

Lesson # 77 Revelation 22:6-11

The Time is Near

Date: November 3, 2013

⁶ And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."
⁷ "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."
⁸ I, 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,
⁹ but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."
¹⁰ And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near."
¹¹ Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

I. Soon

vv. 6-7

Verses 6-21 are the epilogue of Revelation – final reflections, warnings and promised blessings for those who read and heed what has been reported by John. Compare these closing verses with those of **Rev. 1:1-3**. The epilogue closes the book with words that convey what the believer's response should be to the soon return of Jesus Christ, and there is a sense of urgency in these final sentences. Obviously, since John recorded all this in AD 95 or thereabouts, and over 2,000 ^① years have passed, there can be a tendency to be very lax about the occurrence of all these events we've studied over the last 4 1/2 years.

But each day is one day closer though, and our lives are to be models of living as being prepared for Jesus' imminent return, not setting dates, but being aware of the seasons – cf. **Matt. 24:32-35** & note **I John 2:28-3:3**. Do you see the result in this passage of waiting and longing for the Lord's return? John is recording the One who tells him that these things will "soon take place."

But first, the speaker, no longer the angel who was showing John the New Jerusalem, but now Jesus Himself (cf. v. 7) confirms to John that what he has seen and heard is God's word and is therefore trustworthy and true. This focus on God's word is prevalent in chapters 21-22 (see 21:5;22:6-7,9,10,18,19). It has authority, it is sufficient, it is eternal and unchanging, so it is foundational to our very salvation and sanctification – a lamp to our feet and a guide for our path. This is the very point of the Reformation doctrine of Sola Scriptura – God's word is sufficient for instruction in life and worship.

The message of Revelation is from God, who has sent His angel to show "His servants what must soon take place." So John receives the message but his task is to record it and then send it out, and obviously, we are reading it, so he did exactly that.

The shift of speakers is now obvious as it is Jesus who is coming back and He says, “I am coming soon.” We now encounter the 6th of 7 Beatitudes in Revelation.ⁱ This blessing is for those who “keep the words of this prophecy”. So, we don’t just read it, put it on the shelf and forget it. We apply it and live according to the theology it teaches us, looking for the imminent return of Christ and the accompanying blessings, signs and judgments. What we read here must give us the desire to evangelize those we love and know, warning them of what is coming.

Just as Romans 2:12-13 and James 1:21-27 tell us, it is no good to simply hear or read God’s word, we must do His word. It is at this very step that many people’s “Christianity” is displayed as “churchianity” – practiced only on Sundays or in the presence of the pastor, and worthless the other 6 days of the week. This sort of hypocrisy will be exposed in the end as we have observed.

Revelation is a very interesting book, no question, but we are not supposed to read it out of idle curiosity, but in order to understand its truths and prepare for them. In the meantime, we are bidden to live out godly, holy & obedient lives – cf. **II Peter 3:11-14**.

II. Worship God Alone vv. 8-9

John himself now comments that he is the one who has had these visions shown to him. This is a very important point for the 7 churches [in Revelation 2 – 3] to ^② hear since they know John personally. This is simply a sort of provenance, proof of the authenticity of the letter – certification of who is sending it, because he will not be delivering it himself.

He recognizes the proper response to what He has been shown – worship – but he inadvertently directs his worship to the angel who obviously still stands nearby. John already knew this was wrong, but he is so overwhelmed by all of this, that he cannot contain himself. It overwhelms us to read it, so imagine having experienced it!

This angel rebukes John and won’t accept worship (& no holy angel ever will), and tells John he is also just a servant of God like other believers and prophets. Notice how the angel defines believers – “those who keep the words of this book”. God alone is the acceptable object of our worship as this book has made clear on page after page. Hebrews 1:14 provides us with a summary statement of the role of angels in the lives of believers.

III. The Time is Near v. 10

Daniel, being given a vision of some of the very things John saw, was told to “seal up the vision” – **Dan. 8:26; 12: 9,14**. because the time was too far off yet in a sense of the historic calendar ahead of him, and Paul was given a “thorn in the flesh” to keep him humble and silent about what he had seen in a vision of

heaven – II Cor. 12:1-10. John is told the exact opposite. From Daniel’s historic viewpoint, a lot of future lay ahead of mankind, and people were just not ready to understand what Daniel was seeing. Christ had not yet even come the first time, and the NT would not be written for over 600 years. Even John, in Rev. 10:4 is told not to record what “the Seven Thunders” said, and we don’t know why, but in Daniel’s case, a lot of things had to happen before any of the end times could be comprehended enough to make the Jews (whom Daniel was writing to) see their place and the Messiah’s role in the end.

Revelation is the final book of the Bible written and in place, so a framework for understanding its characters, themes and Christ’s return had to be established. Christ had not yet come the first time in Daniel’s time, so His return would not be seen in prophetic scenes very easily. However, Daniel was told that (Dan. 12:4) closer to the end, what he had sealed (in prophetic language) would begin to be revealed and understood (until the time of the end). The return of Christ is now imminent and in fact, there are no prophecies standing in the way of the Rapture occurring any day.

The fact that this book is not to be sealed means there are no hidden secrets hidden from us when we plainly read it. Obviously, there are some interpretive issues like, “who is Antichrist?” because he is not yet on the scene, but we do understand there will be an Antichrist, and to an extent, what he will do politically and militarily, but generally, as we have seen, we can comprehend the flow of thought, understanding the warnings, promises and blessings.

If the truth is not clear in these words, then this command is nonsense. If the plain, normal understanding of the words of Revelation does not convey the meaning God intended its readers to grasp, then the words are in fact, sealed.ⁱⁱ

IV. Hardened or Softened Hearts?

v. 11

In the second part of v. 10, the angel continues to speak to John. Although this sentence seems disconnected from the 1st part of v. 10, it is quite connected. People’s response to God’s word – to the preaching of it & reading it – will fix their eternal fate. Notice **Isa. 55: 8-11**. God’s word, when it goes out has an exact impact on a person that God intended for it to have on that person. Some are hardened by it, and some have their hearts softened by it. Note **Matt. 13:10-16**, and **Isaiah 6:8-10**.

Rev. 22:11 is series of commands – imperatives to act a certain way, not comments about how people act. This verse establishes human responsibility as people are commanded to do what they want to do on the basis of who they are.ⁱⁱⁱ This book has revealed (& it is unsealed) how God will save and how He will judge, so do what you think is best in light of what you’ve heard and read in Revelation.

“This command is meant to force us to realize that if we are vile, filthy and unrepentant, God is going to display the glory of His justice upon us. This command is given to us to force us to recognize what awaits us and to push us to repent.”^{iv}

People tend to continue on the course of their lives that makes the most sense to them (worldview) and that pleases them unless God’s word – the Gospel - has an arresting effect on them when they are confronted with it. Their disposition will follow them right into eternity – either heaven or hell. This verse makes the gospel proclamation the single most important words in anyone’s life.

Again, John MacArthur comments, *“Preaching Revelation draws the line. Its truths will melt the hearts of the repentant and harden the hearts of the unrepentant. Those same truths thus become either an instrument of salvation, or an instrument of damnation (cf. I Cor. 1:18; II Cor. 2:15-16). They must be proclaimed so man and women can hear them while there is still time.”^v*

Next lesson – Lesson # 78 - Our final lesson in Revelation
Rev. 22:12-21 Alpha and Omega

ⁱ See Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14.

ⁱⁱ John MacArthur, Revelation 12-22, p. 297

ⁱⁱⁱ James M. Hamilton Jr.; Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches; Crossway, series editor, R. Kent Hughes, 2011, p. 413

^{iv} IBID, p. 414

^v MacArthur, p. 298