



Part 46 – Wait and Hope

Revelation 22:6-21

Here at the end of Revelation, as at the beginning, we are called to keep the words of this book which, like the rest of Scripture is the wholly reliable Word of God. In hearing and obeying these words we have a rock on which to stand in the midst of the satanic persecution and various calamities that come our way. Here in the book's epilogue are the final two of the seven benedictions in Revelation wherein blessings are pronounced upon those who keep this word and upon those who have fled to Jesus for salvation.

Jesus promises to return soon. That is, we live in the church age, the final epoch of redemptive history. And so, until the Lord breaks through sky and we see him with our own eyes, the church's posture is to wait and hope.

Like the tracks of a central train station, all of the promises in Scripture and all the hopes of generations past converge in the Book of Revelation. This is especially true of the last two chapters in which is depicted the final ingathering of the redeemed into the blessed presence of God. Revelation "draws together all the hopes and aspirations of the people of God from the long history of his dealings with his people – and in doing so, all the hopes and aspirations of humanity itself. It is a fitting end to the canon of Scripture."¹ (Ian Paul, 371).

The epilogue consists of a sort of rapid-fire sequence of exhortations, warnings, and promises. It functions as a summary of the great themes that are most vital for us to remember.

1. God's written word is trustworthy.

Vs. 6 – "These words are trustworthy and true..." – As with all of Scripture, the words of John's prophecy are entirely true because they are the words of God. This is the doctrine of the Bible's inerrancy which holds that God does not err and, therefore, neither does his inscripturated word. "All Scripture is breathed out by God..." (2 Timothy 3:16). Therefore, all Scripture is the true and authoritative word of God. The men God used to write his word were "carried along by the Holy Spirit" as they wrote (2 Peter 1:21).

2. Jesus' return is imminent.

Vs. 7a – "And behold, I am coming soon..." – The nearness of the Lord's return is repeated several times in this final section (vv. 6, 7, 10, 12, 20). What are we to make of these words given that it has been some 2,000 years since they were spoken to John? Some take these words to mean that Jesus' return is a certainty and that the actual timing is relative. For instance, the Apostle Peter addresses this very matter when he assures his readers that the Lord does not count time in the way that they do (3:8). What seemed like incessant delay to those Peter was writing to, was in fact "near" from the Lord's divine perspective. Other scholars believe that what is behind these words is the prophetic principle of *imminence* meaning that throughout her years, the church lives in the final days, and that Jesus' return could happen at any moment.² Beale contends that these words are referring back to Daniel's prophecy of "the latter days" which have now been inaugurated by Christ (**vs. 10**). "What Daniel expected to occur in the distant 'latter day' – the defeat of cosmic evil and the ushering in of the divine kingdom – John expects to begin 'quickly,' in his own generation."³ The latter days prophesied by Daniel were inaugurated at Christ's first advent and will be consummated upon his return. Thus the Lord's return is imminent.

"The 'last days' are so-called because no further epochal event in salvation history remains before the final judgment. 'Last' is not a comment on how long these days continue but on where they come in the story."⁴

¹ Ian Paul, *Revelation*, TCNT (Downer's Grove: IVP Academic, 2018) p. 371

² Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation, revised ed*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) p. 392

³ G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGCT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) p. 153

⁴ Christopher Watkin, *Biblical Critical Theory* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022) p. 460

3. The Lord blesses our obedience.

Vs. 7b – “Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” – This is the sixth of the seven benedictions in the Book of Revelation. Specifically, the Lord promises to bless those who obey what is written. In the Bible, the word prophecy typically refers to what we think of as preaching (more forthtelling than foretelling). Most of what the Old Testament prophets had to say were words directed toward the people of their own generation including calls to repent and to walk faithfully with the Lord. Certainly there is plenty of “preaching” in John’s prophecy along with the warnings and assurances connected to events that are yet to happen. In this sense, “the one who keeps” these words of prophecy is the one who lives in light of them. He believes these words and lives accordingly. “God’s blessing, his favor and grace and power, rests especially on those who take this book seriously and commit themselves in the power of the Spirit to follow its dictates and to believe its teaching.”⁵

4. Keep your worship pure.

Vv. 8-9 – Once again John falls down in worship before the angel who was speaking to him. While we may sympathize with John given the extraordinary sights and sounds surrounding this messenger from God, what he is doing is nevertheless forbidden. We must never worship any created thing including holy angels. Notice how the angel identifies himself as one who must also obey the word of God. John’s original readers were under severe pressure to offer worship to the Caesar apart from which they could pay a heavy price. Here is a reminder that even when it is costly, God’s people must not give their worship to anything or anyone other than the One True God.

5. Don’t presume upon God’s mercy.

Vs. 11 – This verse is perplexing to many because it seems at first glance as though the wicked are being commanded to continue to be wicked. But, of course, this is not the case. Rather, it is a warning to the wicked that a day is coming when there will be no more time to repent. As the return of Jesus draws near, a day is coming when “there is no longer time to alter the character and habits of man.”⁶ When Jesus returns to judge we will stand before him in the very state in which he found us – either dead in our sins or redeemed in Christ. We must never presume that we have all the time in the world to repent. We must never presume upon God that he is somehow obligated to give us limitless chances to turn from our sin (9:20-21). When Jesus returns he will do so to judge (**vs. 12**).

6. Trust in Christ.

Vv. 13-17 – The Book of Revelation is profoundly Christ-exalting. In John’s vision we see the eternal Son of God in all his glory, surrounded by worship, and returning as reigning king to judge all the earth. Here we see that trusting in Christ is grounded both in who he is in what he has done. Notice that the Lord says of himself what can only be said of Almighty God. As the *Alpha and Omega* he encompasses and commands all of time (**vs. 13**). This affirms his sovereignty over all things that come to pass. He is not passively seeking to repair things that go wrong. Rather, as “the First and the Last,” he authors all things whatsoever come to pass. And through it all he has promised to save, redeem, and glorify his people.

In the seventh and final benediction Jesus promises to bless those who “wash their robes so that they may have the right to the tree of life...” (**vs. 14**). Rather than referring to something we do, this is actually a reference to what Christ has done for us. To wash our robes does not mean that we clean up our lives. Rather, this harkens back to 7:14 and those who have “washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.” The operative principle here is not our merit but the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of all who trust in him. They will no longer be identified as outsiders who continue to live as dogs, wallowing in their sin and rebellion and practicing falsehood. Rather, those washed clean in Christ will be full citizens of God’s eternal new creation (**vs. 15**).

Another ground for trusting in Christ is found in his identify as both “the root and the descendent of David” (**vs. 16**). This is a profound statement! Jesus is not only directly descended from David, but he is actually David’s source (“root”). He is David’s Lord and David’s greater Son. Jesus has fulfilled God’s covenant with David. He is the eternally reigning King.

⁵ Sam Storms, *Our God Reigns* (Scotland, Christian Focus, 2024) p. 531

⁶ Mounce, pp. 392-393

There are at least three invitations in **verse 17**. Some see the first calls to “come” issued from “the Spirit and the bride” and “the one who hears” as calls for Christ to come quickly. Others see all of the calls to come as being directed to the still unbelieving to trust in Christ while there is still time. The last invitation is certainly a call for all people everywhere to forsake their sinful delays and flee to the only One who can satisfy their thirst (21:6).

7. Do not tamper with God's Word.

Vv. 18-19 – The Lord gives sober warnings here to anyone who would add to or take away from the words of his book. And this same warning is elsewhere applied to all of God's Word, not just the Book of Revelation. For instance, in Deuteronomy chapters 4 and 29 Moses commanded Israel, “You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it.” We must reject any voice that comes to us claiming new revelations from God. Such claims are sinful attempts to add to God's Word. Likewise, we must turn from those voices who would tell us that portions of the Word of God err or must be rejected to better satisfy the demands of contemporary audiences. Such attempts are almost always driven by a desire to justify sin in one form or another.

All efforts to distort the Word of God either by addition or subtraction will be answered by God's judgment. It is no small thing to tamper with the Word of God! Such tampering reveals a heart that has raised itself above God. It is an echo of the serpent's ancient temptation, “Did God actually say...?” (Genesis 3:1).

8. Love the Lord's appearing.

Vs. 20 – The Lord calls sinners to come to him and drink the living water without price (vs. 17). Here the church is exhorted to cry out, “Come, Lord Jesus!” Those who come to Christ will inevitably long for his return. As Paul reflected on his life during his final imprisonment he wrote Timothy:

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

As we have stated many times in this series, the Book of Revelation is not meant to satisfy curiosities. It is meant to glorify Jesus and equip us to remain faithful. It is meant to boost our desire to see the Lord. This is our hope.

Amen...

Vs. 21 – There is, technically, an eighth benediction in the Book of Revelation. It is typically not included in the seven because it breaks from the pattern of using the word “blessed.” But it surely is a word of blessing: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen.” What greater need is there for us who wait for the Lord's appearing but to know his grace now? The Lord's grace will sustain us as we suffer persecutions and calamities of all sorts. The Lord's grace will keep us as our faith is shaken during the last days. The Lord's grace will keep us from falling even as we face death, the final enemy. For now, as we live in the tension between the *now* and the *not yet* we will cry out at times, “How long, sovereign Lord?” (6:10). But through the waiting we lean into hope and say together, “Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”