

# KING OF THE JUNGLE

## THE BEST IS YET TO COME

### REVELATION 22

During His ministry on Earth, Jesus' first miracle was at a wedding in Cana. There He turned water to wine.

Of course, the party's host was amazed – *but not with the miracle*. He was surprised at the break with custom. The man wasn't even aware a miracle had been performed. He had no idea that that this sweet-tasting wine had just moments earlier been H<sub>2</sub>O.

What amazed the host was that the best wine had been saved to last. In John 2:10 he says to the groom, “Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!” And here's the point for us - it's God's custom to save the best for last!

That's what we'll get a taste of this morning.

God saves the grandest glories - the greatest amazements - for the very end. The most magnificent miracles are reserved – *not for time, but for eternity*.

In Psalm 16:11 God promises His people “pleasures forevermore.” In Revelation 22 we get a sip of those pleasures. And it proves that one day we'll all say to our Lord Jesus, “You've kept the good wine until now!”

Recall in chapter 21 John took us to the very end. You could call it “Forever Land.” It's a point yet future. The world as we know it is in our rearview mirror.

We're past "the Day of Man" - when rebellious humans held sway over planet Earth... The awful hour of Great Tribulation is over - *God's response to man's coup d'that...* We're past the second coming of Jesus...

The Lion has retaken the jungle. He's redeemed all that sin had ruined... Satan is in the lake of fire... At the Great White Throne Jesus dispensed justice on all who refused His mercy... As a final stroke to the world that was, the elements melt. *The Creator uncreates...*

So that He can bring out the very best wine... *a new heaven and a new earth.* By chapter 22 the Old Earth is gone... The universe to which it belonged is gone...

God has saved the best for last. All that remains of what was before, is a city. John refers to it as "the New Jerusalem." Today, we call it "Heaven." It's the mansion Jesus is constructing - the place He's preparing for us.

It's occupied with believers from all the ages. And John sees it joining the new heaven and the new earth.

In Scripture God gives us progressive glimpses of Heaven... *as a Kingdom - then a city - finally a garden.*

From a distance Heaven is seen as a Kingdom. Jesus told us to pray, "Your Kingdom come..." He used the term, "the Kingdom of Heaven." Revelation 4 depicts God's throne. Heaven is where the King reigns.

But in chapter 21 we get up-close and personal with Heaven. We see that it's also a city with walls, and gates, and with a quality of life so peaceful that it's difficult to imagine, living in today's sin-stained world.

But it is beautiful. It comes to us. Heaven comes as a bride at her wedding walking down the aisle. There's no disappointment. It is the fulfillment of all our desires.

And now John takes us through the gates, and inside the walls, and we find a garden. Think of the first few verses of Revelation 22 as a virtual tour of Heaven...

Verse 1, "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month.

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." There's *a river, a throne, a street, and a tree...*

From John's description in chapter 21:21 you enter the New Jerusalem through gates of pearls onto a street paved with gold - *gold so pure it's transparent...*

Once a rich man managed to defy the odds. *He did take it all with him.* Put his gold in two suitcases, and ordered them to be placed in the casket when he died. Somehow he ended up in Heaven with the suitcases.

Of course, the angel at the gate was puzzled. He told him, "Don't you know Heaven is an all-inclusive?"

When the man opened his suitcases, the angel laughed, "Heaven is the fulfillment of all desire, and you brought asphalt?" What nations fight for on Earth, they pave the street with in Heaven. It's a different kind of city from the streets up... But it does have one commonality with cities today - it's got **a Main Street.**

Recently the [National League of Cities](#) listed the most common street names in the United States.

Here are the [Top 10 Street Names in America](#)...

**First**, is [Second St...](#) **Second**, is [Third Street...](#) **Third**, is [First St...](#) **If that's confusing, you'll be happy to know that fourth is Fourth St...** **Fifth** is [Park St...](#) **Sixth** is [Fifth St...](#) **Seventh** is [Main St...](#) **Eighth** is [Sixth St...](#) **Ninth** is [Oak St...](#) And **Tenth** is [Seventh St...](#)

*Let's take it from the top: 1st is Second. 2nd is Third. 3rd is First. 4th is Fourth... 5th is Park. 6th is Fifth. 7th is Main. 8th is Sixth. 9th is Oak. 10th is Seventh. I'm sure you've got it, and **Heaven has got a Main Street.***

It might not be the most popular name for streets, but every city has a chief thoroughfare - *a Main Street.*

In the UK the main street is called "[High Street.](#)"

In Germany it's the "[Hauptstrassen.](#)"

For French Canadians it's "[La Rue Prince-epal.](#)"

In Sweden it's "[Sturgatan](#)" - literally "[The Big Street.](#)"

Well, Heaven also has a Big Street. In fact, Main Street is its only street. And here John takes us cruising down the main drag in the New Jerusalem.

Picture a street of gold that leads to a throne. The street is wide - and rather than a centerline, or median, or turn lanes - there's a river running down the middle.

Several years ago I spoke in San Antonio, Texas, and the church put Kathy and I up on the Riverwalk.

There's a river that runs through downtown, and there's a sidewalk on either side of the river. Trust me, Heaven is a lot nicer than Texas, but it gives you an idea. Main Street in Heaven will be like a Riverwalk.

Throughout the Bible God is seen as a river flowing through our lives. Psalm 1 says the blessed man is like a tree planted by the river. In Psalm 46 God is the river that makes glad the city of God. In John 7, Jesus said from a believer's heart will spring rivers of living water.

I'm sure in Heaven we'll drink from the *River of Life*, and walk along its banks. Jesus will be to us a river - a source of pure, clean, endless refreshment and health.

And understand where this *River of Life* originates... it flows out of "*the throne of God and of the Lamb.*"

From the outside walking into Heaven we've gone pass the wall, through the gate, down the street, and by the river... but from the inside of Heaven working outward everything begins at the throne of the Lamb.

For all eternity we'll be reminded that all that's good flows to us - *not from the human spirit or from freedom and independence* - but out of our submission to God.

It's not *self-government* that produces the utopian paradise called Heaven - it's *God's government*.

And on either side of the *River of Life* John sees a tree. Perhaps it's one tree that grows on both banks of the River, and the water runs through the tree trunk.

The original language could indicate multiple trees. Maybe it's a row of trees growing on either bank.

But Main Street in Heaven affords a welcomed sight.

Adam and Eve were booted from the Garden of Eden because God had to bar them from *the tree of life*. He dispatched an armed angel to guard the tree.

Now in Heaven mankind has access again to the same tree. If the first couple had eaten of the tree of life in their fallen state we would've lived forever in sin.

But now that we're fully redeemed, our access to the tree is restored. Once again we can munch its fruits.

In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul mentioned his vision of Heaven. He called it "*the third heaven*." The blue sky is *the first heaven*. The night sky is *the second heaven*. But the eternal, celestial city is *the third heaven*.

And Paul refers to it as "*Paradise*" - an instructive word. "*Paradise*" is an old Persian word used for an enclosed garden in the midst of the desert - an oasis.

Within its walls were flower beds, and fruit trees, and grassy arbors, next to babbling brooks, under plenty of shade, with fountains to enjoy, and spices to savor. The New Jerusalem is a city with plenty of green space.

When you ponder Heaven, don't think... *long, white hospital corridors - or banks of puffy, fluffy cumulus clouds - or marble, stair-steps for harp-playing angels...*

Heaven is far more intriguing. Think of Heaven as a garden paradise... like a Hawaii, or a Fiji, or a Tahiti.

As we said last week we came from *the garden*, and we'll return to *a garden*. The human story should be titled, "*From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*."

The original garden was called “Eden,” which means “delights.” That was God’s original intention for us - *eternal delight* - and that too is our ultimate destiny.

Notice a couple of other details from verses 1-2...

The tree of life bears “*twelve fruits...*” One tree yields bananas, and apples, and mangos - twelve different fruits. Apparently, there’s incredible variety in Heaven, and few limitations. Heaven is unbridled creativity.

Notice too, “*each tree yielding it’s fruit every month.*”

*Is it one tree producing twelve fruit?... Or one tree yielding a different fruit each month?... Or is it twelve different trees yielding their fruit?... We’re not real sure.*

But notice the inclusion of time. Here’s a mention of months - a lunar measurement. This is eternity - in Revelation 21:23 there’s no moon, yet there’re months.

Even in eternity we won’t completely escape time.

Today, time rules our lives. We’re on the clock. We have alarms, wristwatches, cooking timers. We have limited time. But in Heaven we won’t be a slave to time.

In Heaven we won’t *waste time*, or *make good time*, or *run out of time*. It’s been said of Heaven, “*We’ll live with time, but we’ll no longer be under its pressure.*”

Today, passing time steals our days. But in Heaven we’ll utilize time to measure and manage our days.

And notice in Heaven we’ll eat! Why else is the fruit?

Surely, we won’t have to eat! There’s no hunger in Heaven, but we don’t always eat out of hunger. We eat for enjoyment, and for fellowship, and for relaxation.



And if you want to eat in Heaven, *you can eat!*

I'm sure Angel's Food Cake is on the menu. As well as Divinity and Seventh Heaven Bars. If you like Devil's Food Cake - *better eat that now...* I'll bet every entree on Heaven's menu is calorie-free! Imagine, all-you-can-eat, all-the-time, and you won't gain an inch.

And I'm not being flippant. Our text gives us reasons to believe that everything in Heaven is weight watchers approved. Notice, "*The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*" It's not that they cure sickness.

There's no illness in Heaven. The word "*healing*" can also mean "health producing, or health promoting."

All the fruits and foods in Heaven are *health foods*.

Verse 3 answers the question most people ask...

"*What will we do in Heaven?*" And here's where misinformation abounds. People think we'll all take harp lessons, or rake clouds, or spend 24/7 singing.

Here's a Far Side cartoon of a guy sitting on a cloud, thinking, "*I wish I'd brought a magazine.*" Trust me you won't need a magazine to occupy your days in heaven.

Verse 3 tells us what we'll be doing, "*And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.*"

Notice, *we'll work in Heaven*. You and I were created for meaningful service. When God created Adam and Eve, He put them in Eden to be caretakers of a garden.



Whenever you complete a task, and walk away with the satisfaction of a job well done realize that's a gift God gave you. It's how He made us, and it's a foretaste of one of the joys we'll experience in Heaven.

Sadly, this kind of satisfaction is a rarity on Earth.

Today we labor under the curse. There's thorns and thistles around us. Adam was made from the dust of the ground - then He was told to work that same dust - but as he did he left something of himself in his work.

He never got out of his labor all that he put into it.

And this is now the plight of all men. We work by the sweat of our brow. Today, under the curse *all labor is hard labor*. We're literally working ourselves to death.

Labor in a fallen world is a grind. It's a curse. It's tough to stay motivated. Boredom becomes a problem.

Ultimately, every job is a dead-end job.

Here's a list of good excuses to use if your boss ever catches you sleeping at your desk... "I was testing the keyboard for drool resistance." "*Someone put decaf in the coffee pot marked regular.*" "The mailman went postal and pulled out a gun. I was playing dead so I wouldn't get shot." And last but not least, "*Amen.*"

Imagine though, *work without the curse!* Work that's no sweat. Every day ends with a sense of satisfaction..

*Every bid gets accepted... Every idea becomes successful... Every effort is appreciated...* In Heaven there's no weeds to prohibit a job-well-done. Every day in Heaven you can't wait to get to back and clock in.

We'll all be serving God and bringing Him glory, but we'll be doing it in a way that maximizes our own gifts and talents, and brings us immense joy and fulfillment.

Here's the ultimate indicator of work in eternity... In Heaven nobody ever asks for vacation time! Incredible!

And here in verse 4 is the “*creme de la creme.*”

Here's the best that Heaven offers... “*They shall see His face and His name shall be on their foreheads...*”

This is the pinnacle of Heaven's delights and man's ambition. Nothing tantalizes and raises expectations higher than this promise. That one day, you and I, and all redeemed humans, will look into the face of God.

Nothing testifies to the power of the Gospel - and the cleansing effects of the blood of Jesus - than this outcome... *That the likes of us will see the face of God.*

When the ancient mariners sailed their ships across the Mediterranean Sea westward they would stop at the Straits of Gibraltar. This was the famous marker...

In their minds, this was *the point of no return*. When they reached the huge rock they said in their Latin tongue, “*Ne plus ultra,*” which means “*nothing beyond!*”

This is how I feel about verse 4. *This is the ultimate!*

There's nothing else we can imagine doing that would top this experience - to look into the face of God.

Remember Moses asked to see the glory of God, and it was granted. But God limited the privilege.

In Exodus 33 He warns Moses, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live..." God knew fallen flesh could never survive the blaze of His glory...

That's when God told him, "I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen." Moses was allowed to see God's backside, but never His face.

Yet what Moses was denied, you and I are promised.

1Corinthians 13:12 says of Heaven, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known."

Today, a veil covers our eyes. We know God in part.

But when that veil gets taken away there'll no longer be limits on what I can learn of God, or of anyone else.

I think this answers the oft-asked question, "Will we recognize each other in Heaven?" I believe "Yes!"

We're told, "*I shall know just as I also am known.*"

I like how W.A. Criswell put it when asked if we'll know each other in Heaven. He said, "We won't really know each other until we get to heaven." In Heaven we'll enjoy a depth of intimacy in all our relationships.

And just as amazing, "His name shall be on their foreheads." I'm really not into tats. I've got my *Kathy tattoo* and my *Bulldog tattoo over here*... no, not really!

But here's one tattoo I won't mind getting! We'll visit [New Jerusalem Ink](#). Heaven has a tattoo parlor.

Recall, the Beast identifies the rebels who pledge allegiance to him by putting a mark on their forehead.

Well, God marks His own the same way. He isn't ashamed of His followers. God puts His name on our forehead. He brands us as His. It's the one tattoo you won't mind being permanent. It marks you for eternity. We'll see His face, and He'll mark our face as His own.

Verse 5, "There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light." Revelation 21:23, "The Lamb is its light."

"And they shall reign forever and ever." We'll not only serve God in eternity, but we'll *reign* with Jesus forever.

In Chapter 20 we mentioned that we'd rule over the Earth in the Kingdom Age. But in 1 Corinthians 6:3 Paul further expands on our duties. He asks, "Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" Maybe in the new heaven and new earth we'll reign over the angels.

"Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place." In the very first verse of Revelation 1 this same phrase is used, "*must shortly take place.*"

We assume this speaks of a *length* of time, but that's not its meaning. It's more about a *succession* of what takes place. It means, "here's what's next!" All that John has seen is what's next on God's divine agenda.

In Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples and the Church was born, Peter explained what happened by quoting the OT prophet, Joel, “**In the last days,**’ says God, ‘**I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh...**” Pentecost marked a beginning of *the last days*.

Now for the past 2000 years we’ve been living in “**the last days.**” The Church Age is *the last days*. After Jesus came and the Spirit was poured out, what comes next in God’s plan is the rapture - the Day of the Lord!

Think of it this way, until 32 AD, history was moving across the table top. But at the Cross and Pentecost history reached the edge of the table - *the last days*.

At that point we took a hard 90 degree turn. And since then, history has been moving parallel to the edge of the table. At any moment we can go over...

The point of Revelation isn’t to give us a time frame, but to tell us what happens after we go over the edge.

**What’s next is Jesus.** His restoration of all things.

That’s why His encouragement to saints for the last 2000 years has been the same, verse 7, “**Behold, I am coming quickly!**” We’re on the edge and Jesus is next!

John continues, “**Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.**” This is true of all the Bible. When you purchase an appliance you can save yourself a lot of hassle by reading the owner’s manual.

And that’s what you do when you follow God’s Word.

God created us, thus the Bible is a Manufacturer’s manual. Take heed to it and your bound to be blessed.

Verse 8, “Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.” He made the same mistake in Chapter 19:10.

Apparently, all the *glory* made him *giddy*. He stopped thinking. *God alone deserves to be worshipped!*

And the angel corrects John. “Then he said to me, “See that you do not do that.” Knock it off, John-John!

“For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.” This is a sober warning. John has just seen Heaven, yet it doesn’t mean he’s always right. He goes from *Revelator* to *idolater* in a twitch.

This is why a person’s experiences don’t validate their orthodoxy. Just because they see stuff doesn’t mean their teaching can be trusted. Always make sure you check out *what they say* with *what God hath said*.

Verse 10, “And he said to me, “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.”

In Daniel 12:4, an angel told Daniel to “Shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end.”

At the time of Daniel - 600 BC - God’s people weren’t ready to grasp the prophecies of *the last days*. It was *BC - before Christ*. It was too distant - off the radar.

But now John is given the opposite command. He’s forbidden to seal up the prophecies of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. God wants us to know *what’s next!*

Pay attention to verse 11, for me it's one of the most ominous warnings in Scripture. It causes chill bumps...

**“He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.”**

Here's what this verse means... Once a person passes from time into eternity - once you move into the eternal state - you forfeit any possibility for change.

In Dante's famous novel, *“Inferno,”* he inscribes the following words over the gates of hell, **“Those who enter here, abandon all hope!”** If you were filthy, you'll be filthy forever. If you were holy, you'll be holy forever.

Lester Moore was a Wells Fargo agent in the Wild West. He's buried in Boot Hill cemetery - Tombstone, Arizona. His gravestone reads as follows, **“Here lies Lester Moore, four slugs from a .44, no Les, no More.”**

And that can be said of every single person when they check out of this world. What you were while on this Earth, you'll be for all eternity - *no less, no more.*

If you're unjust in this life, you'll be unjust still. If you're holy in this life, you'll be holy still. If you walk with Jesus in the here and now, you'll walk with Him forever. If you don't, you'll live a part from Him forever!

Verse 12, **“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”** I hope you're prepared for what's next! When Jesus left He said He'd come again. *Are you ready?*

Jesus now speaks, **“I am the Alpha and the Omega..”** These are first and last letters in the Greek alphabet.



Jesus is the A to the Z and all the in between. He's "the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."

I like how AW Tozer puts it, "Man in the plan of God has been granted considerable say; but never is he permitted to utter the first word nor the last. That is the prerogative of the Deity, and one which He will never surrender to His creatures." God always gets the last word. And His last word is **Jesus**... He is the first and the last... Thus, reject Jesus and there's no other hope.

"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs..." Notice the spelling here - it's not "d-a-w-g-s" but "d-o-g-s" – that's a very vital theological distinction.

The other morning my neighbor's dog was barking at the top of its lungs. It caused me to long for heaven!

*No dogs in Heaven...* No, that's not what this means.

In antiquity dogs were rarely pets. They were beasts and scavengers. The word "*dog*" was slang for the most brutal, most animalistic, most immoral sinner.

And "*dogs*" are not the only people outside the New Jerusalem. There are "sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie." Understand the difference between the American Dream and the Bible's vision of Heaven...

All our recent presidents have promised an America where no one is left out - no child left behind - no group forgotten, or neglected, or deprived the rights and benefits given to the whole - *no matter their morality*.

America's vision is inclusion. We're the wide gate, the broad road. But not Heaven. It's the narrow gate.

Verse 14 tells us Heaven is a place for those who do God's commandments - *who approach life His way*.

And those who don't end up outside looking in.

Heaven will consist of all nationalities and ethnicities, but John distinguishes Heaven not only by those who are on the inside, but by those who are on the outside: *the spiritually rebellious, the sexually immoral, those who harm indiscriminately, who worship false gods, who practice lies...* Not everybody will get into Heaven.

Verse 16, "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

Notice, Jesus identifies Himself by two idioms which speak of different events... "*The Root and Offspring of David*" refers to His birthright - Jesus' first coming.

The "*Morning Star*" is the last star seen in the night sky before the dawning of a new day. This speaks of the rapture. The event that takes us over the edge of the table is His coming in the clouds for His Church.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"

And let him who hears say, "Come!"

And let him who thirsts come."

I love this chorus of "*comes*." Understand, salvation is free - paid for by Jesus. But you have to *come!*

This is all it costs for you to be forgiven, and made new, and become part of God's family - you have to come from wherever you are to Jesus... *Get up!* Turn your back on *where you are* and *who you're with*... Step over your pride, and have faith enough to come...

God won't chase you down. He's the Judge, not the cops. He makes no arrests. The Father of the Prodigal Son raced down the street to greet the wayward boy, but he had to come. The Father didn't force Him home.

We're told, "**Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.**" The spiritual refreshment, the satisfaction, is free - but you believe enough to scoop and drink.

**No doubt John knew he was the last of the original 12 apostles.** Thus, the last person authorized to write sacred Scripture. That's why he adds verses 18-19...

In Matthew 18 Jesus gave the 12 apostles a special authority - **to bind and to loose.** This meant it was up to them to establish doctrine and practice for the Church.

They bound or obligated the Church to biblical beliefs and morals. They loosed or freed the Church from legalistic trappings that didn't add to godliness..

And they did this *binding and loosing* through the writings of the NT. All 27 NT books were written by either one of the 12 apostles, or under his supervision.

Since John was the last of the 12 apostles at the time of the Revelation, he knew the canon of Scripture would conclude with him, so he attaches a warning...

I believe it's meant, not only for the last book, but for the other 65 that have come before it - *all Scripture*.

Verse 18, "**For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written**

in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

Years ago, when the Reader’s Digest released their condensed version of the Bible they conveniently left out these two verses... *I think the reason is obvious?*

Thomas Jefferson revealed his arrogance when he took a pair of scissors and cut out the parts of the New Testament that offended his anti-supernatural biases.

Some folks adopt [Dalmatian Theology](#). They believe a spot here or a spot there. But God has inspired the whole enchilada - all 66 books are the Word of God.

*Who are you to cut and paste from God’s Word!*

The Bible needs no edits. It’s sufficient for all things pertaining to what we believe and how we should live.

Woe to the person who tampers with the Bible.

Plagues get added to the Adders. The names of the Subtractors get subtracted from the Book of Life. God takes the Bible seriously, and I suggest we do as well.

We’re winding down, verse 20, “**He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen.**” Three times now we’ve been told to get ready.

Jesus is coming quickly. Sure, it’s been 2000 years, but in comparison with eternity... He’s coming quickly.

And after beholding this Revelation - after seeing the glories of the exalted Christ, John has to respond.

He knows what's next! The King of the Jungle is about to roar onto the stage of history. John shouts out through his ink and pen. **"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"**

Here's my final thought on the Revelation of Jesus Christ... Sometimes we wonder, **why did an Almighty God allow mankind to rebel in the first place?**

*We began in a garden and end in a garden* - but all that occurred *in between* - the crime, the war, the pain, the dying, the crying... was it really worth it to get back to where we started? - to simply return to square one?

But God always saves the best wine for last!

Yes, we've swapped one garden for another, but the man in the final garden is superior to the man in the former garden. **For redemption trumps innocence.**

In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve were innocent.

They knew no sin. But neither did they know the depths of God's forgiveness, the joy of His freedom, the severity of His justice, the righteousness of His judgment - and thus, *the extravagance of His grace...*

They were ignorant as to the extent of God's love.

But not the man in the final garden. Innocent he's not. He's been through the fire - the pain of sin and death. He's known what its like to be lost and alone.

Now He appreciates that He's been found.

He's redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. He now knows the love of God. The Lion is His King. And he shouts with all the redeemed, **"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"** God's goal for us has always been **redemption not innocence.**

Thus, it's fitting how the book closes. It's as if the Groom finally gets to kiss His Bride. We're left with a token of grace, verse 21, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." It's grace that awaits us!

It's still true of Jesus, He saves the best for last!