

The Grace of Wrath

Studies in the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Text

Chapter 22:8-21

Topic

The Revelation ends with the exciting announcement that Jesus Christ is coming quickly

Title

"Someone Worthy This Way Comes"

Introduction

"Is that your final answer?"

Host Regis Philbin made that question a pop culture phenomenon when he repeatedly asked it on the popular TV game show, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* He would present the question, give the contestant some time to think out loud about his or her answer, then ask, "Is that your final answer? They would then answer "Final," and their choice was locked in and could not be changed.

This last chapter of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is a "final answer" kind of text. Will you believe in Jesus, and be saved; or will you reject His offer of salvation and forever be outside of Heaven, suffering eternal conscious torment?

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 If Your Final Answer Is "Yes," Then You Have Words To Declare, and #2 If Your Final Answer Is "Yes," Then You Have Works To Discover.

#1 If Your Final Answer Is "Yes,"
Then You Have Words To Declare

(v8-11)

In Ray Bradbury's classic sci-fy story, *Fahrenheit 451*, books are outlawed and "firemen" burn any that are found. The title refers to the temperature at which books would ignite.

I never read the book, but I remember a movie based on it. In the end, individuals had memorized whole books in order to pass them on to future generations.

According to verses seven and nine of chapter twenty-two, you are to "keep the words of the prophecy of this book."

It doesn't mean we must memorize the Revelation, but it does encourage us to hold it in high regard, and to share its message.

Sadly, the words of the prophecy of this book have fallen on hard times. While we might sometimes seem to overemphasize the Revelation of Jesus Christ, and prophecy in general, the vast majority of mainline Protestant Christianity is ignoring this book and Bible prophecy in general.

One group writes on their website, "the major problem with biblical prophecy from a western perspective, is that much of the western church doesn't realize it is happening."

The study of prophecy from a literal, futurist position, has never been so relevant. Everywhere I go, average people are referring to things like the mark of the beast and the miraculous preservation of the nation of Israel. People are interested, and maybe even a little scared. We can give them hope that Jesus is coming.

Revelation 22:8 Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

Angels are popular today - as decorations. I wonder what they think about that? They are powerful created beings who faithfully serve God as His messengers. Knick-knacks don't do them justice.

One thing we've learned in our studies is that we will one day in the future be over the angels (First Corinthians 6:3).

Maybe they will collect figurines of you.

Here is something to think about. John had been part of the inner circle of disciples, along with Peter and James, while Jesus was on the earth. He was close to Jesus - called "the disciple Jesus loved" (John 13:23). On Patmos, where he was exiled and received this revelation, he was a mature Christian having walked with Jesus maybe 60+ years.

Even with all that going for him spiritually, his experiences overwhelmed him, and he worshipped in a way that was not just uncharacteristic for him; it was wrong.

If John could err, *so can we*. We almost always need to be exhorted to be more exuberant in our worship, but let's not be aberrant.

Revelation 22:9 Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

The angel is content to identify himself as a "servant" and to identify with John, the "prophets," and all the saints who will read the Revelation and who "keep the words of this book."

You and I are part of a much larger plan to bring the message of the Gospel to those in need.

You might never think of it, but angels are excited about the Lord bringing things to their conclusion. They rejoice in Heaven when one sinner gets saved. They want to see the redemption of all things. They want to get back to more pleasant things - like worshipping God.

"Worship God" is great counsel, not just as a correction for false worship, but for almost anything you face.

As I thought about his words, I was reminded that sometimes the best counsel is the simplest, and most obvious.

We've come to think that change requires a great deal of time, and a lot of effort. I think our expectation of difficulty can hinder the work God wants to do in our lives.

Let me give you an example from the Bible. In the Old Testament, a Syrian commander, Naaman, went to the Jewish prophet, Elisha, to be healed of leprosy.

Elisha refused to see him, but got a message to him telling Naaman to go and dip seven times in the Jordan River.

Naaman was furious. Who did Elisha think he was? Didn't they have cleaner water in Syria?

Put that into perspective. What if you called the church, for help, and we refused to see you personally, but told you where to read in the Bible. How would that go over?

People leave churches over stuff like that.

Naaman's annoyance brings us to the heart of the story, the key moment. Naaman's servants said to him, "if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"

Naaman went and did the simple thing Elisha had counseled, and he was healed.

Keep things simple. Remember that God's Word is also His enabling to obey His Word. Do what He says.

Someone needs to hear this. Maybe it's you. You've been struggling with something when, all the while, God has already given you the power you need to deal with it.

[Revelation 22:10](#) And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

If we "seal" these words, our focus becomes man-ward, inward, and earthly, rather than God-ward, outward, and heavenly.

The "time" period in which the prophecies of this book will take place is "at hand."

If it was "at hand" in the first century, why is it still pending in the twenty-first century?

It may seem a long time has passed, but it's nothing to the Lord. Just a couple of days, really. All the while He's been at work, behind history, to set-up the events that precede His return.

God is described by the 'omni-' words - omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent. I conclude that it must take around six thousand years in order for Him to redeem what Adam forfeited in Eden. In other words if there were another way, a faster way, He would have implemented it instead of the plan we read in our Bibles.

Revelation 22:11 "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."

The prophecies of this book call for a decision - a final answer.

If you reject God's offer of salvation, you will remain "unjust" and "filthy." The word "unjust" reminds me that I am a sinner, unable to stand before the just judgment of God. He can, however, justify me on the basis of Jesus taking my place on the Cross. He can declare believing sinners righteous, just-as-if-I'd never sinned.

"Filthy" reminds me of that whole picture the Bible portrays of me as a sinner before God, dressed in filthy rags. When I believe in

Jesus, He removes those filthy garments, and gives me a pure white robe of righteousness.

Most of us like to quote movie dialog. There's a line from a movie where they are training for customer service. The instructor, to make his point, says, "you're putting the wrong EMPHASIS on the wrong SYLLable."

If ever there was a time to put the right emphasis on Bible prophecy, it's now.

Let's not be pressured to ignore prophecy by the skeptics and the scoffers who ask, "where is the promise of His coming?"

#2 If Your Final Answer Is "Yes,"
Then You Have Works To Discover

(v12-17)

One of the criticisms leveled at us, as premillennials who believe in the imminent rapture, is that we want to escape the responsibilities of making earth a better place.

The rapture is not an escape so much as it is an abduction. It's true. Think about it: Jesus is coming to snatch us away.

Don't accuse me of wanting to get away from my responsibilities; Jesus is the One who is coming to take me away. Your beef is with Him.

Meantime, we **are** trying to make the earth a better place, the only way it can improve - by our good works that represent Jesus to nonbelievers so they can get saved.

“Works” and “do[ing] His commandments” are the theme of these next verses. The teaching of Bible prophecy should always encourage biblical action. We don't go out and sit on a mountain, waiting for Him to come. In fact in the letters that teach most emphatically about the rapture, the apostle Paul addresses lazy believers who are mooching off others, using the Lord's imminent coming as their reason. He tells them if you don't work, you don't eat.

Revelation 22:12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."

As I've pointed out repeatedly in our studies, "quickly" doesn't mean soon. It means suddenly. It means that Jesus could return for us at any moment, so be ready.

When Jesus comes for the church He will resurrect those who have died, then rapture the living believers to Heaven where we will stand before Him and be rewarded (First Corinthians 3:13-15).

You will be rewarded on the basis of your works. Now the thing I always like to emphasize about works is that they are something God leads us into. They are things that He has planned for us that we discover.

In Ephesians 2:10 we read, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

God is doing His work in us, and that work is to make us more-and-more like Jesus everyday. He is conforming us to the image of Jesus.

After you get saved, you are predestined to become like the Lord. He Who began this good work in you will certainly complete it.

Growing up, there was always a project car in our garage. The first I remember was a dune buggy conversion.

Then there was my oldest brother's Avenger GT fiberglass kit car.

For years upon years my younger brother's Alfa Romeo was parked in there.

We've talked about our mansions in Heaven. None of them are going to feature a garage in which those who are still a work in progress are kept. No matter when God starts His work on us; no matter how many times we resist it; we will be perfected when we stand before Him to be rewarded.

That's God's work *in* us. The verse also mentions God's work *through* us, and those are **our** "good works," which we discover as we walk with Him.

The good works that God has prepared in advance for you to discover are how you build a successful spiritual life that impacts the world around you. It is imperative you believe that there are things for you to discover - things God wants to empower you to perform.

There's a deception in our churches that the work of the ministry is done by pastors and missionaries. Not true. Pastors are tasked with equipping every saint to do the work of the ministry.

All of us are to devote ourselves to bringing Jesus, and the Gospel, to the places God has placed us.

Ask the Lord to show you how to increase your witness, and His presence, where you work and where you play.

Revelation 22:13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."

Jesus speaks for Himself. He gives three strong statements that only God could claim.

You know, sometimes the cults say that Jesus never claimed to be God. Well, He did even in the Gospels. But they forget His statements in the Revelation. There are words in red in this book that Jesus says that can only be true if He is God.

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

Some translations have the phrase "wash their robes" instead of "do His commandments." In either case, these *describe* you, rather than challenge you.

Here is what I mean. You're not blessed only *if* or *because* you "do His commandments." No, you "do His commandments," by His power, **because** you are blessed by Him.

Likewise, if the translation is "wash [your] robes," it's not an exhortation to do your own spiritual laundry. Jesus said in Ephesians that He was the One doing the washing, the cleansing, to one day present you without spot or blemish to His Father, in Heaven.

These are His promises to you, *not* prescriptions for you.

The Tree of Life was seen earlier in this chapter. It was in the Garden of Eden originally, but mankind was barred from eating from it after Adam and Eve sinned.

We won't be going back to the Garden of Eden. The Tree of Life will be transplanted in the New Jerusalem.

Sometimes I think we forget that, and think of Heaven as a return to where it all began.

God has something much greater planned for us. The New Jerusalem is way better than Eden. Those who think we need to get back to nature need to understand that paradise is not a cabin in the woods but the city whose builder and maker is God.

Crosby, Stills & Nash sang the Joni Mitchell song, *Woodstock*. In it they long to "get back to the garden," meaning the Garden of Eden.

Their idea of the garden is expressed as "losing the smog," and as "bomber jet planes... turning into butterflies."

Woodstock - the music festival without enough bathrooms and where three people died - was, they thought, a return to Eden.

That's a pretty low view of Heaven. Woodstock, NY... Or The New Jerusalem? God's got something greater in store than a hippie music festival.

Revelation 22:15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

This doesn't mean they are right "outside" trying to break in. It means they are forever outside of the new heaven and new earth, having been cast into and confined in the Lake of Fire.

The verse mentions "dogs." In the New Testament the apostle Paul calls the Judaizers "dogs" (Philippians 3:2). These were the men who, pardon the expression, 'dogged' Paul's travels. They came in after him and tried to tell the believers they were not saved until they practiced the Jewish ritual of circumcision and kept the Law of Moses. We'd expand this to include all false teachers and their teachings.

"Sorcerers" has to do with both the occult and drug abuse.

"Sexual [immorality]" is *anything* and *everything* sexual outside of God's loving boundaries in biblical marriage.

"Murderers" are, you guessed it, murderers.

"Idolaters" is a catch-all category. If you're not worshipping the living God, you're worshipping someone, or something, else, because we are hard-wired for spirituality.

"Whoever loves and practices a lie." In context this has reference to those who in the Tribulation believe the lie of the antichrist.

Revelation 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

Wait a minute; did He just say "churches?" Because we haven't heard that word since the opening of the book.

It's part of our argument that Jesus will resurrect and rapture us prior to the Tribulation that the church is not mentioned at all - not once - in chapters six through eighteen, while the Tribulation is raging on the earth.

As the "root... of David," He preceded David; as the "offspring of David," He came through David's line as a descendant.

How can Jesus both precede and follow David? Because He is God come in human flesh.

The "bright and morning star" is the herald of the breaking of a new day. Satan aspired to that title, but it belongs to Jesus.

Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

The "[Holy] Spirit" and the "bride," the church, are God's agents to invite lost men to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior in the age in which we live. "Whosoever desires" may come to Jesus.

Who is it that "hears... thirsts... and desires?" We would say it is **all men everywhere.**

A good friend messaged me an acrostic, Christ Offers Forgiveness For Everyone Everywhere. C-O-F-F-E-E... **Coffee.**

Seriously, the Bible says we were created with "eternity in our hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3). Jesus said that being lifted up on the Cross, He would "draw all men to Himself."

That doesn't mean everyone is saved. No, He is the Savior of all men - "*especially* those who believe."

No one can hear or thirst or desire God unless God takes the initiative. **But He has taken the initiative**, and His grace is active upon hearts to free the human will so we can by faith choose Jesus.

What follows is a most solemn warning:

Revelation 22:18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

Revelation 22:19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

The book in question is *this* book, the Revelation of Jesus Christ. In its context, these verses describe any efforts of nonbelievers to undermine these prophecies. The people being described have no part in eternity.

We are called upon to convey this warning to nonbelievers. We should speak about prophecy in our witnessing.

Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Revelation 22:21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

When is Jesus coming? "Quickly," meaning suddenly.

John understood this to refer to the rapture, because he adds, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” He knew that Jesus' Second Coming is preceded by at least a seven year Tribulation. No way John would invite Jesus to come immediately, knowing the future calendar, unless he was referring to the rapture.

The imminent, pretribulation, premillennial return of Jesus was important to John. It affected how he lived. He wrote in 1John 3:2-3,

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.¹
John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

If you are busy conveying a warning, you will normally be careful yourself. What you believe about the rapture and its timing does affect your entire life.

Revelation 22:21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

You warn others in a context of grace. It is because you love them with the love of Jesus Christ that you warn them, that you explain to them what is happening and what is going to happen. Prophecy is a great proof of the love of God as He is shown to give men ample warning to repent and be saved.

“The Spirit... [says], Come.” The Holy Spirit is in the world today restraining the flood of sin. He is grieved at what He sees. His ministry is to reveal and glorify Jesus.

Here we learn, in what I believe is the only prayer recorded that He utters in Scripture, that He longs for Jesus to return.

“... The bride [says], Come.” The church on earth is the bride of Jesus Christ. The church collectively ought to long for His coming just as a bride awaiting the coming of her bridegroom to marry her.

“... Him who hears [says], Come.” The individual in the church on earth - you and I - ought to, in our personal lives, live in the expectancy of the imminent, pretribulation, premillennial return of Jesus.

“... Let him who thirsts come.” This refers to nonbelievers - who are parched for a drink of the free living water offered to all by Jesus. But they must come and take; they must receive Him by faith.

Say it with me: ***Get ready and stay ready, because, ready or not, Jesus is coming!***