

## God's Final Invitation

Revelation 22:6-21

### Introduction

- 1) 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, its epilogue, 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 and 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.
- 2) From the moment sin entered history, God has been on a mission to save sinners. Our God is a saving God pursuing lost souls with all of His being and glory. It is, therefore, not surprising at all that His Word concludes with a final invitation to sinners to come to Jesus and be saved.
- 3) On September 29, 1997 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 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..."
- 4) Well the Bible teaches that such a place does exist and that place is called heaven. And it is to that place that God extends a final invitation to all to come (v. 17).

### Transition

As the apocalypse comes to an end, God sends forth His final invitation. The invitation itself is 5-fold with specific affirmations, encouragements, and commands woven together in a beautiful tapestry of truth.

#### **I. Invitation #1: Obey the Word of God. 22:6-7, 12-15**

In his excellent work, *Loving God*, Charles Colson says if we love God we will obey God. His thesis could have been taken from the verses before us. John lays bare before us 4 reasons why unquestioned obedience should be our response to the Word of God.

##### **1. God's Word is dependable. 22:6**

- Then he (an angel apparently) these words (Rev. 1-22)
- Faithful and true – reliable and trustworthy, dependable and accurate. What has been predicted and prophesied will come to pass.
- Lord God → angel → His servants (e.g. "the [spirits] of the [holy] prophets").  
A focus on prophecy appears 6 times (vs. 6,7,9,10,18,19).
- Shortly (quickly, rapidly, soon, at any moment) take place.  
The imminency of Christ coming is noted no less than 5 times (vs. 6,7,10,12,20).

##### **2. God's Word is desirable. 22:7**

- Behold – "take note," "look," "hey!"
- Coming quickly – some form of the word "come" occurs 7 times in chapter 22.  
Again the emp. is on the imminency of Christ coming. It could happen at any time.

- Blessed – 6<sup>th</sup> of the 7 Apocalyptic beatitudes (cf. 1:3; 22:14).  
Keeps (cont.) the words ... this book (lit. “scroll,” occurring 7 times in ch. 22). God promises to bless those who keep (obey) His Word. He began the book with such a promise (1:3) and He closes the book in the same way.

\*It will be worth it all when we see Jesus! We should, we must desire, above all else, to obey Him.

### 3. God’s Word is discerning. 22:12-13

- He is coming at any time.
- His reward is with Him to give...  
**Jeremiah 17:10**, “I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.”  
**Romans 2:6**, “who will render to each one according to his deeds.”  
**1 Peter 1:17**, “And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear.”
- R. Mounce, “It is the quality of a man’s life which provides the ultimate indication of what he really believes (p. 393).
- The one who will judge has seen our lives from beginning to end. No act, thought or emotion has escaped those eyes that are like a flame of fire (19:12) because:
  - 1) He is Alpha and Omega, the A and Z.
  - 2) The Beginning and the End (emp. sovereignty).
  - 3) The First and the Last (emp. eternity).

\*In 1:8, 21:6 God was identified as the Alpha and Omega. Now Jesus applies these words to Himself. All 3 titles are ascriptions that can only be applied to God. Appropriately they are applied to Jesus.

### 4. God’s Word is divisive. 22:14-15

- Verse 14 is a positive word for those who love and obey Jesus (2-fold).
- Verse 15 is a negative word for those who hate and disobey Jesus (5 of 6 descriptions are in 21:8).
  - dogs – speaks of street scavengers not household pets. Morally it speaks of impure and depraved behavior. The word is used in Deut. 23:17-18 of a male (homosexual) religious prostitute, in Matt. 15:22ff to the heathen in general and in Phil. 3:2 of the Judiazers.
  - Sorcerers – witchcraft mingled with drug use.
  - Sexually immoral – all sexual conduct contrary to God’s Word (premarital, extra-marital, unnatural sexual activity).
  - Murderers – premeditated life slayers.
  - Idolaters – those who substitute false gods for the one true God.
  - Lovers and doers of a lie (*pseudos*) cf. John 8:44; eg. Lovers of Satan!
- Outside is a symbolic way of affirming what is pointedly stated in 21:8.  
Outside means no access to New Jerusalem.  
Outside means no access to God.  
Outside means permanent exclusion to a place called the Lake of Fire.

### Transition

God's Word is divisive. God's Word must be obeyed.

## II. Invitation #2: Worship the one true God. 22:8-9

John is overwhelmed by the words He has heard and by the experience as a whole. Who wouldn't be? As has happened previously, He loses His spiritual balance for moment (cf. 19:10), but in the process teaches us 2 valuable lessons.

### 1. It is easy to worship the wrong thing. 22:8

- I, John (cf. 1:4, 9) is a direct claim by this John of authorship. The simplicity of the designation points to the apostle John.
  - He saw (eyes) and heard (ears) – empirical, eyewitness testimony
  - Fell to worship an angel – this is easy to understand
    - Messenger – an angel (a supernatural, heavenly being).
    - Message – the book of Revelation in “theo-vision!”
    - Method – vision after vision after vision.
- \* When confronted and impacted with great spiritual experiences, beware! Ask:
- ✓ Is this true to the Word of God?
  - ✓ Does this exalt and magnify Jesus?
  - ✓ Would I want others doing this?
  - ✓ Will my actions help or hinder the true gospel?

### 2. It is essential to worship the right thing. 22:9

- John is quickly and sternly rebuked! Do not do is a pre. imp. of command, lit. “see you not!”
- Why?
  - ✓ An angel is a fellow-servant (*sundoulos*) not the Savior.
  - ✓ An angel is a messenger (brethren the prophets) not the Master.
  - ✓ An angel is a contributor not the Creator (Heb. 1:4ff).
- Worship God (aor. imp.) – He and He only is worthy. “King of Kings, Lord of Lord's you are worthy!” We do not worship Allah, Buddha, Mother-Earth, Creation, an angel, or ourselves. “All Hail the Power of Jesus Name, let angels, let us, prostrate fall.”

### Transition

Be careful, be very careful about who and what you worship.

## III. Invitation #3: Proclaim the gospel of God. 22:10, 16-17

Truth matters to God therefore truth should matter to us. If people are to get the truth we must proclaim it, far and wide, day by day, today, tomorrow and on until Jesus comes. Few sins could be greater than that we would keep God's truth to ourselves.

### 1. Do not silence the Word of God. 22:10

Do not seal (force of an imperative) this book (Revelation, but by application all of Holy Scripture). Why? Time is running out! Daniel was told to hold his revelation “until the time of the end (Dan. 12:4, 9) but that time has come and so the Word is not

being sealed but sent. Eternity is at stake and it is drawing near, it is just around the corner. We dare not silence the Word of God by laziness, disobedience or indifference.

## 2. **Make sure you share the Word of God. 22:16-17**

These verses contain a 5-fold invitation to be saved.

1. Jesus → angel → John → churches
  - Root and offspring of David (Is. 11:1, 10); Root – source → deity, offspring → descendent → humanity.
  - Bright and morning star (Num 24:17) – the earliest and brightest announcing the arrival of the new day (of God's eternal kingdom!).
2. Spirit – come (pre. imp.)
3. Bride (Church) – come (pre. imp.)
4. Heaven – come (pre. imp.) – having heard and received they repeat the invitation.
5. The thirsty – come (pre. imp.) having found eternal life giving water they echo the invitation. \*It is free, free, free! Romans 6:23b  
 Jesus said in John 7:37-38, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

### **Transition**

We must share the life giving waters, the life giving Word.

## IV. **Invitation #4: Warn of the judgment of God. 22:18-19**

These words have been the cause of fear and confusion. This is not surprising given the severity of the warning. Therefore, they call for our most careful study, analysis and understanding. The warning takes a 2-fold nature.

### 1. **Do not add to the Word of God. 22:18**

John (or is it Jesus? The solemn nature of the words point to Christ.) testifies or bears witness to everyone (all) who hears the words of the prophecy OF THIS BOOK! The immediate context of this is clearly the book of Revelation, though broadening the application to the whole of Scripture is not inappropriate. To add to this book is to have all the plagues of the book added to you. Here the language of hyperbole or exaggeration is used, in part, to warn everyone from tampering with this book. It is certainly possible that during the Tribulation those who pervert the Word of God through deception and manipulation will experience the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments in all their fullness.

**Deuteronomy 4:2**, “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.”

**Deuteronomy 12:32**, “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

**Galatians 1:6-7**, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.”

To distort, damage or deny the Word of God is a dangerous thing and it invites God's most severe response of judgment.

## 2. **Do not subtract from the Word of God. 22:19**

- There is something of a wordplay in verses 18-19. Add to the Word and plagues are added to you (v. 18). Subtract from the Word and blessings are subtracted from you (v. 19).
- 3 in particular are noted: 1) one's part in the Book of Life; 2) access to the New Jerusalem; and 3) the things [such as in chapters 21-22] written in the Book. These words are rightly understood both as a word of warning and a word of encouragement. How?
- No one living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ would add to or subtract from Scripture. Rest then in the promise of eternal life, the New Jerusalem and all the other blessings of heaven.
- Lost persons and only lost persons would assault the Bible in such a ruthless and rebellious manner, inviting even greater judgment upon themselves when they stand before God. Here are sins of knowledge, sins of the will, sins of absolute rebellion against God.
  - \*Believers love the Word, unbelievers hate the Word.
  - \*Believers obey the Word, unbelievers disobey the Word.
  - \*Believers receive the Word, unbelievers reject the Word.
- Shall take away conveys the truth of having no part in the Book of Life, better the tree of life.

### Illustration

In her best seller *The Grace in Dying*, new ager Kathleen Dowling Singh says "Dying is safe. You are safe. Your loved one is safe. That is the message of all the words here." Such words are words of death not life, words of error not truth. It is the words of one who adds and subtracts from God's Word, something Revelation says is a very dangerous thing to do.

## V. **Invitation #5: Be ready for the Son of God. 22:7, 12, 20-21**

Revelation ends with repeated or multiple invitations to look and be ready for the coming again of Jesus. Paul called it the blessed hope and glorious appearing (Titus 2:13). John simply adds, "let Him come and let Him come quickly." Jesus says, "count on it." If we are ready and waiting, what can we expect?

### 1. **You will be blessed. 22:7**

- Jesus says I am coming quickly!
- Jesus says you will be blessed if you obey me while you wait.

### 2. **You will be rewarded. 22:12**

- Jesus says, behold I am coming quickly!
- Jesus says you will be rewarded fairly for how you have served Me. (e.g. The Judgment Seat of Christ for the believer).

**3. You will be prepared. 22:20-21**

- Jesus says, surely I am coming quickly!
- John says, I'm ready. Come Lord Jesus and ... until you do may your grace be with all who wait for that day.

**Conclusion**

A contemporary Christian music group called "Mercy Me" has a song about heaven. It is called "I Can Only Imagine." The words are a fitting finale to our study of Revelation. They also provide a compelling invitation to come to Jesus.

- 1) I can only imagine what it will be like when I walk by Your side. I can only imagine what my eyes will see when Your face is before me. I can only imagine ... I can only imagine.
- 2) I can only imagine when that day comes and I find myself standing in the Son. I can only imagine when all I will do is forever, forever worship You. I can only imagine ... I can only imagine.

(Chorus) Surrounded by Your glory, what will my heart feel? Will I dance for You, Jesus or in awe of You be still? Will I stand in Your presence, to my knees will I fall? Will I sing hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all? I can only imagine ... I can only imagine.