

The End of the Beginning (Revelation 21:1-22:5)

The book of Revelation forms a very fitting end to the entire canon of Scripture. In particular, chapters 21 and 22 share an extreme affinity with the opening chapters of Genesis. This literary feature, where a common phrase or theme or message is repeated at the beginning and end of work is called an *inclusio*. Thus, the end of Revelation serves as an *inclusio* to Genesis 1-3. Note the following parallels between these two texts:¹

Genesis 1-3 (the beginning)	Revelation 21-22 (the ending)
In the beginning	I am the Beginning and End
the heavens and the earth	new heavens and earth
Let there be light	God gives it light
rule over...	and they will reign forever
tree of life	tree of life
river in the garden	river of the water of life
gold	the city was...pure gold
you will surely die	no more death
cursed	no longer...any curse
painful toil	no more...pain
garments of skins	robes
cherubim...to guard	angels at the gates
flaming sword	fiery lake of burning sulphur

Within the book of Revelation, we also find that the closing chapters wrap up much of what was first brought out in the messages to the seven churches (ch. 2-3). According to Greg Beale, “The letters [ch. 2-3], describing the present state of the church, and the concluding section [ch. 21-22], describing the glorified church in heaven, are closely and deliberately linked by the theme of promise and fulfillment.”² The following chart summarizes the parallels between the present imperfect church and the future perfect church:³

Present Church	Future Church
false apostles (2:2)	true apostles (21:14)
false Jews (2:9; 3:9)	tribes of the true Israel (21:12)
Christians dwell where Satan’s throne is (2:13)	Christians dwell where God’s throne is (22:1)
some in the church are dead (3:1)	all in the perfected church are alive (21:27)
the church is an earthly lampstand (1:20; 2:5)	God and Lamb are the lamps (21:23-24; 22:5)
the church contains idolaters (2:14-15,20-23)	the church has no idolatry or lying (21:8)
Christians are persecuted (2:8-10,13)	Christians reign as conquerors (21:6-7)

¹ The following table is adapted from the class notes of Ray Lubeck of Multnomah University (BIB 402: Spring 2018). Used by permission.

² G. K. Beale & David H. Campbell, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015): 26.

³ Adapted from *Ibid*, 26.

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Additionally, the final chapters show the fulfillment of the promises made at the beginning of the book to those who conquer or overcome:⁴

Promise	Fulfillment
will eat of the tree of life (2:7)	tree of life bears fruit in heaven for the believer (22:2)
will be a pillar in the temple (3:12)	God and Lamb are temple in heaven where the believer dwells (21:22); God's people are the foundation and walls of the city (21:12-14)
will be part of the heavenly Jerusalem (3:12)	are part of the heavenly Jerusalem (21:23-27)
will have the name of their God (3:12)	name of God is on their foreheads (22:4)
names will be written in the book of life (3:5)	names are written in the book of life (21:27)
will be clothed in white (3:5)	are clothed as the bride adorned for her husband (21:2)
will have a white stone and receive the morning star (2:17,28)	part of the city whose foundations are precious stones (21:11,18-21), whose light is God and the Lamb (21:23; 22:5), and live with Jesus who is the bright morning star (22:16)
will rule the nations (2:26-27) and will sit with Christ on his throne (3:21)	will reign forever and ever (22:5)
will be saved from the second death (2:11)	saved from the second death (21:7-8)

⁴ Adapted from *Ibid*, 27.