

THE GRACE OF WRATH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Text

Revelation 22:6-21

Topic

The last words of the Revelation are appropriately an invitation for “whoever” to “come” and be saved

Title

“Famous Lasting Words”

I never realized how many jobs there are for ‘keepers.’

There tavern keepers, lighthouse keepers, innkeepers, zookeepers, housekeepers, doorkeepers, crowkeepers, peacekeepers, wardrobe keepers, timekeepers, key keepers, animal keepers, lockkeepers, flame keepers, record keepers, water keepers, and vine keepers.

- There are pond keepers, park keepers, and prison keepers.
- There are barkeepers, beekeepers, and bookkeepers.
- There are groundskeepers, gatekeepers, greenskeepers, and goalkeepers.
- There are scorekeepers, shopkeepers, stockkeepers, supply keepers, station keepers, and storekeepers.
- Hagrid was groundskeeper, gamekeeper, and Keeper of Keys for Hogwarts.
- Dr. Strange is the stone keeper in the MCU.
- Horror fans know the Crypt Keeper.

Did I miss any?? I missed at least one.

Jesus has given us a job as ‘words keepers.’

He said, "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed *is* he who **keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.**" Then [an angel] said to [John], "I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who **keep the words of this book...**" (22:7&9).

Jesus provided a job description for words keepers:

- "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book" (v7).
- Do not "[take] away from the prophecies of this book" (19).
- We're to make sure people "hear" the words (v18).

This book and its words, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, needs **keepers** in every generation. We have the watch.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 You Are Appointed To Be A Words Keeper,** and **#2 You Are Anointed To Be A Words Keeper.**

#1 - You Are Appointed To Be A Words Keeper (v6-9)

"Keep the words of this prophecy." We immediately hear it as a general appeal to obey the Bible. That isn't quite what is meant. There was no 66-book Bible when John wrote. It is the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, *its "words,"* that we are to "keep."

"Keep" can mean obey, but it can also mean "guard" and "maintain." Jesus gives us the responsibility to guard and maintain His Revelation.

Rev 22:6 Then he said to me, "These words *are* faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.

"Faithful and true" as opposed to false prophecies circulated by others. If I see one more History Channel program about Nostradamus, I'm going to go insane with rage. They spend hours trying to massage a few of Nostradamus'

weird quatrains to fit specific events while the Bible has been 100% accurate in predicting the future.

God is gracious to include us in His councils by showing us the future. He reveals the future to strengthen us in the present. Also, it is an act of intimacy between friends to share secrets.

Rev 22:7 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Jesus thrice says He is "coming quickly" (v7, 12 & 20). He was not talking about His Second Coming. He will first return in the clouds to resurrect the dead in Christ and transform living believers to take us to Heaven prior to the seven year Great Tribulation.

The Second Coming is preceded by all the events in chapters four through eighteen. Jesus' return to take the church to Heaven has no preceding events. It could happen at any moment. It is imminent.

An imminent event is certain to occur at some time, but we are uncertain at what time. It may take place within a short time, but it does not have to do so to be imminent.

We become discouraged that the Lord has yet to come for us. It doesn't alter that He can at any moment.

This is the sixth of seven blessings conferred in the Revelation. Do you recall the first? It was in chapter one. "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near" (v3). I realized this week that the Lord kept this promise to our congregation. A few months ago the Lord provided the funds to retire the mortgage on our property.

I receive it as a fulfillment of the first blessing.

Rev 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.
Rev 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."

John knew better, but he found himself worshipping an angel for the second time. The angel corrected him for his own good.

When we worship together, it is essential we "worship God," and not *someone* or *something* else. I don't want to go too far afield, but I will give one example. Be careful you are not worshipping 'worship.' The singing in churches is trending towards a performance, like a concert. Churches hire professional musicians, some of whom are not believers. I'm not criticizing talent or saying smaller is better. You can sing old songs, new songs, acapella, plugged, unplugged, big team, small team, no team. As long as you are following God's definite leading and not trying to copy or entertain.

As it turns out, *the church needs this exhortation to keep the words of this book*. The Revelation is always on any list of the most neglected books in the Bible. We need to encourage the reading and the study of these words.

#2 - You Are Anointed To Be A Words Keeper (v10-21)

Part of our job description is to partner with God the Holy Spirit to spread the Revelation. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come" (v17).

- The Spirit is God the Holy Spirit Who indwells us.
- The bride is the church.

We are therefore anointed by God the Holy Spirit to invite everyone to "come" to Jesus Christ and be saved.

Rev 22:10 And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

The Revelation was for immediate circulation. We saw it taken to the seven churches of Asia. It remains an active prophecy for the Church Age.

I want to emphasize one final time that the Revelation is *not* what scholars call "Apocalyptic literature" that can be written off as primarily allegorical. It is called "prophecy" no less than four times in chapter twenty-two. It is an almost entirely unfulfilled future prophecy.

Futurists like ourselves are criticized for being escapists. Not so. Being words keepers lights a fire in us to see others saved. It is when we "seal" these prophetic words that 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 was "at hand." It may seem a long time has passed. If there were another way, a faster way, God would have implemented it.

Rev 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."

There comes a time in every life when it is too late to receive the forgiveness of your sins. For most, that time is at your death.

- The word "unjust" reminds me that I am a sinner, unable to stand before the just judgment of God. He can, however, justify me based on Jesus taking my place on the Cross. He can declare believing sinners "righteous," just-as-if-we'd never sinned.
- I stand before the Lord dressed in "filthy" garments. Jesus takes my filth upon Himself and exchanges it for His "holiness."

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

Does this sound at all like the Second Coming? No, it does not. Jesus was talking about the rapture.

“Work” is singular. It refers to the sum of your life’s spiritual work. We describe people sometimes by saying that something was their life’s work. Infuse your work with Jesus.

Rev 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last.”

Jesus identified Himself using three strong statements that only God could claim.

I’ll give you three words to aid in thinking more deeply on your own about the titles:

1. As “the Alpha and the Omega,” Jesus *communicates*.
2. As “beginning and end,” He *completes*.
3. As “the First and the Last,” He *creates*.

Rev 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.

This is the seventh and final blessing. You’re not blessed only *if* or *because* you “do His commandments.” You “do His commandments” by His power **because** He blesses you. It is a response.

Some translations have the phrase “wash their robes” instead of “do His commandments.” It is not an appeal 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 blessings showered upon you.

The “Tree of Life” from the Garden of Eden was transplanted earlier in this chapter in New Jerusalem. Eternity is not a return to the Garden of Eden. New

Jerusalem is our address, not Eden. We won't be walking around naked all day eating fruit and conversing with animals. It won't be a time of testing.

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

No one will be lurking "outside" trying to break into your mansion. They are forever outside of New Jerusalem, having been cast into and confined in the Lake of Fire.

One commentator said, "It is the hopelessness of the final state of the wicked which is here pictured. The states of both the evil and the good are now fixed forever. There is no word here about a 'second chance' hereafter."

A words keeper is sensitive to a few perversions:

- "Dogs." In the New Testament, the apostle Paul calls the Judaizers "dogs" (Philippians 3:2). Judaizers insisted you be circumcised or you were not saved. We'd expand this to include all false teachers and their teachings.
- "Sorcerers" can be translated *evil powers*. We must maintain a healthy skepticism and test everything according to the truth.
- "Sexual [immorality]" is *anything* and *everything* sexual outside of God's loving boundaries in biblical marriage. We like to explain biblical marriage by saying it is a covenant of companionship between one biological man and one biological woman in a monogamous, heterosexual commitment for as long as either spouse lives.
- "Murderers." Jesus taught that if you are angry or even insult your brother, you are guilty of heart-murder. Anger and abuse are killers on many levels.
- "Whoever loves and practices a lie." Ananias and his wife Saphira lied to the church in the Book of Acts. God killed them for it, with Peter mediating.

Rev 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."

We haven't heard "churches" since chapter three.

In chapters four through eighteen *the church is not on Earth* while the Great Tribulation is wrath-ing on the earth.

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

Jesus precedes and follows David because He was God before David and came as God in human flesh after David.

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

Rev 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 and be spiritually satisfied by drinking the "water of life."

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

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

God the Holy Spirit prays. I believe it is His only recorded prayer. Since He is in you and aids you in your prayers, you, too, pray, "Come."

Rev 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;

Rev 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.

Believers have sincere differences interpreting the Book of the Revelation. Those who disagree with us on certain future things are not adding to, or subtracting from, the Revelation.

I do think that if you make a conscious decision to neglect the Revelation that the Lord might consider it a subtraction.

One way of adding to the words is to elevate the prophecies of others to have the same or greater weight as the Revelation. When Jesus wrote to the church in Thyatira back in chapter two, He warned them to quit listening to Jezebel "who calls herself a prophetess" (2:20).

Mormonism is guilty of both adding and subtracting. They've added books as if they were inspired, and in so doing subtracted from the truth of the inspired Bible.

Jesus didn't give us a complete words keeper checklist for determining if we or someone else is adding to or subtracting from the Revelation. We must, however, be vigilant regarding this book in particular and the Bible in general.

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

The big question here is, "Who is Shirley?"

Jesus proclaims no less than three times that He is coming. Week after week, for almost 700 Sunday's we've heard, "*Ready or not, Jesus is coming!*" I don't think it is too repetitive anymore than Jesus did.

"Amen" is a word of agreement. We agree with the Lord that His coming is imminent.

“Even so, come Lord Jesus!” Have you ever come out of an event, like a movie or a play, and given a short assessment of what you just experienced?

- “Man, that was great!” or, “I loved it!”
- “That was awful!” or, “Can I get a refund?”

“Even so, come Lord Jesus!” is the reaction of a words keeper upon reading this book.

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

Words keepers are gracious. We have received grace and having experienced it cannot help but want it for others.

At age 92, he might be the most famous groundskeeper in the world. George Toma has been the head groundskeeper for all 55 Super Bowl games, dating back to 1967. Toma was honored by the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2001 as the recipient of the Daniel F. Reeves Pioneer Award. He was inducted into the Major League Baseball Groundskeepers Hall of Fame on January 8, 2012, as one of its charter members. That same year, Toma was inducted into the Kansas City Royals Hall of Fame.

The average, everyday believer in Jesus is the least famous, most important ‘keeper’ on Earth. Your rewards will come later from your rewards keeper, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Final words have weight. They are powerful. They motivate, they comfort, they inspire.

The final words in red in the canon of Scripture: “Surely I am coming quickly.”