

Revelation Bible Study #52

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

Revelation 22:6-21

6 And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.”

7 “And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, **9** but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”

10 And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. **11** Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

12 “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. **13** I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. **15** Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

17 The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, **19** and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

20 He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Introduction

These are the final words of the Book of Revelation. The vision is complete, and St. John is presumably writing the end of the work while having returned to Patmos. There is a sense of finality to the text, wherein the Apostle is aware that only one prophecy is left to be fulfilled in the strictest sense – thus closing the canon of Scripture. Throughout the book, he was given a form of typology that moves forward from the day he writes Revelation until Judgment Day. The antitypes are given in the vision and are fulfilled by their types multiple times in history: the beast from the earth, for instance, is an antitype which has found hundreds or thousands of fulfillments in the various heretics that came and went throughout Church history. Yet the firmer prophecy, the Return of Christ, is one which shall only be fulfilled *once* at the end of days.

Here lays a supposed problem for many a believer. St. John and the angels speaking with him

present the Second Advent as though it were near *in time* to when Revelation was first penned. Naturally, we may feel some angst at wondering how exactly Christ's Return was "near" two thousand years ago. Thankfully, the sense of the text is not one which portrays the Parousia as near to St. John *in time*, but rather as a sudden event which shall catch the world off-guard. Thus the urgency is placed on the hearts of men such that, not knowing when the end of days shall be, they must prepare accordingly by seeking the mercies of God.

Vs.6-7

6 And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

7 "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

The angel speaking tells St. John that the message he has received (including the vision) is trustworthy and true. This hearkens back to Christ being referred to as "faithful and true" in the letters to the churches, and bearing that phrase as a title upon His Return.¹ The callback to the beginning is no accident, especially as the Apostle used the same phrasing about what "must soon take place" in the very first verse of Revelation.² The sixth verse serves then as a bookend to the opening words, telling us that the vision is complete. All that comes after this is a contextualization for the reader, the important takeaways for them to hold onto for the times ahead.

"God of spirits" language is found in only two other places in Scripture, both of which are in the book of Numbers. The first is during the contention between the sons of Korah and Moses, in which Moses and Aaron ask whether God shall destroy all of Israel on account of Korah. Our Lord replies that He shall not, instead instructing the children of Israel to depart from the Korah family (who is then summarily swallowed by the earth and burned to death).³ The second mention is when leadership over Israel is passed from Moses to Joshua – whose name in Greek is Iesous, or Jesus.⁴ Given that the book of Revelation is about Jesus returning to shepherd His people into the true promised land (the new heavens and new earth), and *simultaneously* about the judgment which shall come upon the wicked, this turn of phrase is not an accident. Here, however, the difference in title is made, from Moses' "God of the spirits of all flesh" to St. John's "God of the spirits of the prophets;" our Lord makes this alteration to emphasize the prophetic nature of the vision and St. John's fellowship with the Old Testament prophets themselves.

Christ says through the angel, "behold, I am coming soon." The specific word used is *ταχύ*,⁵⁶ which does not denote a length of time but rather a *pace*. There will be an immediacy to the Parousia which will fulfill St. Paul's description of it as being like a "thief in the night."⁷ This is to say, on account of the *nature* of His Return one ought to hold all the more dearly to the Gospel and the promise of eternal life.

Vs.8-9

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, 9 but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

1 Revelation 3:14, 19:11

2 Revelation 1:1

3 Numbers 16:20-35

4 Numbers 27:15-18

5 Transliterated "Tachu," Strong's #5035

6 <https://biblehub.com/greek/5035.htm>

7 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2

Some have been confused by the angel's statement. It appears in the seventh verse as though the angel is the one pronouncing himself to be the one "coming soon." St. John was confused too, as he bowed to the angel as though he were Christ. This is likely because the angels who carried the bowls of plagues wore sashes of gold just like Jesus did when He first appeared to St. John at Patmos.⁸ Since one of the angels who carried one of the bowls is the one speaking to him,⁹ it is likely that the Apostle made this mistake on account of the similar priestly clothing, the shining glory which obscured their faces, and the difficulty he had in parsing out voices. He makes the same mistake earlier when encountering the angel who speaks about the marriage supper of the Lamb.¹⁰

The confusion over this verse (and a few that are similar to it) has led some to make erroneous conclusions, namely that Jesus *is* an angel – and they often deny His Deity on account of this incident. However, the text clearly shows that they are distinct, especially when considering that Christ clears the matter up in the next three verses. Nonetheless, this is an important moment for our understanding of the Apostle's experience. That he writes of this embarrassing moment confirms to us that it was a *real* vision as opposed to some poetic fiction. He truly did suffer from a kind of panicked brain-fog symptom on account of the vision itself. Coming to in Patmos, he sees a figure who looks approximately like our Lord and bows to him, not realizing yet that the vision is over and he must wait to see our Lord again.

Vs.10-15

10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. **11** Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

12 "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. **13** I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. **15** Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

The language concerning sealing is in contrast to that of Daniel. Daniel is told multiple times that he must shut up and seal the words of the vision and books, on account of their being far off from his own contemporary situation.¹¹ For St. John's vision however, the period is near in which the antitypes which he has observed will begin their typological fulfillment: the earth is about to enter the Church Era in its fullest expression, wherein the things shown to the Apostle will happen again and again until Christ's return. It is for this reason in the tenth verse that the angel uses the word *καιρός*,^{12¹³ which denotes an *epoch* just as often as it denotes a point in history. That the angel says this *καιρός* is *ἔγγυς*,^{14¹⁵ which may be translates as "near" but is so on account of the pressing nature of the matter.}}

Jesus, speaking through the angel, speaks not of His Return as near but as *sudden*. Using the word *ταχύ* once more, He reinforces the sense of a sudden and destructive Second Advent which shall not be expected by the world at large. So, blessed are those who listen to the Gospel and wash their robes in Christ's righteousness, seeking to be justified by Him and obedient. They will have eternal life per the process of re-creation discussed in the previous passages. Those who care not for the Christian faith (described here by the sins they commit) shall not be permitted this blessedness. Christ, declaring

8 Revelation 1:13, 15:6

9 Revelation 21:9

10 Revelation 19:9-10

11 Daniel 8:26, 12:4, 12:9

12 Transliterated "Kairos," Strong's 2540

13 <https://biblehub.com/greek/2540.htm>

14 Transliterated "Eggus," pronounced "Engus," Strong's #1451

15 <https://biblehub.com/greek/1451.htm>

Himself to be Divine by way of the “first and the last” title,¹⁶ asserts His Godhood as the merit by which He shall judge humanity. Everyone shall be repaid in some sense: the saints will be blessed according to their good deeds and not punished for their sins, the damned shall be punished according to their sins and not blessed for their good deeds. The Church, in the meantime, must “let” people do as they will, not exercising worldly power to force the filthy to be pure or anything like that (such matters are a problem for the State, not the Bride); only the Church must continue to proclaim the message that may result in the repentance of the wicked.

Vs.16-17

16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

17 The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

Here Christ clarifies further that He was speaking through the angel when St. John arrived back at Patmos. Once more, He also asserts His office in terms of His humanity. As touches on His Divinity, He is the Alpha and the Omega; as it pertains to His humanity, He is the proper heir of the Davidic throne over God's people and the true star under which all creation must bow. It is for this reason that the Holy Spirit, speaking through the prayers of the saints (that is, the Bride), puts forward the earnest request of the Church: that Christ shall return. St. John exhorts us to do the same. Because Christ is our God, our King, our Redeemer, and the Morning Star living within our hearts,¹⁷ our highest good is actualized when He returns to the earth to assert His rule and make all things new.

Vs.18-21

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, **19** and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

20 He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

On the positive side, St. John has exhorted us all to pray for Christ's Return. On the negative formulation, all are forewarned to never add to nor take away from the words of Revelation. Previously, Solomon recorded the words of a sage named Agur, who told it rightly that to add to what God says is to incur rebuke as a deceiver.¹⁸ This is not to be understood in a granular textual fashion; if a scribe misspells a word in his copy of Revelation, that scribe is not going to hell for such an offense. It is closer to a “common sense” understanding of the matter: God's *Message* is not to be added to nor reduced, for the only reason one would have for doing these things is to deceive people. With the nineteenth verse, the Apostle declares the canon closed, the “the book of this prophecy,” Revelation itself, is to be understood as the climactic pinnacle of Scripture. No doctrine may be added to the Word, which has been proclaimed to be all-sufficient for doctrine and morals.

All that is left for believers now is to pray for our Lord's Return, continue in the faith and in His grace, seeking to please Him with our lives.

Come, Lord Jesus.

¹⁶ Isaiah 41:4, 44:6, 48:12. In Revelation 1:8 and 21:5-6, God the Father calls Himself the Alpha and the Omega.

¹⁷ 2 Peter 1:19

¹⁸ Proverbs 30:5-6