

THE FINAL WORD

Revelation 22:6-21

Introduction:

A little over a year ago, on July 20, 2014 we began our look into the book of the Revelation. It has been quite a journey. At times I wasn't sure where we were going to end up. At times, I wanted to quit, as the book of Revelation can get rather negative at times. But here we are, in Rev. 22, the final word of the angel and of Christ himself to John and to the church today.

I struggled with how to approach this final passage of Revelation and how to wrap up this series of messages. I finally decided that some review would be in order, as well as looking at the warnings and promises in the final verses of the book. I would like to take you back to the message I preached over a year ago when we introduced the book of Revelation. There are some things I said then that I would like to follow up on in this final message.

But first a few comments regarding this passage we have just read. This passage contains some warnings, some promises and a glorious assurance of Messiah's imminent return.

One thing to note. If you have a Red-letter edition of the Bible, you will note a number of statements in this passage printed in red, attributing them to the Lord Jesus himself. I found, in reading the text, that it is sometimes hard to determine where the Lord's words end and John's words begin. Some parts of this passage are statements by the angel, some by Jesus, and some are John's personal comments.

In this passage we find warnings to those who do evil, warnings to those who would misuse or alter the contents of this book, and warnings about directing our worship to anyone besides God himself. We find promises of blessing to those who practice righteousness, promises to those who keep the words of this book, and promises of refreshment to those who are thirsty. And along with all of that is the assurance that Christ is coming soon. Let's look at those things in a bit more detail.

The Warnings

Note: I am not going through the text in order – only picking out certain thoughts this morning.

1. Warning to those who do evil – v. 11. This verse has confused many as it seems to encourage a continuation in evil. But it is not intended to promote evil. It is actually a warning to the wicked. Fruchtenbaum says, "Those who are unrighteous are to confirm their unrighteousness by continuing in their unrighteousness, which is something that will naturally occur if God's revelation is rejected. But the righteous are to confirm their righteousness by continuing in their righteousness, which will naturally result if God's revelation is accepted. The former will be characterized by filthiness, but the latter by holiness." So there is a warning to the wicked about the end result of their lifestyle choices.
2. Warning to those who would misuse or alter the contents of this book – vv. 18-19. These warnings, in their context, are concerned specifically with the Book of Revelation. However, the principle can certainly be extended to the Bible as a whole. We cannot, and must not, add our own thoughts or traditions to the holy Scriptures. Nor do we have the right to remove the things we don't agree with or approve of from the Bible. Examples – cults who view other holy books as inspired and place them on equal grounds with the Bible. Or those who refuse to accept the entire body of Scripture as God's inspired Word and hold to ideas of partial inspiration or no inspiration.
3. Warning against the worship anyone or anything besides God – vv. 8-9. David Levy makes an interesting comment: "Sad to say, many who hear God's Word proclaimed today focus on the ability and delivery of the messenger rather than on the content of Scripture. The angel minced no words in his response to John. Tersely he commanded, 'Worship God.' God alone, and no other, is the focal point of worship."

So there are warnings which we need to heed. There are also promises made in these final verses of this book.

The Promises

1. The promise of blessing to those who practice righteousness – v. 11. We have already commented on this, but let me just reiterate: the righteous will confirm their righteousness by continuing in their righteous living. The life of those who do so is characterized by holiness.
This thought is repeated in v. 14 – read it. Some manuscripts say, “Blessed are those who do his commandments...” (Received Text) The idea is that of a life that is righteous, cleansed, washed by the blood of the Lamb.
2. The promise of blessing to those who keep the words of this book. The word keep means “to attend to carefully, take care of, to guard...” It is not enough to read and to know the content, but to live according to the words of this book. This is really a reminder of the message given to John at the beginning of this revelation – 1:3.
3. The promise of refreshment to those who come to God thirsty – v. 17. Three times in these last two chapters of Revelation you find reference to the water of life – 21:6, 22:1, and here in 22:17. There will be nothing lacking spiritually in eternity. There will be a constant supply of refreshing life-giving water.

As we wrap up our study on this amazing book, I would like to go back to some things I mentioned in the very first message I gave over a year ago. In that message I gave what I called...

Important Considerations Regarding Revelation

We looked at the objectives of this book and some dangers involved in studying this book. I would like to review those now to see how we have done in our study together. I want to look first at some dangers.

The Dangers

1. **The danger of sensationalism. It is easy to become caught up with a fascination for that which is unusual and fanciful.** “Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.” (Acts 17:21 ESV) **There is a danger of becoming ab-**

sorbed with looking for sensational new theories and ideas, while forgetting about the importance of how we live our lives here and now.

2. The danger of dogmatism. “Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up.” (1 Corinthians 8:1 ESV) We must be careful not to become proud and divisive.
3. **The danger of escapism. There have often been those who, in the light of Christ’s promised return, have sought to escape this world in order to wait for his coming.** We must love and serve our community instead of running to the hills and hiding out away from others.
4. The danger of pessimism. It is easy to become negative and pessimistic as we look at what is happening in our world. But as believers, we are to be full of joy and hope instead of buried in hopelessness and discouragement.

The Objectives

1. To reveal the plan and purposes of God. Without the book of Revelation, we would be left hanging. Revelation tells us that there will come a day when every wrong will be righted and every right will be rewarded.
2. To promote righteous living. There is no question we live in an unholy age. The book of Revelation provides a wake-up call for all of us. When faced with temptation, have you ever asked yourself, “Do I want to be doing this when Christ returns?” We are challenged to live in such a way that when He comes we will be found doing the things that earn His praise, rather than his rebuke.
3. To promote evangelism. If the time is indeed short, and Christ’s return is coming soon, then we ought to be diligently doing everything we can to turn people from their sin to find eternal life in Jesus Christ.
4. To comfort believers. When we hear of wars, rumors of wars, and natural disasters, the knowledge of Revelation can give comfort by reminding us that God is still on the throne, He is still in control, and He is carrying out His purposes and plans.

5. ****To exalt Jesus Christ** – This book is quite different from the gospels where Jesus is shown as the Savior, in all of his humiliation and suffering. Here He is revealed as the Lamb of God and King of Kings who restores what was lost by the fall and so much more.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the goal of this book is to lift up Jesus Christ and direct our gaze and our worship toward him. As we do so, our attention is drawn to the wonderful assurance of his soon return. Three times in this final passage, Jesus repeats this promise, "...I am coming soon." (vv. 7, 12, 20).

As Jesus reassured his disciples on the last night he spent with them, *"...I am going ... to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."* (Joh 14:2-4 NIV)

Then, on the day he was taken up from them, they were again given assurance from the angel, *"...This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:11 ESV)

For the disciples of Jesus day, just as for every generation since, there has been the realization that Jesus may return at any time. Jesus says, "Behold, I am coming soon." That word soon means quickly, suddenly. His coming is imminent; it may happen at any time.

So, having looked at all of the dreadful and terrible judgments recorded in this book, the greatest takeaway is this: Jesus is coming. The Rapture may happen at any time. We need to be ready. I trust that we can all say with the Apostle John, ***"Amen. Come Lord Jesus!"***