

LITURGICAL DIALOGUE

These verses parallel 1:4-8. The angel tells John not to confuse God with that which mediates God, and repeats the command to worship God (see 12:9; 19:10). He goes on to tell John not to seal up the book; its message is immediately relevant to the Christians to whom it is addressed.

John contrasts those who refuse the offer of life coming to them from God, with those who are righteous and holy. His words echo the following:

When I speak with you, I will open your mouth and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God'; let those who will hear, hear; and let those who refuse to hear, refuse.

– Ezekiel 3:27

The wicked shall continue to act wickedly. None of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.

– Daniel 12:10

The exalted Christ himself declares that he is coming soon, and that good and evil are being judged according to what they really are. We all have to resist whatever temptations we face that distract us from the life we are offered in Christ; and we will all be judged by the decisions we make in relation to him. John's teaching is in accordance with that of the prophets:

See, the Lord God comes with might ... his reward is with him.

– Isaiah 40:10

I, the Lord, test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways.

– Jeremiah 17:10

Repeating words spoken earlier by God (21:6), the risen Christ declares that everything is from him and for him.

[John]:

⁸I, 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; ⁹but he said to me,

[Angel]:

'You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!'

[John]:

¹⁰And he said to me,

[Angel]:

'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

¹¹Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.'

[Risen Christ]:

¹²See, I am coming soon; my recompense is with me, to repay according to everyone's work.

¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.'

[Angel]:

¹⁴Blessed are those who wash their *festive* robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates.

¹⁵Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practises falsehood.'

[Risen Christ]:

¹⁶It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.'

[John]:

¹⁷The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come'.

And let everyone who hears say, 'Come'.

And let everyone who is thirsty come,

let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.

The seventh and final beatitude is addressed to those who are in the process of washing their festive robes (see 7:14); that is to say, they are allowing the love which Jesus offers them in his self-giving on the cross to cleanse them and transform their lives. They are preparing to enter paradise where they will live for ever (see 2:7).

Their lives are contrasted with the kind of life lived by those outside whom he speaks of in traditional terms as 'dogs'.¹

Jesus speaks of himself as the bright morning star (see 2:28),² for it is his presence among them that gives them the assurance of the coming of the full light of the eternal day.

The church, speaking as the bride of Christ and in the Spirit that gives her life, is encouraged to long for him and to cry out to him to come. All who hear this cry are encouraged to echo it, for the life which God offers through Christ is meant for everyone, and anyone who is thirsty for life is welcome to enjoy the intimacy of his love. This is not earned, it is not able to be bought.³ What is asked is faith which accepts the offering in joy and faithfully follows Jesus, resisting contrary allurements.

¹See Deuteronomy 23:18; Philippians 3:2; Matthew 15:26; Mark 7:27. Compare the list of vices in 21:8.

²The star from Jacob (Numbers 24:7).

³See 7:17 and 21:6.