

If Anyone Adds to the Words of this Book, God Will Add to Them the Plagues Described

22: 18-19

DIG: What is the meaning of God's final curse in these verses? Knowing what you know about the seven plagues, the tree of life, and the holy city of Jerusalem, how seriously do you take this warning?

REFLECT: Have you prepared yourself for the Second Coming? Do you feel more ready, or less ready, after reading Revelation than you did before? How have your perceptions of Jesus, Satan, heaven and hell changed? Why? How will these new perceptions affect your worship? Your life style? How would you sum up the central truth of this book?

It is of great significance that the Bible closes with an affirmation of its truthfulness. Because the words of Scripture are **trustworthy and true (22:6)**, they must not be sealed up, but proclaimed (**22:10**). Sinners are to be called to respond to the warnings in the Word of **God** or suffer the consequences. All the prophecies of **Revelation** regarding the doom of unbelievers will come true. That terrifying certainty should drive people to accept **Yeshua, who rescues us from the coming wrath (First Thessalonians 1:10)**.⁵²⁸

John warns everyone who hears the word of the prophecy of this book: **If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book (22:18)**, ultimately the lake of fire.

John's warning refers to the book of **Revelation**, not the whole Bible. However, since this is the final revelation of **God's** Word, the principle behind the warning can be extended to the whole Bible because the Scriptures are complete only with this final book. Once **John** died, no further inspired books would be written (**Ephesians 2:11 to 3:12**). If this were not true, revelation would be open-ended, and churches and messianic synagogues would have no way of distinguishing between false and true doctrine.

Examples of those who add are the numerous cults that accept other writing as inspired and authoritative and place them on equal (or higher) grounds with the Bible. The Mormons have their *Book of Mormon*, Christian Science have their *Key to the Scriptures*, the Jehovah's Witnesses have their *New World Translation (NWT)*, and the Muslims have their

Koran. In view of the proliferation of all kinds of cults and winds of doctrine sweeping across the world today, most of them rooted in some charismatic personality with claims of divine wisdom and authority, **John's** warning is needed more today than ever before.

And if anyone takes words away, literally to cut off, from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll (22:19).

Now if it is a deadly crime to add to the **words** of Scripture, then it is even more wicked and dangerous to take them **away**. Adding false scripture to true Scripture at least leaves the truth, with the saving Gospel in tact. Trying *to cut off* certain unwanted words of **God** from the Bible, on the other hand, will dilute or destroy its saving message and living truth. That is why the influences of the cults, as bad as they are, still are not as deadly as those, like the Jesus Seminar, who specialize in cutting out or explaining away all those portions of the Bible that offend their humanistic prejudices and evolutionary presumptions. All of the Scriptures have been attacked by such people, but none so much as the books of **Genesis** and **Revelation**.⁵²⁹ The penalty for removing anything from the Bible is nothing less than the removal of **that person's** name from the Lamb's book of life, **that person's share in the tree of life** and their entrance into the New Jerusalem.

The cults add to the words of the Bible and the liberals take them away. The form of the warning comes from **Deuteronomy 4:2**, where **God** admonishes Isra'el: **Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of ADONAI your God that I give you.** In **Deuteronomy 12:32** he added: **See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.** **Proverbs 30:5-6** warns: **Every word of God is flawless; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, or He will rebuke you and prove you a liar.** Therefore, the prohibition against altering the words of **Revelation** by implication extends to the entire Bible. As **John** had said: **The Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35).**

No true believer would ever deliberately tamper with Scripture. Those who know and love **ADONAI** will treat **His Word** with the utmost respect. They will agree with the psalter: **How I love your Torah (Psalm 119:97, 119:113, 163, 167; John 14:23); and, I delight in Your Torah (Psalm 119:70, Psalm 1:2, 119:77, 92, 174).** That does not, of course, mean that believers will never make errors in judgment or mistakenly interpret the Bible. **The Lord's** warning here is addressed to those who purposefully distort or falsify Scripture. Paul says that these **peddle the Word of God for profit (Second Corinthians 2:17).**⁵³⁰