood” (15). And we saw earlier that “God” is associated twice with this punishment ... adding to him the plagues described in this book (18) or taking away his share in the tree of life and the holy city (19). This causes to remember the book as a whole, and the warnings to the churches which precede the prophecies.

Time and again Jesus tells the churches that they are to “overcome” or “conquer” (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). It was to the very first church, Ephesus, that he told them, “To the one who conquers I will grant *to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God*” (2:7). Now, John has come full circle. All this means something extremely practical about Revelation: This book with all its wild imagery and easily speculated prophecies has not been given to divide the

church on end times disagreements. So why is that what we almost always focus on?

Rather, they have all been given so that the churches of Jesus Christ and the elect within them **might hear** what is coming—including the coming suffering and tribulations, coming judgments, coming wrath of God, and that they **might see** that **the rewards far outweigh the cost**. That's why God tells us about the future.

**What is that cost**, ultimately? First of all, this free gift of salvation actually **costs us nothing**, for Jesus paid it all. That's grace. Second of all, **it may cost us everything**, perhaps even our lives, but what is that cost really, compared to eternal life? The Lord teaches us, **“If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell”** (**Matt 5:29**). On the other hand, **“What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul”** (**Matt 16:25**)? Yes, even if it costs us our lives, which is a major theme of the Apocalypse, that cost is also very little when compared to eternity.

This then is what the book is ultimately teaching. This is why we have those **images of works** on either side of eating from the tree of life. This is why Jesus **comforts us**

with his nature and presence as the I AM of Scripture. This is why it says on either said, “The words of the prophecy of this book” (22:10-11; 18-19). This is why he says he is coming quickly, also on both sides of this central idea (22:6-9, 20). This is why God is revealed as Triune, so that you can see who he truly is, hear his words, and trust his grace.

At the end here of the entire Bible, what then is left? I leave you with Jesus words, words which also encompass this central focus of grace and the tree of eternal life. “Behold, I am coming soon” (12). In other words, *I am coming to you*. Therefore, *come to me*. “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price” (17). This is the free gift of the Triune God who has disclosed what is about to take place and told you about who he is so that you might understand that it truly is a *free* gift. Hear with your ears this good news, believe that this God offers you this water by which you will never thirst again and that he is coming back soon to just the living and the dead.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

Amen.

- A. 1:1. Things that must happen quickly (202)
- B. 1:3. Hears the words of this prophecy (200)
- C. 1:8. Alpha/Omega ... beginning/end (195)
- D. 1:17. When I saw, I fell at his feet (186)
- E. 1:19. The things which shall take place (184)
- F. 2:1. In the midst of seven lampstands (182)
- G. 2:7. the tree of life (176)
- H. 2:17. White stone, new name written (166)
- I. 2:26. He who overcomes ... will give authority (157)
- YY. 12:9. Dragon/serpent/devil/Satan thrown down who deceives world
- YY<sup>1</sup>. 12:10. Salvation/power/kingdom/authority of God and Christ ... accuser is thrown down
- I<sup>1</sup>. 21:7. He who overcomes I will give these things (159)
- H<sup>1</sup>. 21:12-14. New names written ... the city had twelve foundation stones (164-66)
- G<sup>1</sup>. 22:2. The tree of life (181)
- F<sup>1</sup>. 22:2. In the midst of its street (181)
- E<sup>1</sup>. 22:6. The things which must take place (185)
- D<sup>1</sup>. 22:8. When I heard and saw, I fell at his feet (187)
- C<sup>1</sup>. 22:13. Alpha/Omega ... beginning/end (192)
- B<sup>1</sup>. 22:18. Hears the words of the prophecy (197)
- A<sup>1</sup>. 22:20. I am coming quickly (199)

<p>1:5, 9 “the <b>light</b> shines in <i>darkness</i> ... He (Jesus) was the true <b>light</b> which <b>gives light</b> to every man”</p> <p>1:14 “the <i>Word</i> became flesh, and <b>tabernacled among us</b>”</p> <p>1:17 “<b>grace</b> and truth came by <b>Jesus Christ</b>”</p> <p>1:28, 48 “these things took place ... beyond <i>the Jordan</i> ... ‘when you were under <i>the fig tree</i>, I saw you.’”</p>	<p>22:5 “there shall be no <i>night</i> there; they need no lamp nor <b>light</b>, for the Lord God <b>gives them light</b>”</p> <p>21:3 “the <b>tabernacle</b> of <i>God</i> is among mankind and He will <b>tabernacle among them</b>”</p> <p>22:21 “<b>grace</b> of our Lord <b>Jesus Christ</b> be with you”</p> <p>22:1–2 “And he showed me <i>the river of the water of life</i> ... and <i>the tree of life</i>”</p>
---	---

<p>21:25 “And there are many other things that Jesus did, which if they were <b>written</b> one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the <b>books</b> that would be <b>written</b>.”<sup>14</sup></p>	<p>22:18–19 “if anyone takes away from the words of the <b>book</b> of this prophecy, God shall take away his part ... from the things which are <b>written</b> in this <b>book</b>.”</p>
---	---

## Select Bibliography

Andrew of Caesarea. *Commentary on the Apocalypse*.

Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999.

Nigel. “Revelation 22:17[16]-Genesis 1:2[3]. *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* (Jan 24, 2016). <https://www.chiasmusxchange.com/2016/01/24/revelation-2217-genesis-12/>.

Reymond, Robert L. *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998.

Smith, Christine. “Revelation 22.” *A Little Perspective* (Dec 29, 2016). <https://www.alittleperspective.com/revelation-22-2016/>.

Tertullian. *Against Praxeas*.

<sup>14</sup> Gage, *John’s Gospel*, 46–92.

Theophilus of Antioch. *Theophilus to Autolycus*.

Whidden, Woodrow W. "Trinitarian Evidences in the Apocalypse," *Journal of the Adventists Theological Society* 11/1-2 (2000): 248-60. <http://archive.atsjats.org/JATS11-23Whidden.pdf>.