

Come, Lord Jesus

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- [0 : 00] So we're going to turn to our Bible reading. And this morning we're coming to the end of the book of Revelation. Paul Brennan, one of our ministers, is preaching to us once again.
- So do grab a Bible and follow along as we read. We have Bibles available at the sides, at the back. That's one of the welcome team will be able to grab one for you if you need. And do turn up to the very last page indeed of the Bible, the very last chapter.
- And we're going to be reading Revelation chapter 22 from verse 6 through to the end. Revelation 22, beginning at verse 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.
- And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things.
- [1 : 15] And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me. 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. And he said to me, do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.
- Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me to repay each one for what he has done. I am the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.
- 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. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers, and the sexually immoral, and murderers, and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.
- 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.
- [2 : 38] 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 to take the water of life without price.
- 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. 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.
- He who testifies to these things says, surely I am coming soon. Amen.
- Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. This is God's word.
- And we'll return to it shortly. Well, good morning, folks. Good to see you all. As Josh said, my name is Paul, one of the ministers here in the church.
- [3 : 49] And very good to see you this morning. Please do have Revelation open in front of you. It's the end of our time in Revelation. So do turn to the last page of your Bible.

Revelation 22. And from verse 6. And as we come to the end of the book of Revelation, and as we come to the end and read these final words, we are reminded of what sort of book we have just been reading.

Yes, it is apocalyptic. We've read of spectacular visions, which are here not to confuse us, but to bring clarity. It's giving us clarity about the ultimate events and where history is going about the future.

It is apocalyptic, but it's also a letter. John, the writer, was a real human being. He really did write this book as a letter to real churches.

And we saw that in the very opening words of the book. Just flick back with me for a minute to chapter 1. Chapter 1, verse 1. And it says there, The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants, the thing that must soon take place.

[5 : 16] He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy. And blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. John, to the seven churches that are in Asia, grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come.

So John really did write this book to those churches in Asia. It is a real book. It's a letter. And we see again, we're reminded of that here at the very end.

So back in 22, chapter 22, verse 16, we are reminded that this is a real letter. It says, Revelation is a message.

It has a purpose for the churches. And what was that message? What is Revelation here to do? What's it for? Well, Revelation is in our Bibles to help struggling Christians, struggling churches to keep going, to overcome, to persevere to the end.

[7 : 01] And the book does that. The book helps Christians who are struggling to keep going by unveiling reality. It's here to show us what's really going on and where history is really going.

Revelation means an unveiling. Apocalypse means an unveiling. It's revealing. And by pulling back the curtain on the visible world and revealing to us unseen realities, the church is equipped to conquer and not to compromise.

We are, through this book, being enabled to see the world as we're meant to see it. And having a grip on reality, we are then able to conquer and not compromise.

See, Revelation is here to help us see the world as it actually is. God is revealing to us what is actually happening. Remember that word conquer?

In each of the seven letters in chapters two and three, the letter concludes every time with an exhortation to conquer. So to the letter of the church in Ephesus, it concludes with these words.

[8 : 15] To the one who conquers, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. To the church in Smyrna, it finishes this way.

To the one who conquers, will not be hurt by the second there. The church in Pergamon, to the one who conquers, I will give some of the hidden manna. To the church in Thyatira, the one who conquers and who keeps my words until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.

To the church in Sardis, the one who conquers will be clothed in white garments. The church in Philadelphia, the one who conquers, I will make him a pillar and a temple of my God.

To the church in Laodicea, to the one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne. See, each and every one of those real churches faced unique trials and temptations.

But the Lord Jesus spoke to each one of them. And he speaks with great clarity. And he's urging each of those churches and every church since to overcome the trials and temptations and to conquer.

[9 : 23] Revelation is here to help you conquer. And these are the very same trials and temptations that the church and Christians always face.

Maybe you're an Ephesian Christian. Your temptation is to lose your first love. Maybe you're a Smyrnan Christian.

You're fearful in the midst of persecution. You look around the world and you're fearful. Maybe you're a Pergamon Christian. And the danger there was to accept false teaching, to compromise.

Maybe you're a fire-tiring Christian. And the danger there, Jesus says, I have this against you. You are too tolerant. They were over-tolerant of sin.

They overlooked blatant sin in their fellowship. Or maybe you're a Sardis Christian. And they're described as being whitewashed tombs. They were hypocrites who looked like they had it all together.

[10 : 24] A big, impressive church, but inside they were dead. Or perhaps a Philadelphian Christian. Weak and struggling, but hanging on to be faithful. Or a latest here in Christian.

Filled with wealth in the midst of that affluence came great apathy. At every point in history, the church, collectively and individually, will be tempted by one of those things.

Regardless of the trials and temptations that we face, every church is urged through this book to conquer. To overcome, not compromise. The whole point of the book of Revelation is to help the church to conquer.

To overcome. And it's here to help you keep going. Revelation is here to help you to keep going. Today, 10 years from now, 20 years from now, the things you'll be facing, you need this book in your system.

You need to have the book of Revelation imprinted on your heart, clear in your head. So that you'll conquer when the pressure comes. And these final verses of the whole book underline for us the purpose, the message of the book.

[11 : 42] And they give us reason to trust what we've read. Look at verse 6. And he said to me, these words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits and prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.

It says these words are trustworthy, true. So some key questions to grapple with at the end here. As we look at these final verses. What is meant there in verse 6 by these words?

See it begins there by saying these words are trustworthy and true. What does it mean? What are we then told about these words? And what is the message for us? So three key questions.

Number one, what is meant by these words? What is the content of Revelation? Well, at the end of verse 6, it says that God has sent his angel to show his servant what must soon take place.

That is a summary statement for the whole of the book. The book is concerned with what will soon take place. The future. All the things that are taking place between Christ's first and second comings.

[13 : 01] In other words, it's this present age. The age that we're living in now. How will things unfold? Until Christ returns. And what will happen when he does return?

That is what Revelation is all about. And we've seen that over and over as we've read through the book of Revelation. It's telling us what to expect in this age and when Christ returns.

Look down at verse 12. It says, Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me to repay each for what he has done.

And that is essentially what we've been reading over these past weeks through Revelation. Jesus, who is, as we've seen through the book, Jesus died, rose again.

He now reigns over the universe. He is ultimately sovereign. And he's coming again. And when he does, he will judge the living and the dead.

[14 : 01] It is massive. The scope of this book, the magnitude of Revelation is huge. It's everything. The claims are massive. And we're told here that he will come bringing his recompense.

He will judge the living and the dead. Every deed will be brought out into the open. Justice will be done. He will, second half of verse 12, repay each for what he's done.

And that day will be, as we've seen over and over again, through the book, that day will be a day of great, unimaginable joy for some.

For others, it will be a terrible day. Because there are, in the end, only two destinies for humanity. And we see that with great clarity in verse 14.

It says, 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 gates of the city.

[15 : 10] Outside are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the sexually immoral, and murderers, and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. There will be those, who are welcomed into the heavenly Jerusalem.

There are those whose names are written in the book of life. There are those who have conquered, those who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of their sins. There are those who have repented and believed.

There are those who have accepted the invitation, to the marriage supper of the Lamb. There are those who have the seal of God on their forehead. These are all ways Revelation speaks of the same reality.

Those who will be welcomed into the New Jerusalem, are Christians. And on that day, it will be a day of unimaginable joy. But there will also be those who are outside the city.

Those who worship the beast, whose destiny is the lake of fire. Those who refuse to repent. In other words, it is unforgiven, men and women.

[16 : 20] Those who refuse to repent. And Revelation makes those two destinies crystal clear. And it speaks of the coming judgment in radically vivid ways.

The images are shocking, aren't they? They're disturbing. As you flick back over the chapters we've read over these months, the images are shocking and disturbing.

And they are shocking and disturbing because the reality they describe is shocking and disturbing. There really is a coming judgment day.

There really is eternity for all of us. There really are only two destinies. There really is a heaven. There really is a hell. And we need to know and feel those realities and align ourselves now to those realities.

We must live in light of those realities now. And the shocking and disturbing imagery is also used because reality is not apparent to us.

[17 : 30] These things are not immediately apparent to us, are they? We push these realities to the side. We don't want to think about them. As we look around the world, it does not seem to us that Jesus is the victor.

It does not seem as if the church is the most enduring, incredible institution in history. It doesn't seem that way. And so Revelation is here to make what is unseen, seen.

It is to make what is invisible to us, visible. Revelation gives us reality. And the reality is, in the end, evil is defeated and Jesus wins.

That is the reality. And this book sets before us a clear choice. And it makes it very, very clear which way we should go. And so the message of Revelation is of utmost importance.

If what I've said is right, if what Revelation says is true, then there is nothing of greater significance than this. If the future of everyone and everything is on the line, if the destiny of the world and every human being is on the line, if Jesus really is returning one day to judge the living and the dead, then there's no more important message in the world.

[18 : 56] This is it. This is the key, central message the world needs to hear today. Today, Jesus reigns. He's coming again. Where's your destiny?

But is it true? Is this a trustworthy message? Because there's a lot on the line, isn't there? Is it true?

And this final section of Revelation addresses that question. We are given reason here to trust God's words. We are given reason to conquer now and not compromise.

So three things we see here about the trustworthiness of God's word. Number one, it is a trustworthy and unchanging word. We see that in verse six. He says these words are trustworthy and true.

It's a deliberate echo here at the end of the book. To what was said at the very beginning in chapter one, verse one. We've read that already.

[19 : 59] It says the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything that he saw.

That is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. So this is testimony. This is witness.

And it bears the significance of legal witness. This is trustworthy, reliable evidence. You have Jesus Christ himself on the witness stand saying, I bear witness these things are true.

And there's an order here in terms of how this revelation comes. It's there in chapter one, verse one. It's echoed here in chapter 22.

Notice the second half of verse six. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.

[20 : 59] So God gave this revelation to his son, Jesus Christ, who gave it to the angel, who gave it to John, who now gives it to his servants, to us.

So the chain of revelation, God to Christ, to the angel, to John, to our book in front of us. These words in revelation, and by extension, the whole words in all our Bible, have the power and authority of God himself.

The chain of revelation is God, Christ, angel, John. We get the same thing in verse 16. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you, John, about these things for the churches.

Jesus, angel, John, us. This is a trustworthy word. It has come from God himself.

And so these words, revelation is not, therefore, John's opinion. It is not setting out probabilities. Of how things will play out in these last days. It is rather an unveiling of basic principles underlining human existence.

[22 : 29] This is God himself revealing reality to us. It's an unveiling of the truth about our world. About the certainty of things that will come. These are the things which must shortly come to pass.

These are things which must therefore inform how we live now. The priorities we land on must be informed by these things.

The decisions we make today must be informed by these things. There is a certainty here because of who utters these words.

God himself, our creator, our laws. We can trust it. And we cannot change it. You notice the warning in verse 18?

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.

[23 : 30] And if anyone takes away from the words of this 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.

We get similar warnings in Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 2. We must not add to the word I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I commanded you.

We must not add to the word of God, nor must we take away from it. We must not say more than the word of God, nor can we say less than the word of God.

Those are always the twin dangers to add or subtract. Some will promise new words, new revelation, new prophecy, new scriptures.

Hear the warning. If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. So if you stumble across some preacher or writer or bloke in the street who tells you that God has revealed something new, don't listen.

[24 : 45] Don't engage. Stop watching the YouTube video. Stop reading the article. Stop following them on Insta FaceTalk, whatever it is.

Do not engage. If someone promises new insights, new revelation, a new word from the Lord. Don't listen. If something you hear sounds a bit off, a bit funny, you're just not sure, well, trust your instinct.

Examine it. Be discerning. Be wary of those you add to the scriptures. Equally dangerous and perhaps harder to spot is when people take away from God's words.

It's the things that are left unsaid that are hard to notice. The things people just don't talk about. We'll skate over that issue. And our danger usually in the church is not that somebody would emphatically deny the word of God, but that we would nullify it or would minimize it or mitigate it in subtle ways.

We'll go easy on the bits of the Bible that challenge the culture, the hot topics. We'll dodge those. We'll focus on the gospel. Keep the main thing, the main thing.

[26 : 09] Maintain a good witness. We'll not delve into those bits of the Bible that are controversial with society. Let's not actually apply the Bible to the actual issues in our world. Let's not do that.

A major Christian convention publicly condemned a pro-life CBR display. You know the breathless stuff we're involved with? People publicly condemned it this week in the town it was taking place in, the same town as the convention.

They were saddened by the approach being taken by Breffos. They distanced themselves from it. No mention of being saddened by the pro-abortion campaign in the city that day.

No mention of being saddened by the thousands of babies killed in the womb every week. No mention of that. But we'll condemn the pro-life, guys. Let's not apply the Bible to the issues.

We don't want to go there. It's controversial. But the reality is, people looking in will see that. People looking in will spot it when the church goes easy on these issues.

[27 : 30] Interested visitors coming around the church, they will know when issues are being dodged, when the message is being soft-pedaled. They notice that. Actually, for those who are really seeking the Lord, those who are really seeking the truth, searching for the Lord, that will be a turn-off.

When the church soft-pedals, it's a turn-off for those who are seeking the truth. For them, it's the fragrance of life.

For some, it's the stench of death, but that's how it is. The Lord promises that. We must declare the whole counsel of God, every bit of it. It is a public word, verse 10.

Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, it says. We are to boldly proclaim the whole Bible, even the uncomfortable bits, even the bits that deal with judgment, that deal with the exclusivity of the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Issues of sexuality and gender, all the hot topics. It was Martin Luther who said, If I profess with loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God, except that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ.

[28 : 56] However boldly I may be professing Christ, where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved. And to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace, if he flinches at that point.

If we flinch at the point at which culture is pressing in, we are saying less than what the Bible says. So God's word is trustworthy and true, all of it.

Do not add, do not take away. We declare the whole counsel of God. It's the first thing we see in this section, the trustworthiness of God's word.

Second, it's an urgent word. It is an urgent word. The message of Revelation is an urgent word. It presses upon us not only the reality of eternity, but also that it's near.

The message of Revelation is one to be responded to today. Verse 7, Behold, I am coming soon. Verse 10, Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

[30 : 09] Verse 12, Behold, I am coming soon. Verse 20, Surely, I am coming soon. And there are two implications depending on where you stand before God today.

If you are not yet a Christian, the urgency of this message, the message that Jesus is coming soon, is urgent in the sense that it's a warning. Your eternity depends on your response to the call of Christ.

He desires that all might be saved. He offers forgiveness to all who will come to him. And he says to you, verse 17, Come. Let the one who is thirsty come.

Let the one who desires take the water of life without price. Jesus holds out life for all. Will you receive it?

Will you humble yourself to the point that you realize you are thirsty? That you need to drink the water of life that only Jesus can give? And that is for so many a hard, almost impossibly hard thing to do.

[31 : 20] Because it requires us to humble ourselves, to realize we're not the center of the universe, God is. And to realize that we have sinned against him, that without Christ we face a judgment and eternity in the lake of fire.

And the day of judgment that is coming, is coming soon. None of us knows when we will die. But all of us are destined to die and having died face judgments.

That is the one certainty in this life. Are you prepared for it? Sometimes we need a real wake-up call, don't we?

To come face-to-face with our mortality so that we would consider the big questions in life. I'm often reminded of the story of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16.

You remember it? The earthquake struck. The Philippian jailer sees all the doors bursting open. His prisoners can just walk out.

[32 : 26] There's nothing more shameful for a Roman guard than for that to happen. And so, seeing that, he draws his own sword. He's about to take his own life. He was face-to-face with his own mortality.

Death was literally making its imprint on his chest. The end of the sword was there. He was ready to fall upon it. But just at that moment, Paul calls out, the apostle Paul from the center of the prison calls out, do not harm yourself.

We're all here. relief floods over that prison guard. But here's his question to the apostle Paul. What must I do to be saved?

He has, in a blink of an eye, come face-to-face with his own mortality. And this man, this prison guard, needed, as every person this planet needs, to know the God who made him, to know the forgiveness of sin that only he can provide.

He needed salvation. And there was no better way of making him realize that than by bringing this earthquake that would make him feel most acutely his insecurity as he came face-to-face with big questions, ultimate questions.

[33 : 44] He was brought to an absolute end of himself. He had to face reality. Listen to how one preacher draws out the implications for us of that story of the Philippian jailer.

He said, Eternity is not a state of existence beyond this earthly life, some far-off, shadowy thing too remote from the present to worry about, but eternity is something right there at our side, touching us at every point were we but conscious of the fact.

all that separates us from eternity is a thin partition of time, so thin that one might swear we sometimes hear whispers from the other side.

And in that instance for that jailer, those whispers became a loud voice of thunder. What would it take for you to come face-to-face with your immortality?

To come to that point, what must I do to be saved? How can I be made right with the God who made me? Well, revelation presses upon us the urgency.

[34 : 56] If you're not a Christian, where do you stand before God? Are you prepared for that day? If you are a Christian, then the implications of this urgent word is to encourage us to remain faithful until the end.

Christ is coming soon. Your Savior, your Lord, is coming soon. We will be with him in the glorious new creation soon. On that day, eternity will stretch out before us, unending.

All the griefs and hardships of our present life will seem momentary on that day, fleeting. Soon, we will have access to the tree of life.

Soon, we will enter the new Jerusalem with its magnificent gates welcoming us in. That is the future and it's coming soon. Are you gripped by the reality of Jesus' return?

What would your life look like if you really were gripped? If these words of revelation had grabbed hold of your heart and mind and really shaped how you live, what would life look like if we were really gripped as a church by this reality?

[36 : 15] Would our priorities shift a bit, I wonder? Are your priorities and mine aligned to this future? Revelation is here to help us see the world as it really is.

We're to see past the world's glitter and glamour to a deeper reality. Is revelation and the reality it describes gripping you?

It's not just a case of grinning and bearing it until that day. There is joy even now in this world as we wait. There is joy even in the longing.

The waiting for Christmas is agonizing for a child, isn't it? You've got kids in the house, how many days for Christmas? Still July, son. Months to go. How many sleeps till Christmas?

But there's joy in that longing, isn't there? There's joy in waiting. Waiting for the wedding can seem like months or years away, but there's joy in the longing, isn't there? There's joy. Waiting for your birthday, waiting for that child to come.

[37 : 26] There's joy in that waiting. The holiday around the corner, there's joy in the waiting. And every day is closer, friends. The return of Christ can never get farther away, it's only ever nearer.

closer and closer every day until we'll be dwelling with our Father in heaven. And there is joy even now in the waiting. So the word of revelation, it's a trustworthy word.

It cannot be changed. It's an urgent word. It's thirdly and finally a dividing word. Verse 14. Blessed are those who wash their robes so that they may have the right to the tree of life, that they may enter the gates of the city.

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. On the one hand, there is great blessing inside the eternal city.

On the other hand, there is cursing outside the city. And those are, in the end, the only two destinies that Revelation speaks of. Indeed, that's the whole message of the Bible.

[38 : 41] There is no third way. And our response to the call of the gospel determines our destiny because Jesus will return one day as Savior and Judge.

And salvation is by grace through faith in the blood of the Lamb. And by saying that those who wash their robes are blessed, Jesus refers to the cleansing from sin that comes through faith in the blood of Jesus.

One commentator put it this way, every person carries about with him a robe, he's always weaving it, for his every thought, word, and deed enters into it.

That robe is splashed, dirty, altogether filthy. In the entire world, there is no power that can clean it. God, however, has provided a remedy.

And the remedy is the atoning death of the Son of God. In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself. What can wash away my sin?

[39 : 51] Well, nothing but the blood of Jesus. It is through the blood of Jesus. Our sins are cleansed. Our penalty is paid. We are made acceptable to enter into the presence of the glory of God, to receive the blessing of eternal life.

It is only through Jesus' work that we can do that. That is one destiny set before us. The other is outside the city.

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers. And it is hard language, isn't it? But it is referring to those who in this life refuse to repent.

So it is not a question of whether your destiny is inside or outside the city. It is not a question of whether your destiny is heaven or hell. It is rather which. Which one is it?

There are only two destinies. Only two. And Jesus calls you to come. Let the one who is thirsty come. So will you come before it is too late?

[41 : 06] But Jesus says to us, remember, that the book of Revelation is written primarily to the churches Jesus says to the church, to his church, which is so often under pressure, enduring hardship, he says to his church, I'm coming soon.

I'm coming soon. So friends, hear the message of this book. Keep going. Don't give in. Don't compromise.

Don't deny Jesus when the pressure comes. Keep going. See the world you're meant to see it. See the world through the lens of scripture, through Revelation's eyes.

And you'll be able to conquer. Because in the end, it will be worth it. in the end, we'll be with our Savior and Lord forever.

Come, Lord Jesus. That's the cry of our hearts, isn't it? Come. Let's pray. Come. Come. Father God, please give us the eyes of faith that we would not live by what we observe in this world.

[42 : 38] We wouldn't live by sight. But rather, give us the eyes of faith so that we'd see the world as it really is. the world as your word tells us it is.

So please help us, Lord, to trust your word. Help us to align our lives, our whole realities to what you have said to us through your word this morning.

Help us, each of us, to respond by faith and therefore to conquer. Help us for your glory.

And because we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.