

“LOOK, I AM COMING SOON!”

Revelation 22:6-21

Key Verse: 22:12

“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.”

Now we come to the last passage in Revelation. This book has been like a spectacular symphony with clear, distinct movements that reflect the spiritual warfare between God’s people and God’s enemies. God’s people are marginalized and vulnerable. In contrast, God’s enemies seem so powerful and fierce. Those who hold onto gospel truth will be persecuted by God’s enemies. God’s people are tempted to fall into fear and compromise. This spiritual warfare seems endless. But the book of Revelation tells us that Christ, the Lamb, will destroy all of God’s enemies completely and eternally. Furthermore, he will create a new heaven and new earth where he dwells with his people forever. This will surely happen when Jesus comes again. Now, this symphony reaches its crescendo with Jesus’ repeated promise: “Look, I am coming soon!” We will think about these words in two ways: First, Jesus’ promise as given in chapter 22. And second, the meaning of this message as a main takeaway from the study of Revelation.

First, Jesus’ promise: “I am coming soon!” Today’s passage, the closing bookend of Revelation, is related to the opening bookend, chapter 1. Chapter 1 introduces the main theme: “Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and tells us that Jesus is: “the Alpha and the Omega” (1:7-8). Chapter 22 concludes with the same theme: “Look, I am coming soon!” and also tells us that Jesus is: “the Alpha and the Omega” (7a,12a,13,20a). Between the opening and closing passages, the words of prophecy are revealed in the scroll.

This book started in 1:1a with the words, “The Revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.” Then in chapters 1-22, Jesus revealed what will happen. In 22:6, the phrase “These words” refer to this entire Revelation. The angel said to John, “These words are trustworthy and true.” It is because they are not human words; they

originated from God who inspires the prophets (6b). The words in Revelation seem to be too fantastic to believe--far from the reality we experience. Moreover, we are wary because people have misused the book of Revelation to spread their own strange ideas. In addition to this, worldly people scoff at the news of Jesus' coming again to justify their own evil desires (2Pe 3:3-5). However, Christ's words are trustworthy and true because he himself is Faithful and True (3:14; 19:11). He showed us the things that must soon take place (6b). We should believe what he says.

In the Greek text, verse 7 begins with "and" (*kai*). This signifies a shift in speakers from the angel to Jesus himself. Jesus said, "Look, I am coming soon!" The word "Look" means that Jesus wants us to pay attention to his coming. There are so many things that vie for our attention. Politicians and advertisers constantly try to get our attention for their purposes. They are not concerned about us; they only want to get our vote or our money. But Jesus is genuinely concerned about our salvation. He is eager to plant true hope in our hearts out of his great love and compassion. We should keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and his coming again. This is good news to his people. Jesus said, "Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll" (7b). This is the sixth of seven blessings in Revelation.

Let us review these blessings. Blessed are those who read aloud the words of prophecy and those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it (1:3). Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord (14:13). Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed (16:15). Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb (19:9). Blessed are those who share in the first resurrection (20:6). Blessed are the ones who keep the words of prophecy written in the scroll (22:7). Blessed are those who wash their robes (22:14). The blessings include eternal rest from labor, not being shamefully exposed, participating in the wedding supper of the Lamb, glorious bodily resurrection and exemption from the second death, being priests of God and of Christ and reigning with him, and the right to eat from the tree of life and to enter the eternal city. God's heart's desire is to bless his people and his blessings are rich and abundant. These blessings are given to those who keep the words of prophecy. To "keep" them means to listen carefully, meditate on

the meaning, take them to heart, and live them out in our practical lives. As we do, blessings come upon us and our lives become very fruitful.

When John heard and saw the words and visions of prophecy through the angel, they were so fantastic that he fell down to worship the angel (8). It is easy for us to be overwhelmed by those who share God's visions. Even the great Apostle John was tempted to worship an angel. The angel immediately corrected him, saying, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!" (9) No matter how charismatic or fantastic any human being, saint or angel may seem, they are not worthy of our worship. Who is worthy of our worship? The Creator God is worthy. 4:11 says, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." The Lamb is worthy. 5:12 says, "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise" (5:12). Let us worship God our Creator and the Lamb who was slain for our sins.

The angel told John, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near." Some 600 years before Christ, God gave Daniel an apocalyptic prophecy and commanded him, "...roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end" (Dan 12:4). It was because God's plan was not fully revealed. But in John's time, God's plan was settled with certainty and the time of Jesus' coming again was near. As Jesus prophesied, we see many signs of the end of the age: wars and rumors of war, earthquakes, and worldwide pandemics. This year many renowned scientists and world leaders set the Doomsday Clock to 100 seconds before midnight--the closest it has ever been to the end. They say this is due to climate change and nuclear and cyberwarfare concerns. But spiritually speaking, it is due to the increase of corruption and wickedness before the end of the age. So we must keep watch and preach the gospel diligently.

When the words of prophecy are proclaimed there are two responses. Verse 11 says, "Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy." There are two groups of people:

the wicked and the holy. Each group reveals deeds and character which become the basis for divine judgment. Patterns of behavior, whether controlled by unbelief or by faith, will eventually become irreversible. People's response to gospel truth in this life will determine their eternal destiny. When they die, or when the Lord returns, their character will be forever fixed. This is why it is so important not to harden our hearts when we hear God's word. As the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart" (Heb 3:7-8a).

In verse 12, the speaker changes again from the angel to Jesus Christ, who says, "Look, I am coming soon!" When Jesus says something to us, we should pay attention. When he says the same thing again, we should realize it is vitally important for us to listen. He emphasizes that his coming is imminent. We should not be complacent, thinking that Jesus will come sometime later. Jesus is at the door, knocking (3:20). We need to answer right away; there is no time to delay. This means we should always be spiritually alert and doing what he wants us to do. When he comes again, he will reward each person according to what they have done (12b). Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (13). This divine title indicates that Jesus is the Sovereign Ruler of history who has authority to reward the faithful and punish the wicked according to what they have done. This is revealed in the contrasting words, "Blessed" and "outside" in verses 14-15. Jesus will reward those who wash their robes by accepting his blood shed for them which washes away their sins. They are given the right to eat from the tree of life and go through the gates into the Holy City, not by their credit but by the grace of Jesus. They are truly blessed. In contrast, God excludes the wicked from the Holy City and punishes them outside. First on the list are dogs--not your pets--these dogs symbolize false teachers. Also listed are those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. They will be tormented day and night forever in the fiery lake of burning sulfur (21:8).

In verse 16, Jesus confirmed that he is the sender of this message to the churches. Who sends the message is important to the recipients. If the sender has great authority, people listen to his message, but if he has no authority, they ignore it. Jesus identified himself, saying, "I am the Root and the Offspring

of David, and the bright Morning Star” (16). Jesus is the Creator God and the Author of life from whom David came. But Jesus came down into the world and became flesh as the promised Messiah and David’s offspring. Now Jesus provides a fresh revelation to his people about the final consummation of his kingdom. The bright Morning Star appears when night is almost over (2Pe 1:19). Jesus is the only hope of a new world. Now his coming is at hand. All the darkness disappears, and a bright new day comes.

In verse 17 we find the responses to Jesus’ coming. The Spirit and the bride--the church--say, “Come!” They long for Jesus and welcome his coming. Together they become a witness to the world. Without the Spirit’s witness the church is powerless; without the church’s witness, the Spirit is voiceless. Together they become an effective witness, urging the world to come to Christ for salvation. Those who accept the gospel join in welcoming Christ, saying, “Come!” Those who are thirsty and have spiritual desire are invited to come and take the free gift of the water of life. This is the last invitation before Jesus’ comes again. God is so gracious and generous. He does not want anyone to perish but everyone to have eternal life.

Verses 18-19 contain a final warning to those who hear the words of the prophecy of this scroll. If they distort the words of prophecy by adding something to them or taking something away from them, there will be serious consequences. People do this when they do not respect this word of prophecy as the word of God, but consider it human words, as many liberal scholars do. Such people are proud, thinking that their ideas are better than God’s words. God will add to them the plagues described in this scroll. God will take away from them any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City.

Jesus’ final words in the Revelation are, “Yes, I am coming soon.” We should respond with John, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus” (20). This is our longing and prayer. Revelation concludes with the final greeting: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen” (21).

Second, Jesus’ message to the church. As we conclude our study of Revelation, we need to review its contents and why it was written so that we may hold onto the main message of the book. In John’s time Christians were persecuted

by the Roman Empire and many were martyred because they testified about Jesus. John himself had been exiled to the island of Patmos where he received this Revelation. In chapter 1, John saw the vision of the glorified Christ. Chapters 2-3 are what Christ says to the seven churches. In chapters 4-5 John saw the vision of heavenly worship of God and the Lamb. The Lamb was given authority to execute God's judgment against his enemies. The Lamb opens the seals of the scroll and releases God's wrath in a series of three sevens: the seven seals in 6:1-8:5, the seven trumpets in 8:6-11:19, and the seven bowls in 15:1-16:21. The interlude in chapters 12-14 explain the spiritual conflict between God's people and this world, which is controlled by Satan. Chapters 17-18 describe the fall of Babylon. 19:1-10 is the celebration of Babylon's fall and the announcement of the wedding of the Lamb. 19:11-21 describes Christ as the King of kings who judges the beast and the false prophet completely and eternally. In chapter 20 God executes final judgment against Satan, the source of evil. 21:1-22:5 tell of the wedding of the Lamb and the creation of a new heaven, new earth, and the Holy City where God dwells with his people. 22:6-21 emphasizes Jesus' promise of coming again and its trustworthiness. Though this book is written as apocalyptic literature--containing cosmic images, symbols, and metaphors--there are definitely messages to the churches. These messages include commendation, rebuke, counseling, and reward. We want to focus on the central theme of the letter--Christ's promise: "I am coming soon!"

The promise of Jesus' coming started in 1:7: "Look, he is coming with the clouds...." In 3:11, Jesus told the Philadelphia church: "I am coming soon." In 22:7 and 12 Christ say, "Look, I am coming soon!" And in 22:20 he confirms his promise, saying, "Yes, I am coming soon." We need to think about the significance of this repetition, especially as this book closes. Why do we need to hear this message again and again? We suffer from injustice, violence, corruption, and many other acts of wickedness. In addition, we suffer from many kinds of diseases, natural disasters, political turmoil, war, and economic instability. Christians suffer from persecution and are even killed. All these things happen endlessly and crush people's spirits. No one can solve all these problems. It seems there is no hope. But there is hope: Jesus is coming. When Jesus arrives, he destroys Satan and all wicked people and will create a new heaven and a new earth. God will dwell with us and we will enjoy him forever

in paradise. This is why we eagerly wait for his coming. We need to be reminded of this promise regularly and to hold it in our hearts in the midst of all the trials we face in this world.

Though “I am coming” refers primarily to Christ’s final appearance, it also refers to his imminent coming to each generation. Christ is not sitting around in heaven waiting for the date he will come again. As chapter 1 reveals, through his Spirit, he is walking among his churches on earth. As the Head of his church, he is constantly working to sustain, nurture, guide and empower his church. He rewards those who keep his words and punishes the wicked. For example, Jesus warned the church in Ephesus, “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first...Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place” (2:4-5). Jesus also warned those in Pergamum who compromised with false teaching of the Nicolaitans: “Repent, therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth” (2:15-16). On the other hand, Jesus encouraged believers in Philadelphia who held to gospel truth: “I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown” (3:11).

When Jesus comes again, we will have final victory. This victory already started the moment we accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior, Lord and King. But as we live in a wicked, corrupt world, it is easy to compromise and live a lukewarm Christian life like the church in Laodicea. When persecution arises, we can fall into fear and shrink back. How does Jesus encourage the church? He said, “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer...Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown” (2:10). It is only the victorious who will inherit God’s blessings and rewards. The words “victorious” or “triumph” are applied to believers ten times (2:7,11,17,26; 3:3,12,31; 12:11; 15:2; 21:7). How can we be victorious? 12:11 says, “They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” When we keep our faith in Jesus to the end of our lives, the final victory will surely be ours when he comes again. Jesus said, “Yes, I am coming soon.” We say, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”