

## Lesson # 78 Revelation 22: 12-21

## Alpha and Omega

Date: November 24, 2013

<sup>12</sup> “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. <sup>13</sup> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” <sup>14</sup> Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. <sup>15</sup> Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. <sup>16</sup> “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” <sup>17</sup> The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. <sup>18</sup> I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, <sup>19</sup> and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. <sup>20</sup> He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! <sup>21</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

## I. I Am Coming Soon

vv. 12-13

There is a shift that takes place here in Revelation. The visions of the future have ended and now a sober realization is presented to those who have heard or read what John has so faithfully recorded. God has given us a glimpse of the future, specifically how He will end what we experience as history. In vv. 10-11, His word forces us to consider our response to this message in light of what’s coming, and now, in case we take this too lightly and act or think like those Peter mentions in **II Pet. 3:1-13**, we are reminded that Christ is coming back....soon! ①

So, in verse 12, Christ Himself announces, “Behold, I am coming soon.” Now, in light of the passage we just looked at in II Peter 3, “soon” is relative. To us, He’s been gone almost 2,000 years, but to God, only a couple of days. Some versions say “quickly” instead of soon, meaning His return, the unfolding of all John has written is imminent, and could occur anytime – cf. MK 13:33-37. Once the process starts, it will be unstoppable and the events will occur more and more in a staccato fashion.

However, He is not just coming back, His coming has purpose. He will bring His rewards for the righteous and eternal punishment for the wicked. We have seen this as we’ve gone through the book haven’t we? A relentless series of judgments, martyrdoms for the faithful, destruction and death for the rebellious, glimpses of heavenly joy and worship, and especially in the last 2 chapters, glorious descriptions of the beautiful capital city of heaven itself! Back in **Dan. 12:1-3**, this idea of reward and punishment is depicted prophetically.

Notice that Jesus also says, “It is My recompense.” Only He has the authority as Lord to return and bring this judgment with Him. Remember the universal search for one worthy to open the scroll in Rev. 5? There is only one worthy! Cf. **Rev. 5:5-6, 9-14** – the Lamb. In chapters 21 & 22, He is called the Lamb 6 times. He has been represented as a Lamb in Revelation “*because he is the fulfillment of the entire sacrificial system in the Old Testament.*” It is as God’s Lamb Who takes away the sins of the world that all we hope for our eternal future was bought and paid for. Without His substitutionary death on that cross, we could only hope for some sort of more tolerable degree of Hell, and no joy.

His return is what believers long for – to see that King of kings on that white stallion splitting the eastern sky, rolling the clouds back as a scroll!

*“This final chapter of the drama of redemption not only tells us how the story ends but also reveals the point of the whole story. It is not too much to say that in order to understand the biblical story, we must know how it ends. When we learn the goal toward which the biblical story moves, we understand the scope of God’s redemptive and covenantal concern – what He values, what He holds dear, what He considers worthy of His love and His redemptive work in Christ.”<sup>ii</sup>*

Now, in v. 13, He announces what God the Father announced in Rev. 21:6 – He is the Alpha and Omega, the First and Last, the Beginning and the End! He is all in all. It all involves Him from start to finish [ **Rom. 11:36** ] – every detail of history, science, geography, sociology, geology, climatology, genetics, biology, zoology – all those things man has studied since time began, Christ designed, created and has sustained atomically for the duration of history since creation and before that. That’s why we can trust the promises, the prophetic nature of this book and the entire Bible!

## II. Two Responses

vv. 14-15

These two verses comprise the only 2 possible responses to the message of Revelation, which is really the message of the gospel. The first is the 7<sup>th</sup> and final beatitude of the book<sup>iii</sup>. The obvious implication of this verse is that we all have a robe that starts out dirty. Only if this robe is washed clean can it gain one entrance to the jasper city, because only those who do so are blessed. In Rev. 7:14 we were told what the only detergent strong enough to remove the filth from our robes is – the blood of the Lamb!

This action of cleaning our robe is symbolic of course, and means that the blessed here have placed their eternal destiny by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and clean ‘robes’ are the proof that this has occurred in your life. A clean robe means you have the right to enter the city by the gates and a right to the tree of life. This is the only way to gain eternal life.

Remember the parable Jesus told in **Matt. 22:1-14**, the parable of the wedding feast? Only those whose robes have been supplied and cleaned by Jesus Christ will ever enter heaven.

The rest ( v. 15 ) are outside the gates, well outside the gates, in Hell with no access to any of the blessings or joy that the redeemed will experience. These are dogs, sorcerers, sexually immoral, murderers and idolaters, and all who practice falsehood. This list of categories covers pretty much every possible sin, but the word ‘dogs’ may seem out of place for those who love puppies. Dogs in the OT and gospel times were not pets. They were filthy, wild and roamed the garbage dumps, eating trash and sometimes even attacking people. This is a derogatory term for the wicked, saying that they are filthy animals who have no redeeming qualities within their own characters.

So there are two choices, but hasn’t it always been that way? See Gen. 2 ( Adam and Eve ); Gen. 4:7 – Cain and Abel; **Joshua 24:14-15**; the narrow gate vs the broad gate; the narrow road versus the broad road; riches or Christ; comfort or Christ; love God or hate Him; see the cross as life or as foolishness; etc. I realize God chooses the elect, but the Bible is also very clear that we are responsible to obey the word and if we don’t, punishment and judgment await. Blessings or curses? Which will it be?

### III. The Bright Morning Star v. 16

Now, lest there be any confusion over who is speaking, and who this Lamb is, Jesus now identifies Himself as the source of this book – the One who sent His angel to testify about all these things “for the churches”. This is for the benefit of His people, so that we might know what awaits man at the close of history. In 22:6, notice it is God the Father who said the same thing.

Jesus identifies Himself amazingly as both the root and descendent of David. David came into being from Christ, His creator, and then, in the incarnation, Christ became David’s ‘Son’, a fact that confounded and astounded the Pharisees in Matt. 22:41-46 – which was an answer to many prophecies along with the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. He is the root of David prophesied in **Isa. 11:1**, and the offspring of David in **II Samuel 7:12-14**.

And He is the ‘star’ of **Numbers 24:17**. James Hamilton adds, “*He is God, and He is man, lion and lamb, slain and risen, conqueror and peacemaker, reigning and returning, servant and king, creator and consummator – He is Lord.*”<sup>iv</sup>

He also calls Himself “the Bright Morning Star”. This is a title used nowhere else in Scripture of Christ, so it must have special intention when used to close the end of the canon. It is the only occurrence of the Greek word, ‘*orthrinos*’ ( morning ), primarily used in Greek for the planet Venus, often seen in early dawn. In Rev. 2:28, Jesus promised the overcomers at the church at Thyatira the

morning star ( meaning Christ Himself ), but that Greek word is ‘*proinos*’. Now, at the end of the book, He is the unique, bright morning star.

Angels are called ‘morning stars’ in Job 38:7, and Lucifer, in Isa. 14:12 is called ‘son of the morning’ ( NKJV, KJV ), Daystar ( ESV ), ‘shining morning star’ ( HCSB ), and ‘star of the morning, son of dawn’ ( NASB ). But here in Rev. 22:16, Jesus Christ is shown to be the triumphant, bright morning star, the true One who will never be cast out of the sky. This is a gracious title for our Lord Jesus Christ.

## IV. Come Lord Jesus

## v. 17

The immediate response to the proclamation of v. 16 is found here as the Holy Spirit and the Bride say “come”. Creation groans awaiting this time when Christ will come to finally set everything right and wouldn’t we all desire that He might come even today? Yet, to be honest, some Christians, perhaps even us from time to time hesitate to pray this because it’s just not convenient. We want that dream house, that new car, to see our kids graduate or get married, become grandparents, or parents, etc. Even noble things like, “I want to see my loved one saved” can interrupt our desire to love His appearing.

When He comes, Col.1:20 says that He will reconcile all things to Himself, but until then, what are we to be doing? Well, in II Cor. 5:18-20, we are told to be His ambassadors, pleading for people to be reconciled to God on Christ’s behalf. ④ Are we? In **II Peter 3:10-13**, we are exhorted to be holy & godly in our conduct as we await the return of Christ and all the events that follow it, and notice **II Pet. 3:14-18**.

Here, in v. 17, let those who hear say ‘come’ and obviously those who hear are those whose eyes and ears have been opened to the truth and for whom, Jesus’ return will be a joy over against the horror that awaits those who hate Him. “The conditional promise of the gospel – *“Let anyone who wishes to take of the water of life as a gift” ( Rev. 22:17 RSV ) – expresses the gospel’s initial command to believe. The conditional warning – “if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person’s share in the tree of life and in the holy city ( Rev., 22:19 RSV ) – expresses a corollary to the promise as it elaborates and sustains the call of the gospel for faithfulness and loyalty to Christ that endures to the end.”*<sup>v</sup> Also, note here again, there appears to be a distinction made between those who are the Bride and others who are saved, because these are a different group.

The focus then shifts to those hearing the message, who recognize their thirst ( cf. Matt. 5:6; JN 4:10-14 ), to call them to come and take the water of life without cost. It is free to all who thirst for righteousness and know they cannot buy it, because it is a gift – cf. **Isa. 55:1-13**. The NKJV says whoever ( KJV – whosoever ), but the ESV is more accurate here, “the one who desires” just as in JN 3:16, “whosoever” literally means “those believing”. Those whom God does

not seek will never seek Him, will never thirst, will never come to Him ( JN. 6:37,33 ), and will never ask Him to come quickly or otherwise. Those who do come as a result of this call, this “come to the waters” from God, will never thirst again. Note Rom. 8:29-30.

## V. A Warning and a Benediction vv. 18-21

Two warnings are posted here for those who hear the word of the prophecy of this book, meaning the book of Revelation. Some apply this to the entire Bible, but I don't believe that is a proper application here. Certainly that would be serious infraction, but in the context here, only Revelation is meant.

One warning is “do not add anything to this book”, and the second is “do not remove anything from it.” The penalties for either are severe. Those who want to add to it will have the plagues of the book added to them, and those who take away from the book will have their rights to the tree of life taken away. IOW, only unbelievers would ever do either of these heinous sins.

John had been told not to seal up the words of this prophecy so it is meant to stay intact, not one more or one less word. The message is exactly as God the Holy Spirit intended it to be and human meddling can only make it ineffective and perverted. This does not mean we cannot teach it and preach it, because we need to examine it and explain it, and we have to use other words to do that. What is arrogant and heinous is to add a verse here or there, or cut a word or verse or two out because we don't like the way it is or there is something there unpalatable that we want to soften up. ⑤

In modern times, in the broader sense, people try to add books to the canon, claiming these books were supposed to be part of the Bible but mere ‘men’ cut them out, usually said to be at the Council of Nicea 325 AD, and we are left with a Bible short of what it should be. Many liberals, agnostics and atheists argue that books like The Gospel of Thomas, The Gospel of Judas, the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, etc. should be in the Bible, but these were written many 100's of years after the books now in the canon of Scripture, and in many cases refute what the Bible says, and do little more than cast doubt on the veracity of the Scriptures we do have. The Apocrypha, a collection of inter-testamental collection of religious writings, are excluded from the Canon by Protestants because of historical errors and contradictory doctrinal assertions found within them, yet are included by Roman Catholics and some others as “the Bible”. It is surely a serious offence to tamper with God's word and this warning passage makes that very plain.

In v. 20, the One who testifies to these things ( all the events of Revelation ), the Lord Jesus Christ again says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Again, the reply, “Even so, come Lord Jesus.” John closes with a personal greeting to the seven churches and to us. This ending, of course is very similar to the close of just about every NT book, and is the way this book began – cf. **Rev. 1:4**.

The grace of Jesus Christ permeates every passage of the Bible, because it all revolves around Him – cf. **Ephesians 2:4-10** – and then the fitting last word, “Amen.”

## VI. Personal Final Remarks

We began the study of this book on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009, so we have spent the last 4 1/2 years or over 172 Sundays looking into what most people consider the most exciting book of the Bible. We have covered not only expositional ground, but also interpretive – looking at the Rapture, the Millennial Kingdom, the Antichrist, the role of Israel in the end times, various theological systems and positions, etc.

This is a book I once commented that I would never teach in Sunday School, and yet I have now taught through it twice! This latest time, I filled over 20 notebooks with written notes, references and quotes, and read at least 5 commentaries cover to cover and referred to numerous others. It’s funny how life takes you in directions you never expected to go isn’t it? Hopefully, our understanding of this book and what we now believe about God’s final judgments will inspire all of us to be diligent evangelists and worshippers of God.

I was 55 years old when we began this Bible study and I am now 59. I’d like to think that the in-depth exegesis of Revelation has helped me grow spiritually as well as all of you. As we anticipate the eventual unfolding of the events depicted in this book and in the many OT prophecies about the end of all things, and the ultimate fulfillment of the hope that is within us, perhaps the words of Solomon and the Apostle Paul as inspired by the Holy Spirit are appropriate as we approach our final look at God’s future grace towards His own beloved people. ⑥

Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

*12 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”; <sup>2</sup> before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, <sup>3</sup> in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, <sup>4</sup> and the doors on the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low—<sup>5</sup> they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets—<sup>6</sup> before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, <sup>7</sup> and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. <sup>8</sup> Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.<sup>9</sup> Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. <sup>10</sup> The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.*

<sup>11</sup> *The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.* <sup>12</sup> *My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.* <sup>13</sup> *The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.* <sup>14</sup> *For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.*

## Romans 4:18-21

<sup>18</sup> *In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be."* <sup>19</sup> *He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.* <sup>20</sup> *No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,* <sup>21</sup> *fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.*

Timothy George queries, *"If you were asked to sum up the entire message of the Bible in just one word, which word would you choose? Reconciliation, salvation, justification, atonement, faith, love, eternal life? All of these are wonderful words, but the word I would choose is "grace". The very last verse in the Bible summarizes the message of Holy Scripture from Genesis to Revelation: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all" [ Rev. 22:21 ]."*<sup>vi</sup>

John Calvin, as quoted by Kevin DeYoung, will get the final say;

*"We see that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ ( Acts 4:12 ). We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else. If we seek salvation we are taught by the very name of Jesus that it is "of Him" ( I Cor.1:30 ). If we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in His anointing. If we seek strength, it lies in His dominion; if purity, in His conception; if gentleness, it appears in His birth. For by His birth He was made like us in all respects ( Heb. 2:17 ) that He might learn to feel our pain ( cf. Heb. 5:2 ). If we seek redemption, it lies in His passion; if acquittal, in His condemnation; if remission of the curse, in His cross ( Gal. 3:13 ); if satisfaction, in His sacrifice; if purification, in His blood; if reconciliation, in His descent into Hell; if mortification of the flesh, in His tomb; if newness of life, in His resurrection; if immortality, in the same; if inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom, in His entrance into Heaven; if protection, if security, if abundant supply of all blessings, in His Kingdom; if untroubled expectation of judgment, in the power given to Him to judge. In short, since rich store of every kind abounds in Him, let us drink our fill from this fountain and from no other."*<sup>vii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Steven Lawson, "Whomever he Wills", Matthew Barrett & Thomas Nettles, editors, Founders Press, 2012, P. 8

<sup>ii</sup> Michael D. Williams, "Far as the Curse is Found", P & R Publishers, 2005, pg. 271

<sup>iii</sup> Revelation 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14

<sup>iv</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., Revelation, Crossway, 2011, p. 417

<sup>v</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner & Ardel B. Caneday, "The Race Set Before Us", IVP, 2001, P. 143

<sup>vi</sup> Timothy George, "Amazing Grace – God's Pursuit, Our Response", Crossway Books, 2000, 2011, p. 15

<sup>vii</sup> John Calvin, quoted by Kevin DeYoung in "The Hole in our Holiness", Crossway, 2012, p. 123