

THE LORD'S PROMISE AND THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER

Revelation 22

Intro: The title of this last book of the Bible is given in the first verse of chapter 1. It is called, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." The contents show that it is both a revelation from the Lord, but also a revelation about the Lord. If you have a red letter copy of the NT you will see that here in this book we have the words of the Lord Jesus in chapters 1, 2, and 3, but nothing more from Him until we get to the last chapter, chapter 22.

Furthermore, by comparing the first and last chapters of this great book, you will see that the Lord Jesus identified Himself in the last chapter the same way that He did in the first chapter. In chapter 1 we read that our Lord said,

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty (Rev. 1:8).

In my Bible the words after "Lord" are in black ink, but it seems to me that the Lord said the last part as well as the first, so all of it should be in red – but I suppose that is a matter for the interpreter to settle for himself.

But then moving on down to verse 11 we have this same statement, but in a more abbreviated form, reading what the Apostle John said with it in verse 10:

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last (Rev. 1:10-11a).

There are some MSS where these words are not found, but there are others which support what we have in our Authorized Text.

But notice the same idea in Rev. 1:17 where the Lord said, "Fear not; I am the first and the last." And then He added,

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death (Rev. 1:18).

Now I said a moment ago that we hear nothing more from the Lord after we leave chapter 3 until we get to chapter 22. But that is not exactly correct, even though the words I am about to refer to were not printed in

red in my Bible, and may refer to God, I believe that Rev. 21:6 perhaps should also be included. That verse may refer to God, but it also could refer to our Lord. Anyway this is what you will read in Rev. 21:5-7:

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son (Rev. 21:5-7).

I agree that this passage could refer to God, but it would be most unusual, I think, to have such a title refer to both God the Father and God the Son in the same book. But anyway, it does not alter the meaning.

But when we move on to the last chapter of the Revelation of Jesus Christ we find this same title in Rev. 22:13.

Alpha and Omega, as I think most of you know, are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This book was originally written to churches where the people were well acquainted with the Greek language, and where it most likely was spoken. So they would understand it.

It speaks of the eternal character of our Lord. But more than that it declares that He was the Creator, and He is the finisher, not just of creation, but of the purposes the Godhead had when They created the heavens and the earth. These words indicate that all things are designed for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. When He came the first time He was despised and rejected of men. And He continues to draw the contempt of people even today. But the time is coming when He will be acknowledged as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The same idea is in Hebrews 1:1-3:

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:1-3).

All of this is very important for us to understand because it has to do with

the completion, the full realization, of all of the purposes of God. This has to do with our hope. And our hope is only as good as those who have made the promises. This is what makes them absolutely secure because they are dependent upon the eternal, unchanging, almighty God, and His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now with this in mind, let us go to the last chapter of the Bible to see what we have there.

The Apostle John is the writer of this book. The Holy Spirit is the Author. But at the same time John wrote with the conviction that, although a little over sixty years had gone by since the Lord had ascended back to heaven, there was a firm conviction in John's heart that the Lord had not forgotten His promise. And that conviction was supported by the three times in this chapter where we have the words, "Behold, I come quickly," or as it is in verse 20, "Surely I come quickly."

So let us look first at:

I. THE PROMISE OF OUR LORD (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20).

The whole chapter is written around these three times that the Lord Jesus emphasized that He was going to return, and that His return would be soon.

I am going to suggest that the first 7 verses give us the first division. Then, that verses 8 through 13 give us the second division. And verses 14 through the first part of verse 20 give us the third part.

A. "Behold, I come quickly" (Rev. 22:1-7).

In this section we see what life is going to be like, and what our environment is going to be when the Lord does come.

I think that there are more promises of blessing for keeping and believing this book than you will find in any other book of the Bible. Cf. Rev. 1:3.

And this is what we have in Rev. 22:7. None of this has happened yet. We are still waiting, like believers have in every age. But in the light of eternity it can still be said that these promises will be fulfilled "shortly," "quickly."

So whether we take the last words of verse 7 as the words of our Lord, or the words of John the Apostle, the point is that blessing most certainly comes to those who *keep the sayings of this book, and who refuse to give up hope.*

But let us go on to the next section.

B. “Behold, I come quickly” (Rev. 22:8-13).

John obviously was overwhelmed with what he had just heard. I don’t know if he intended to worship the angel. I have a hard time thinking that this aged apostle would do that. But the angel thought that he was going to worship him, and it is to the angel’s credit that he stopped the Apostle.

But the point was that the message of this book was not to be sealed. And this applies down to the present hour. People in the world have their goals, and they think they know what is best for this world. They are seeking peace, but they don’t know how to get it and they don’t have the power even if they did.

Verse 11 is very solemn for those who are unjust and filthy, and very encouraging for those who are righteous and holy. The Lord was speaking about an event that is going to take place so suddenly that people will have no opportunity to change. So to trifle with this truth is to court disaster. On the other hand, those who are righteous and holy must not let down the standards of their behavior because it is certain that the Lord is coming.

Each one of these sections is enforced by the promise of our Lord.

But let us go on to the last section.

C. “Surely I come quickly” (Rev. 22:14-20a).

Again the Apostle John was led by the Spirit to talk about the Word of God, about keeping the commandments of the Word, about the danger that people face when they either add to the Word, or to take away from the Word. The Word of God must stand as it is written – all of it! But especially this book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. It is a dangerous thing to tamper with the Word of God.

And so for the third and last time we have that promise confirmed:
“Surely I come quickly.”

Now the Lord only has to say a thing, or give a promise, or issue a commandment once, for it to be true. But for Him to state it not just once, or twice, or even three times, because this is not the first that we have heard of this in the Bible.

Let me take you back to that Upper Room where the Lord met with His disciples for the last time before His death. What did He tell them? I feel sure that most of you know the words to which I am referring. You will find them in John 14:1-3:

1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Do you remember how the Lord prayed about this in His prayer which is recorded for us in John 17? Listen to what He said. I am referring to His words in verse 24:

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world (John 17:24).

When Paul spoke of the possibility that he might not get out of that Roman prison alive, this is what he said about his death: "To depart, and to be with Christ, . . . is far better" (Phil. 1:23). Earlier he had written to the church at Corinth to tell them that to be absent from the body, that is, to die, for a believer, "is to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). And the Apostle John said about the same subject,

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

Remember also that precious passage in 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

And in our text for tonight the Apostle John said in verse 4, "And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev. 22:4).

I think it is very significant that in none of these passages heaven is mentioned. Heaven is wherever the Lord is, and He is the One Who will make heaven, heaven. Heaven is a place, and I am sure that it will be a most glorious place. But we are not looking for a place, as great as that

will be; we are looking for a Person, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

But let me come to my last point.

II. THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER (Rev. 22:20b-21).

His prayer was first of all a response to what the Lord had been saying to Him. It was very simple, and very short – just four words in the Greek text. He said, “Amen, come Lord Jesus!”

John was an old man when he wrote this, and he was in exile on the Isle of Patmos, and he must have had a deep longing to depart and to be with Christ.

But there is a second part to John's prayer, and that was for the people of God who were waiting for the coming of the Lord. He knew that what they needed most was daily “grace.” (Read verse 21.)

Concl: I trust that this is our response. The Lord may come some time this year, and I don't say that because it's a new millennium. I say it because one of these days He is going to come. But let's not await it just hoping that we will get out of all of the unpleasant things of this life, but because we want to see Him, and be with Him, and what is most amazing of all, to be like Him. Let's keep looking for Him because He is really coming, and coming soon. Until then, His grace is all that we need.