

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

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.

behold, I am coming soon

What are we to make of the book of Revelation? We've just finished reading it. We've spent the last **8 months** studying it. What do we do with it now?

How we view the book of Revelation, and whether we treat it as a bit of 'Interesting Bible knowledge' to tuck away in our memory bank; or whether it's something that just piques our interest and sharpens our intellectual study of the Bible; or whether it's something we just dismiss because it's ... all too

complicated; or whether it becomes something that actually transforms and shapes our lives, very much depends on whether we truly believe that Jesus really is coming soon... Do we really believe this? Do we really believe that Jesus is coming soon?

John believed it, but that was nearly 2000 years ago – was John wrong??? No, John **wasn't** wrong.

- A lifetime might seem like a long time for a human.

For goodness sake:

- An **hour** seems like a long time when you're trying to upload something to the internet.
- 2 minutes seems like a long time when you're waiting for dinner to heat up in the microwave

Pause for 10 seconds....

- an awkward pause of 10 seconds in the middle of a sermon, can seem like a long time...

We can be very impatient creatures, can't we???

But when it comes to the return of Jesus, it's not that far away. It wasn't that far away for John – it's not that far away for us.

You see, the point is, Jesus' return is always best to be considered, as “imminent”. Or **my death** may be imminent. Or **your** death could be imminent (for that matter)... I don't want to sound all doom and gloom here, but cemeteries **are** full of people who expected that they'd have another day; or another year; or another decade...

Jesus told a lot of parables about how He would be a long time coming. And because He was a long time coming, there

would be some, who would cease to be vigilant – some would cease to be ready, for when He **did** return... And so they were caught out, weren't they:

- the bridesmaids ran out of oil
- the owner of the house fell asleep and his house was broken in to.
- the servant got drunk and mistreated the other servants

These are all parables, Jesus told, to warn us to be ready – To warn us, to continue to be faithful, and to be righteous, because Jesus is coming soon, but He might be a long time coming...

We don't know the day; We don't know the hour; But live, in the full expectation that it could very well be **this** day; it could very well be **this** hour that Jesus returns, because He **is** coming soon.

And Because Jesus is coming soon, of this book of the Revelation, He says: **Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."**

What does it mean, to "keep **the words of the prophecy of this book**"???

Well, I reckon it means 3 things:

1. Firstly, it means "Don't throw the Book of Revelation out". Keep it. Study it. Digest it. We were told right at the beginning, that we'd be blessed by reading it, and we'd be blessed by hearing it. But hearing it counts for nothing, unless we keep it, and so **now** we're being told,

Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

2. Secondly, to keep the words of this prophecy, means to let the Holy Spirit convict us and change us, and transform us, and strengthen us, and renew us, as we hold on to its promises, and as we respond to its challenges. And there are challenges here – challenges to overcome:
 - to overcome sin
 - to overcome idolatry
 - to overcome lovelessness
 - to overcome the temptation to lose heart, and to stop following Jesus; and
3. Thirdly, to keep the words of this prophecy, means to be a witness to Jesus. And if Jesus is coming soon, why wouldn't we be a witness for Him?

Keeping the words of this book, is what a servant of God does. Do we have any servants of God here?

When the angel said all these words to John, John fell down and wanted to worship him, but the Angel wouldn't have a bar of it. He said to John, "I'm just a fellow servant with you."... You see, The Angels are servants; the Apostles are servants (John was an apostle); the prophets are servants; and those who keep the words of this book, are **all** fellow servants of God.

Are you getting this? If **we** stay true to Jesus, (in the way that this book has outlined), we're on a par with the angels – we're on a par with the prophets – we're on a par with the apostles...

Faith, is the great leveller of humanity... I don't want you telling yourself (ever), that you're not good enough... Christ has called you. Christ has given faith to you. And while you continue faithfully following Jesus, you have that high status and that very high calling, of being "a servant of God"...

It is wrong to worship angels. It is wrong to pray to angels. It is wrong to elevate any man or woman of God to become some kind of hero to be worshipped... Worship, is to be reserved for God and God alone.

So, what does this Angel tell us to do with this book of Revelation? Well, he tells us what **not** to do with it. He said "**Don't seal it up!**" The time is near. We **need** these words.

...

Some of you have told me how much you've really appreciated these studies in the book of Revelation. I've had more people express their appreciation for this series, than any other series we've ever done before. And if you're someone who's found it really helpful, well give God the glory. It's not because "I'm clever" that the words of God come alive – that's what the word of God does. And we should expect the word of God to come alive to us. Any part that I might play, is as a simple servant – as a tool in God's hands, and the Holy Spirit is the one who has been touching your heart – not my words.

...

But while some have really appreciated this series, some others – not so much. Some have even dropped off from coming to church, because they don't want to have to try and grapple with the book of Revelation. To them, they've fenced

it off as a “no go” zone... And that’s exactly what we’re told **not** to do – **don’t** seal it up. **The time is near.** We need these words. Keep these words.

And oh, how the Christian church today, needs to hear these words, and needs to be reminded of these words... – The words of Jesus Himself, to encourage us, through all of the hardships that we are yet to face. So, don’t seal it up...

But even though we have this prophecy – even as the day of Jesus' coming approaches, and even as the events of this prophecy unfold, don’t be surprised, that most of the world will continue as they are, and take **no** notice of it.

Verse¹¹ **Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."**

Now, I don’t know if you’re noticing this, but this is not merely a statement of fact – it’s not simply an analysis of the way things are – it’s a statement of intent – it’s a statement of God’s intent... And you might find this a little bit troubling – that it is God’s intent that the evildoer still does evil and that the filthy will still be filthy – surely God wants everybody to be transformed and changed doesn’t He?...

We talked about this back in chapter 9: When man hardens his heart against God, God hardens it even more.... Back in Chapter 9, even when the obvious judgment of God is being poured out on the world, they still refuse to repent.... And that’s God’s intent. When we reject God, we’ve made our

choice, and He hands us over to sin... Just like when Pharaoh rejected Moses and rejected God, God hardened Pharaoh's heart even more, so that he would never let the people go..

*You know, when some people argue against the whole concept of grace (the undeserved forgiveness of God), sometimes their great barrier to faith, is expressed something like this: "Are you telling me, that if Adolf Hitler became a Christian before he died, that God would have forgiven him and taken him to heaven???" And of course the answer to that is "Yes". The grace of God **is** big enough to forgive Adolf Hitler, should he repent and yield to Jesus Christ as His Lord. Yes, the blood of Jesus **is** powerful enough to wash even Hitler clean of his sins, **IF** he was to repent of his sins and bow before Jesus as His lord...*

But it's a moot point, because he didn't, did he? Hitler rejected God, and embraced evil. And God handed him over to sin of demonic proportions... His heart was hardened against God, and God handed him over to sin. ¹¹ **Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy**

Don't be surprised, when most people don't repent, and most people won't turn their hearts toward God. Rejoice, that God will be glorified in the destruction of the wicked, just as God will be glorified in the salvation of the righteous.

And so God's intent, is that those who reject Him, will continue to follow the evil of their heart, until the day of judgment.

But I want you to notice also, God's intent for the righteous – it's a matter of being and doing. It's a matter of believing in Jesus, and doing righteous acts.

Let **the holy still be holy** – alright, we're only holy, because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross. I don't want you to confuse this with any kind of idea of "being saved by our works". None of us can save ourselves by doing good works... None of us can make ourselves "holy" – that's what God does. But because we **are** holy – because we **are** forgiven of our sins, a true disciple of Jesus will **do** good works – they will live a life of righteousness.

Let me underline 2 words here "Do" and "Be". If your faith is all "do" and no "be", your acting as if you're "saved by works". If your faith is all "be" and no "do", you've swallowed the whole "easy-believism" thing – it's a modern heresy that says "You don't have to do any good works – all you've got to do is believe in Jesus, and you've got an irrevocable ticket to heaven"... my friends, that's a lie of the devil.

Being a disciple of Jesus, is about being and doing. You **are** holy because by faith you believe in Jesus Christ, and **He** has washed you and **made** you holy. But because of what you **are** (holy), you will also **do**, righteousness. **Be** holy. **Do** righteousness.

Even right here, in the closing words of the Bible, we're being told yet again, that the Holy will do righteousness. How we live, matters. What I do, and how I treat others – matters....

When Jesus comes, with Him will come “recompense” – that means “reward”; “wages”. He says “I will **repay each one for what he has done.**”

Do you know what that means? ... Our salvation, is demonstrated by our good works. If good works are missing, that means that there’s something not complete about my salvation. It’s a heart problem, you see. When someone loves Jesus, they’ll love others. When someone has been blessed with the gift of grace and salvation, they’ll demonstrate that same grace and love to others... And if love and grace are not evident in my life, then I’ve got a heart problem, and there’s something not complete about my salvation.

Do you ever feel your Christian life isn’t all that it should be???

- You hear about “holiness”, and you realise that “Actually, I’m **not** very holy at all.”
- You hear about “love”, and you realise that “Really, I’m not loving as I should.”
- You hear the preacher talk about this thing called, “sanctification”, and he explains that “Sanctification is about how God changes us, to make us more like Him.”, and you find yourself thinking, “Well, He might be changing other people, but I don’t think He’s been changing me very much.”

Do you ever feel like that? Do you know what the missing ingredient is? Repentance.

I mentioned a false teaching which is pretty common in the Christian church of today. It's sometimes called "easy-believism". And a common teaching of easy-believism, is that you only ever have to repent once. Change your mind about Jesus, and believe that He died to save you from your sins, and you'll be saved forever...

That's what it teaches, but the fact of the matter is, Repentance is a daily action (for me, multiple-times-daily). God continues to reveal the sins in my life, and I need to repent of these things. Without repentance, there is no forgiveness.

V14 says:

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.

.....

¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes – This, is an image of repentance.

Back in Chapter 3, Jesus said to the church in Sardis, that there were some there who had soiled their garments. They had a reputation for being alive, but in Jesus' eyes, they were dead, because their works weren't complete (in other words, they were doing the **wrong** thing, or they **weren't** doing the **right** thing) – they'd soiled their garments. For them, it was all about appearances, but the appearances were far from the reality. How were they to get right with Jesus again? Repent!!!!, and once again, they'd be clothed in white.

Only those who repent and wash their robes, have the right to the tree of life... Others will be excluded: V15 gives us a few examples: **¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.**

There is no place for “duplicity” in the Kingdom of God. “Duplicity”, is where you claim to be a disciple of Jesus, but your actions, are not at all, the actions of someone who’s following Jesus. And this isn’t a complete list – it’s just a few examples:

- Sorcerers:- Think of this as those who continue to dabble in the occult (whether it be spiritualism; or contacting the dead; or astrology; or new age practices; or yoga; or Thai chi) – they’ll be excluded.
- Then there’s those who are sexually immoral. The Scriptures are pretty clear – God’s good plan for sexual activity, is one man, married to a woman, and that’s it. Everything else falls under the description of “sexual immorality”, and those who don’t repent of their sexual immorality, will be excluded.
- Murderers will be excluded, but remember, that Jesus told us that “hatred” reveals a murderous heart.
- Idolaters will be excluded. An idol, is anything that we set above God.
- **and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.** will be excluded. False teachers; False prophets; Anyone who is false, will be excluded.

When Jesus returns, there will be nothing false in His Kingdom.

So, how do we respond to this? Those who wash their robes will be saved; Those who continue in their sin will be excluded.... So, what do we do??? Well, first of all, we repent of our sin, and get right with God, but what then????

We invite.. Come.

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come."

That's the Holy Spirit and the church – The Holy Spirit and the Church are always inviting. Come. Come to Jesus. The Gospel isn't a blessing we want to keep to ourselves – it's something we want to share with the world.

And let the one who hears say, "Come." You know, you don't have to be a Christian for 30 years and graduate from Bible College before you are qualified to invite people to Jesus – In fact, often the best evangelists, are brand new Christians. Let the one who **hears** say "Come". You've heard the invitation. You've responded to the invitation. Now, invite somebody else to Jesus.

And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

The good news of the Gospel, is the deepest needs of every sinner – the deepest needs of everyone who is lost; and lonely; and destitute, will be met by Jesus, but only if we thirst for it, and only if we come.

And the grace of God is free. There is no price to be paid. Jesus has paid it in full – nailed on the cross...

So, that's pretty much the book of Revelation. And it ends with a warning, a promise, and a blessing.

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.

Alright, so that's a warning against false teaching. False teachers and false prophets, love to read the bible with a pair of scissors in their hands... Some of this book of Revelation, is tough to understand. And sometimes, through this series, I've had to say to you, "I don't know what that means." But that doesn't mean we should ever cut it out, or that we should add to it, to give it more sense...

So, that's the warning. Next comes the promise

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

Jesus is coming soon – Is anyone excited by that??? Well, give me an "Amen". Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

And finally, the blessing

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

The book of Revelation, was originally written, to be sent on a circuit, to 7 churches in what is now known as Turkey. One commentary I read, summed up the goal of the book like this:

The goal of the book, is that God's true people would obey its revelation, and be blessed with salvation.ⁱ

And my prayer, is that the goal of the Book has hit its mark with us. That we would keep this revelation – that we would obey it, and that we would be blessed with Salvation.

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

Amen.

ⁱ Beale, G.K., 1999. *The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text*, Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.