

God's Final Invitation

Revelation 22:6-21

Introduction: 1) Our God takes delight in inviting the peoples of the world, those made in His image, to come and be satisfied in Him. Time and again throughout the Bible we see God extending an invitation to come and enjoy who He is and all that He provides. Sometimes these invitations are extended through God's servants. Other times they come directly from God Himself.

Psalms 34:3: "O magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together."

Psalms 66:5-6: "Come and see the works of God, Who is awesome in His deeds toward the sons of men. He turned the sea into dry land; They passed through the river on foot; There let us rejoice in Him!"

Psalms 95:1-2: "O Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms."

Isaiah 1:18: "Come now, and let us reason together, "Says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool."

Isaiah 55:1-3: “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David.”

Matthew 4:19: “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Matthew 11:28-30: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Matthew 25:34: “Then the King will say to those on His right, Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Mark 10:21: “Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, “One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the

poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.””

Revelation 3:20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”

And finally, in the last book of the Bible, and the last chapter in the book, we are told in verse 17, “Both the Spirit and bride say, “Come!” Anyone who hears should say, “Come!” And the one who is thirsty should come. Whoever desires should take the living water as a gift” (*HCSB*). At the very end, our God one last time invites people to come to Him and be saved.

2) Last words are important words. Indeed last words are intended to be lasting words, words that make an impression, words that will stay with the listener or the reader. In Revelation 22:6-21 we come to the last words in the book of Revelation, and the last words of the Bible. God’s written Word comes to an end, and so what we find here is of utmost importance to God. It also should be of utmost importance to us. Two themes are dominate: 1) the reliability and authenticity of the book and 2) the imminency of the end. As the apocalypse comes to an end, God sends forth his final invitation. Actually, I believe there are seven invitations embedded in these final words of the Bible. Here we will discover words of

affirmation, encouragement, command and warning. As our Lord repeatedly challenged the 7 churches in chapter 2-3, anyone who has an ear should listen!”

I. Invitation #1: Obey the Word of God

22:6-7

- Revelation 22:6-21 is the epilogue to the book that contains various speakers and subjects. Duvall notes that it has “important parallels with the prologue in 1:1-8, and three central themes that reinforce the overall message of the book: (1) the book is an authentic prophecy from God (22:6-8, 10, 16, 18-19), (2) Jesus Christ’s return is imminent (22:6-7, 10, 12, 20), and (3) those who obey the prophecy will be blessed (22:7, 9, 11, 14, 17, 18-19).”

[Duvall, 304].

- The angel who began talking to John in 21:6 (also 22:1) tells him, “These words,” the words of the Revelation, these words are “trustworthy and true.” They are reliable, dependable. You can trust these words. Afterall, their source is “the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets” who inspired and moved them to write (cf. 2 Peter 1:20-21). Further, in this book, the Lord sent “his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.” This recalls the very first verse of the book (1:1). What you have received is clearly divine revelation. It is from God.
- In verse 7 the Lord Jesus speaks directly once again (cf. 16:15) addressing the imminency and certainty of His 2nd coming. “Behold, I am coming

soon.” Some form of the word “come” appears seven times in this final chapter. In light of his “anytime return” what should our response be? We should “keep the words of the prophecy of this book.” We should diligently and consistently obey God’s word. Those who do are promised to be blessed (cf. 1:3). Here then is how we should live in anticipation of the return of the King. Let the Word of God live in your daily life. Let Scripture guide you and shape you. Let it do its powerful work as it, by the Spirit, transforms you into the image of the Lord Jesus. Dennis Johnson says it well in his commentary on Revelation, “Scripture is not a passive cadaver, waiting for curious medical students to dissect it in their quest for information. It is a living, double-edge sword that proceeds from the mouth of the triumphant Son of Man and pierces the thoughts and intents of our hearts. It is a hammer that shatters, a seed that grows, rainfall that never returns to its Giver without accomplishing the mission on which he sent it. Scripture has a job to do in us.”

II. Invitation #2: Be Truth to the Worship of God

22:8-9

John affirms he is the one who both “heard and saw these things,” the messages and visions of Revelation. Understandably, they were overwhelming. John honestly confesses, “And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me.” Immediately, the angel

commands him, “You must not do that!” (Pre. imp. with a neg.). “John, I am an angel and to worship anything other than God is idolatry!” The angel tells John, “I am a fellow servant (fellow slave) with you and your brothers the prophets, who keep (obey) the words of this book.” I am a servant of our great God just like you. Therefore watch out! Think clearly! Always remember. “Worship God” (imp. of command). John had already received this same warning in 19:10. But like us, he had not learned his lesson. Once more he has to be reminded of the very basic truth of Exodus 20:3 and the first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before me.” Once more we are taught: take a good thing (like an angel) and turn it into a god thing and it becomes a bad thing (an idol). MacArthur clearly and simply reminds us, “God alone is the only acceptable person to worship. The Bible forbids the worship of anyone else, including angels, saints, the Virgin Mary, or any created being (cf. Col. 2:18)” [vol. 2, 296].

III. Invitation #3: Proclaim the Truth of God

22:10-11

- Unlike the prophet Daniel who was told, “shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end” (Dan. 12:4), John is told, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book.” The words clearly have the force of a command. Why? Because “the time is near.” Christ could return at any moment. Eternity is drawing closer. For all of us, it is only a heartbeat away.

We dare not silence the Word of God by disobedience, indifference, laziness or neglect. We must preach it and teach it continually and faithfully. There is coming a time when the opportunity to respond to the gospel and the Word of God is no more.

- Verse 11 echoes Daniel 12:9-10 which says, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.” The verse contains four commands that serve as warnings and encouragement. It affirms that a day is coming when change will no longer be possible. That is true eschatologically, but it is also true personally. How we respond to the truth of God’s word in this life will confirm our character and determine our destiny for all eternity. Negatively, the evil doer will still do evil and the filthy will forever be filthy. On a positive note, “The righteous will still do right, and the holy still be holy.” One’s character will be set, forever fixed in a final condition and disposition. Those in hell will have no heart and passion for God. Those in heaven will delight in their emulation of their Lord. These truths must be told. We dare not be silent. Souls are at stake. Eternal destinies hang in the balance.

IV. Invitation #4: Pursue the Will of God

22:12-15

Verse 12 contains a third affirmation of the imminent return of Christ, “Behold, I am coming soon.” And, when He comes He is bringing his “recompense,” his reward with Him (cf. Isa. 40:10). He will “repay (or reward) everyone for what he has done.” Jeremiah 17:10 reminds us, “I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.” Mounce notes, “The reward will be spiritual blessedness to the righteous but judgment for those who are evil. It is the quality of a person’s life that provides the ultimate indication of what that person really believes” (407). Verse 13 makes clear the one who will render the judgment is fully qualified. He is the “Alpha and Omega” (the A to Z; cf. 1:8; 21:6), “the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” He sees all and He knows all. Nothing you ever think, feel or do escapes Him.

There is in verse 14 a 7th and final blessing for the one who loves and obeys God, “Those who wash their robes.” Those who have been washed by Christ in justification continue to wash their robes in sanctification (cf. John 13:10). Duvall notes in the 1st century context this washing, “refers to persevering in faithfulness to Christ and refusing to compromise with the world, even in the face of tribulation” (306). These who are faithful in following the Lamb are promised access or “the right to the tree of life” as

well as access to the holy city Jerusalem “by the gates.” Eternal life in the eternal city is in their future forever.

Verse 15 stands in striking contrast to verse 14. Those whose destiny is the lake of fire are described as those “outside” the holy city. The list here recalls 21:8. Mounce’s comments are very instructive: “John describes six (or perhaps seven, depending upon how one views the two kinds of liars) types of evildoers who are excluded from the city. The term “dog” is used in Scripture for various kinds of impure and malicious persons. In Deut. 23:17-18 the term designates a male cult prostitute. In the Jewish culture of first-century Palestine it was used in reference to the heathen (Matt. 15:22ff), and in Phil. 3:2 Paul turns the tables and applies it to the Judaizers. Those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters, and all liars are to be excluded along with the dogs. To love and practice falsehood is to be totally devoid of truthfulness. These have become like their leader, Satan, “who leads the whole world astray” (Rev. 12:9; also 13:13-15; 16:14).”

[408].

V. Invitation #5: Respond to the Invitation of God 22:16-17

- Jesus authenticates the message of Revelation in verse 16. He, Himself, sent His angel “to testify to you [John] about these things for the churches.” And, this Jesus is the root (source) and the descendent (offspring) of David (cf. Isa

11:1, 10). He is before David as God and comes from David as man. He is the root and fruit of David! He is the God-man who is also “the bright morning star” (Num. 24:17). The Christology of the end of Revelation is staggering.

- Verse 17 contains the great invitation of Revelation. It could be said to be the great invitation of the Bible. It is a fourfold invitation to all persons of the world to come and be saved.
 - The Holy Spirit says come!
 - The Bride, the Church of Jesus, says come!
 - The one who hears is told to come!
 - The one who is thirsty is invited to come.

All who desire the eternal living water of life are invited to come and be saved without price because Jesus has already paid it all. Isaiah 55:1 says, “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

Jesus said in John 7:37, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.”

Charles Spurgeon, in reflecting on both the content and location of verse 17 wisely says, “To my mind, the solemnity of this invitation lies partly in the fact that it is placed at the very end of the Bible and placed there because it

is the sum and substance – the aim and objective of the whole Bible. It is like the point of the arrow and all the rest of the Bible is like the shaft and the feathers on either side of it. We may say of the Scriptures what John said of his Gospel, “These are written” – all these books that are gathered together into one library called the Bible – “These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And that believing you might have life through His name.” So far as you are concerned, this blessed Book has missed its purpose unless you have been led by it to come to Christ!”

It is all in vain that you have a Bible, or read your Bible, unless you really “take the water of life” of which it speaks. It is worse than vain, for if it is not a savor of life unto life to you, it shall be a savor death unto death! Therefore it seems to me that this is a very solemn invitation because all the books of the Bible do, in effect, cry to sinners, “Come to Jesus.” (Sermon #2685).

VI. Invitation #6: Heed the Warning of God

22:18-19

As the book of Revelation draws to a close, God issues “a severe warning against adding to or taking away from its prophetic message” (Mounce, 409). The warning is all-inclusive: “everyone.” It is also comprehensive: do not add to the book (v. 18) and do not subtract from the book (v. 19). To tamper with

and distort God's word, in the context the Apocalypse, by application all 66 books, is to invite God's judgment into your life. Add to the book and the Lord Jesus will add the plagues of Revelation, a hyperbole indicating the severity and harshness of the judgment. On the other hand take away from the words of the book and Jesus "will take away your share in the tree of life and in the holy city." (cf. Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Gal. 1:6-7). MacArthur once more provides a pastoral and theological perspective on these two verses: "No true believer would ever deliberately tamper with Scripture. Those who know and love God will treat His Word with the utmost respect. They will say with the psalmist, "O how I love Your law!" (Ps. 119:97; cf. Pss. 119:113, 163, 167; John 14:23); and, "I delight in Your law" (Ps. 119:70; cf. Pss. 1:2; 119:77, 92, 174). That does not, of course, mean that believers will never make errors in judgment or mistakenly interpret Scripture incorrectly or inadequately. The Lord's warning here is addressed to those who engage in deliberate falsification or misinterpretation of Scripture, those whom Paul denounces as peddlers of the Word of God (2 Cor. 2:17)." [vol. 2, 310].

The bottom line is clear:

- Believers love the Word but unbelievers hate the Word.
- Believers obey the Word but unbelievers disobey the Word.
- Believers receive the Word but unbelievers reject the Word.

VII. Invitation #7: Pray for the Coming of God 22:20-21

Revelation and the Bible are at their end. One last time the risen Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ speaks. His last words are brief but sure. Coming in the form of testimony our God and King promises, “Surely, I am coming soon.” Certainly, without a doubt, my coming is imminent so be ready. As James 5:9 says, “behold, the Judge is standing at the door.” Now, given that this promise was made almost 2000 years ago, some sneer and scoff. They mock and ridicule. Oh, but go and read 2 Peter 3:1-10 to get heavens perspective on the kindness, love and patience that has delayed His coming.

Hearing this promise from the lips of Christ Himself, John is quick to respond and to respond with enthusiasm. “Amen.” So be it. Yes! I agree. So, “Come Lord Jesus!” Titus 2:13 calls us to wait and look for “our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Taken as a whole, the end of Revelation calls us to a clear and simple 3-fold posture: 1) watch, 2) wait and 3) witness. Persecution, trials and suffering may be a 3-fold companion but do not grow weary in well doing. God sees and He knows. And, He is with you and working through you to advance His kingdom among the nations. How do we know? Just look at the last verse in the Bible, Revelation 22:21. There is our prayer and promise, “The grace of

the Lord Jesus be with all.” To this we say with the apostle John, “Amen.”

We agree. We believe.

Conclusion

From the moment sin entered history, God has been on a rescue mission to save sinners. Our God is a saving God pursuing lost souls for His glory and the good of the nations. It is, therefore, not surprising at all that His Word concludes with a final invitation to sinners to come to Jesus and be saved.

Some years ago the *New York Times* ran a story about the popularity of the “Mayberry Day” festivals in Mt. Airy, NC where thousands flock to celebrate “a place that never was, a place they choose to believe once existed...” Why the make-believe, why the continued nostalgia over a mythical town in a television series? The article concludes with this thought, “People come...less to escape than to search.” “All of this tells me that people are really looking for something,” says a 73 year old barber by the name of Hiatt. “They want to know if there really was a place where people trusted each other, where there’s peace and serenity...” (9-29-97).

Well the Bible teaches that such a place does exist. It is not in a place called Mayberry. It is in a place called heaven and in a person named Jesus. It is to that place and to that person that God extends a final invitation to all to come (v. 17).