

Revelation 22:6–21 — Concluding Verses

Notes on The Revelation with Practical Reflections

H. H. Snell

Chapter 22:6-21: Concluding Verses

As we had introductory remarks to the sayings of the prophecy of this book, so we find concluding statements which appear as postscripts to a letter. The prominent thought in them is the Lord's announcement to the assemblies of His own speedy coming. This is what we should have expected. What so welcome to the members of His body as Himself! It would have been strange for our Lord to have given us various details of things coming upon the earth, without plainly keeping before us our proper hope -- the one hope of our calling. The Spirit of Christ in the prophets was wont to guide them to conclude their testimonies with earth's only hope -- the day of the Lord -- Messiah's reign -- the times of restitution which follow righteous judgments; but in the apocalyptic testimony to the assemblies, we find the relief for the heart oppressed by the sorrows coming upon the children of men, is the Lord's coming to receive us unto Himself.

John tells us that he saw and heard these things, and that the effect of seeing and hearing them was most overpowering. And not only so; for, alas! how weak is man! how little can any of us bear! how badly can we be trusted! Again we find this honored seer at the angel's feet, a worshiper of that bright messenger who had showed him these things. Again the honored vessel came between him and the Lord. He idolizes the instrument; he worships the creature, though he did it ignorantly. He might have thought that this heavenly messenger was Jesus. Solemn lesson for us. Alas! how true it is that we are kept by the power of God. The angel, however, is more faithful than the loved and aged seer, and rebukes him for his folly.

In order to leave no room for question, as to the reality and accomplishment of this prophetic book, we are assured that

Would, beloved, that we might be instructed by this angel to be more ready than we are to refuse everything that robs God of what belongs to Him and that we had a deeper sense in our souls of what is due to Christ, so as to be alone jealous for His glory. This surely is the only way of realizing present blessing.

these sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done (Rev. 22:6).

Thus the Divine character of the prophetic testimony is attested, and the introductory announcement repeated, that these things will shortly come to pass. Time hurries on with rapid flight. Events follow in such quick succession, that eternal realities will soon dawn upon a slumbering world. How secretly, yet surely, the leaven of infidelity is diffusing itself! How rapidly the spirit of irreverence

for the things of God, and desire for the exaltation of man, are growing! What patronage, too, the great harlot is receiving! How many seem satisfied to have their intellects amused and senses intoxicated with the adulterous wine, because it still allows the heart to maintain its enmity against God, and leaves the conscience unmoved by its sin and guilt; and with what increasing boldness among all nations she holds out the golden cup, brimful of all manner of filthiness, to the myriads of passers by! These things are enough to show us how soon the apocalyptic prophecies may be accomplished, and how unmistakably we see the day approaching. What effect, beloved, should these things have upon us whose citizenship is in heaven, but to look for the Savior! What else can meet the need of our hearts? Hence the next words are, Behold, I come quickly {Rev. 22:7}!

because it is Christ who is our hope; not events, but the Lord Himself. “For thee, His royal Bride, for thee, His brightest glories shine; And, happier still, His changeless love, With all its joy; is thine.”

Then saith he, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and [the fellow-servant] of thy brethren the prophets. Worship God (Rev. 22:8, 9).

The prophet Daniel was told to go his way, because the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end (Dan. 12);

but John is told to seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand (Rev. 22:10).

The things here revealed are therefore to be published; men are both to be instructed and warned, because the time is so very near. How important and necessary it is, therefore, for those who would be faithful servants of Christ to be well acquainted with the things here revealed; for they are no longer to be sealed, but to be made known. A few more fleeting moments and man’s eternal doom will be forever fixed; and though myriads of ages roll on, the sentence will be, He that is unjust, let him be unjust still (Rev. 22:11).

Those who now act so unjustly toward the God of all grace and His only-begotten Son, the Savior of sinners, will then ever be among the unjust. Let ten thousand times ten thousand years pass, and still it will be said, He which is filthy, let him be filthy still (Rev. 22:11).

Having despised the only sin-cleansing remedy, they will learn in outer darkness that nothing but the blood of Jesus could cleanse a sinner, and make him fit to stand in God’s infinitely holy presence. Ah, how little men think that they insult God and dishonor Christ by refusing that only atonement which He has provided for sinners in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! But of those who have

Notes on the Revelation

accepted Christ as their Savior, who are sanctified by His blood, and made the righteousness of God in Him, it will be for ever true -He that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still (Rev. 22:11).

The fifteenth verse shows us the unclean ones outside -- the Gentile dogs as well as the children of Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations, or idolatries; those who in heart depart from God to

gratify their lusts, and all others who loved the lie of infidelity, which is always placed by the enemy in opposition to the truth, which truth those only love who are truly born of God. Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie (Rev. 22:15).

But on the other hand, how sweet it is to see our precious Lord reminding us that His blood-washed ones have title to stand in changeless blessing before God, even in the unsullied holiness of His glorious presence, there to feed upon living realities, and enter into the kingdom of the living God. Blessed are they that do His commandments [or rather, Blessed are they that wash their robes], that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city (Rev. 22:14).

the Sun of righteousness {Mal. 4:2}

arising upon this desolate earth with healing in His wings, when He will make up His jewels of the elect people of Israel, and tread down the wicked as ashes under His feet. But there is no allusion, in this presentation of the Lord as the Morning Star, to any judgment upon the ungodly, which characterizes the testimony of prophets, because here it is simply the announcement of Him who is coming to meet us in the air, and receive us unto Himself. Our joy will be full then; for we shall see Him as He is, before Israel and the earth are delivered from their oppression. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Therefore we wait for God's Son from heaven, the bright and Morning Star, to take us out of this scene, and to be for ever with Him and like Him. "Panting with rapture and surprise, 'Caught up,' our fond affections rise, Our coming Lord to meet; Hearing the trumpet's glorious sound; Soaring to join the rising crowd; Gazing upon the parted cloud Beneath His pierced feet.

We find, within the compass of a few verses, that the Lord announces His speedy coming three times, as if in this last letter it should be the last thought He would impress upon our minds. He also reminds us of His eternal Godhead --

"O blessed, O thrice blessed word! To be 'for ever with the Lord' In heavenly beauty, fair! Up! up! we long to hear the cry, Up! up! our coming Lord draws nigh, Yes, 'in the twinkling of an eye,' To meet Him in the air."

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last (Rev. 22:13).

No sooner, then, does the blessed Lord present Himself as the bright and Morning Star, than there is a response, --

It need scarcely be said, that no one could lay claim to such titles but He who is God, that blessed One who left the world to go to the Father, who has sent down the Holy Ghost, and is gone to prepare a place for us. It is He who here says, Behold, I come quickly (Rev. 22:7). Behold, I come quickly (Rev. 22:12). Surely, I come quickly (Rev. 22:20).

These things are testified in the Churches, to whom the Lord's last presentation of Himself is the Root and Offspring of David, and THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR (Rev. 22:16).

As David's Creator and David's Offspring, the Godhead and manhood of Him who sent these things to the Churches are plainly set forth, and shows us that all the promises of royalty, and everything connected with the future kingdom of Israel, are secured in Him. The final sentences of this blessed book make us feel deeply that the night is far spent {Rom. 13:12},

and we are encouraged, during the closing moments of the dark night, to look out for the Morning Star. It is the harbinger of the day. Those only who are watching see it. To such it is a glorious sight. Those who are slumbering on their beds see it not. It is a blessed prospect for us, because it is the Lord who here subscribes Himself -I, Jesus . . . I am the bright and Morning Star {Rev. 22:16}.

We know it will be followed by

The Spirit and the Bride say, COME {Rev. 22:17};

for it is the Holy Ghost dwelling in the saints that teaches them, and enables them to say, Come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

It is well to see that the Holy Spirit shows us things to come, and inspires us with hope; that He teaches us to cry, Come, Lord Jesus.

Surely nothing else could ever satisfy the bride's heart; for she is espoused to one husband, and her assurance is that she will be presented as a chaste virgin unto Christ. Those who are taught of God love the Lord Jesus. They truly say -"No object so glorious we see, And none so attractive to us."

The affections and desires of the saints are drawn out after Christ, for what He is in Himself, in all the perfectness of Divine and changeless love. It would seem as if there were an intimation here of bridal affections characterizing saints just before the Lord's return: not all saints; for the next sentence shows us that some are not thus responding to our Lord's revelation of Himself as the bright and Morning Star:

hence the exhortation, Let him that heareth say, Come {Rev. 22:17}.

And is it not very remarkable how love for the person of our Lord, and desire for His coming, characterize many saints now? In almost all times of the history of the Church there have been those who have rejoiced before God in the finished work of Christ,

in their completeness and security in Him, in the blessedness of redemption by His blood, and have willingly suffered for His sake. But there is something more in the present day, low and humbling as our condition is in many respects; there is a manifest, and I think in some an increasing attachment to the Lord Himself, with the longing desire to see Him. In many parts of England and Ireland, on the Continent, and in other parts of the world, how frequently is the cry going up to heaven from longing souls, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" and in various ways how cherished and cultivated are what may be properly called bridal affections towards Christ? And if so, is it not like the rousing of the slumbering virgins at the cry of, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him {Matt. 25:6}?

which is soon followed by all those who have oil in their vessels with their lamps meeting Him, and going to the marriage. Who knows how soon this blessed hope may be realized by us, beloved! How encouraging this view of the subject is, and how calculated to stir the affections of our souls in becoming fervour to our Lord! But further. In connection with this, as I have noticed, there appear to be some who do not say, Come, Lord Jesus;

hence it is added, Let him that heareth say, Come.

What hinders them from thus responding to our Lord? Is it from bad teaching, a lack of spiritual instruction on the subject? Is it worldliness of spirit? for eating and drinking with the drunken is associated in Scripture with the unholy sentiment, My Lord delayeth His coming {Matt. 24:48; Luke 12:45}.

Is it carnal-mindedness? allowing fleshly lusts and tempers to grieve and quench the Spirit of God, and thus hinder His teaching. It may be that malice, guile, hypocrisy, and evil speakings, are not laid aside (for they are natural to us all), and spiritual desires and growth are checked, and thus hinder the cry in the soul, of Come, Lord Jesus! Is it the habit of carelessness and insubjection to Christ, not keeping His words? for the Church is supposed in Scripture to be subject unto Christ; and those true to Him, who keep His words, sayings, and commandments, are promised the enjoyment of sweet manifestations of Christ, and abiding fellowship with the Father and the Son. Whatever it be that hinders the soul from truly giving utterance to the cry of Come, Lord Jesus,

it should be detected and judged; for the inspired declaration is, Let him that heareth say, Come {Rev. 22:17}.

With this intimation of a company on earth inspired with bridal affections towards Christ, we have also bowels of mercies going out in deep Christ-like love and compassion towards the lost around. This is another important thought in reference to the present day; for who has not observed how largely the gospel of the grace of God has gone forth of late, and that by servants of God who look for the coming of our Lord! Here they are linked together, for a present salvation is associated in Scripture with this blessed hope; and who can conceive a heart really touched with love towards Christ, and waiting for His coming, that does not long for the salvation of souls? I know nothing so calculated to fill

as with holy zeal in the gospel as the scriptural hope of the Lord's coming. If the above view be correct, we may be now in the very closing days of the Church's history on earth. The "thirsty" are considered here. Disturbed or dissatisfied with what their poor hearts have tasted, they crave something more. Earth's charms have been vainly tried. Nature's resources are exhausted. The emptiness of men's inventions painfully experienced. Their own hope of self-improvement has been woefully disappointing. That which they most eagerly sought has failed to satisfy. A dead fly has been found in it all. The soul longs and pants for something else. It really thirsts for what can give present rest, and meet eternal realities. Such are here addressed, Let him that is athirst come {Rev. 22:17}.

The Lord Jesus alone can relieve such. He can give rest. His blood purges the conscience. He gives eternal life. He saves at once and for ever. But there are many who seem not to thirst; but they are

unsaved, going on the broad road, trying to get comfort in themselves, or in the world, or anywhere but in Christ. Such were some of us. Still the gospel addresses itself, to sinners, ungodly, enemies. As the Lord said in the beginning of His ministry, whosoever believeth {John 3:15, 16},

in

Him

should

not

perish

so now, at the very close, it is, Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}.

It is the fullest, freest grace. Throwing His loving arms wide open, He welcomes any, every sinner that will take eternal life at His hands as a free gift. How rich is this mercy. Can anything exceed the gracious fervour of the Lord toward the lost? or can a more thorough welcome be intimated to the soul that desires eternal life? It is not a question of terms or conditions, but God in Christ taking the place of a giver, and making the soul eternally happy that is willing to be a receiver, content to be saved in God's way -- thus accepting Christ as his Savior, and giving all the glory to God! Observe, it is not a question of religion at all; there is no room for pleading ordinances, no advantage proffered to the moralist, nothing repulsive set before the most profane: it is simply a question of life eternal, and possessed, too, not by those who hold orthodox views even of the gospel, but by those who take Christ as their Savior: not by those who say they think of Christ, or pray to Christ, or work for Christ; but by those who take Christ: Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}.

Worship, service, and other fruits of faith, of course follow. They are the effects of life received, not the cause. A mistake here is of eternal importance. The saved sinner can sing -- "I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Behold, I freely give The living water: thirsty one, Stoop down, and drink, and live.' I came to Jesus, and I drank Of that life-giving stream, My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, And now I live in Him.

Notes on the Revelation I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'I am this dark world's light. Look unto me, thy morn shall rise, And all thy day be bright.' I looked to Jesus, and I found In Him my star, my sun; And in that light of life I'll walk Till travelling days are done."

And we are here most solemnly warned against lowering the divine standard, and taking the unholy liberty of setting aside any portion of the truth of the Revelation.

Before this blessed little book is concluded, we find a remarkable parenthesis. The awful sins of adding to and taking from God's Word are plainly insisted upon. These we know are not uncommon errors. The Lord especially refers to the book of Revelation, but the Old Testament sounds a somewhat similar warning.

Can anything be more solemn? or could any words be more thoroughly invested with divine authority? Need we anything more to persuade us of the deep value and weighty import of the book? or to prompt us to read it with prayerfulness of spirit and true subjection of heart before God? We know how ready the intellect is to frame theories, and go to the Scripture for some license for their existence; in other words, to go to God's Word to get something to endorse a system, instead of bowing down in selfloathing, and felt ignorance, to receive what God has to say to us in His Word by the Spirit's teaching. O for real subjection of heart to Christ!

Every word of God is pure. . . . Add thou not to His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar (Prov. 30:5, 6). Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it (Deut. 4:2). What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it (Deut. 12:32).

The Lord has been always jealous for the maintenance of His own truth. Saul lost the kingdom because he obeyed not the word of the Lord (1 Sam. 15:28). We know, too, what judgments came upon Jehoiakim king of Judah for cutting and burning the word of the Lord written on the roll of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 36:29, 30). The canon of Scripture is complete. To add to it must be deeply offensive to God. It must be the fruit of a proud and unbelieving heart. The warning is addressed to every man that even heareth the prophecy of this book; and in executing the sentence, God will be no respecter of persons. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book (Rev. 22:18).

Nor is it a light thing either to take away from the complete revelation that God has graciously given. Believers are supposed in Scripture to be subject unto Christ (Eph. 5:24).

Practical Christianity consists in owning the lordship of Jesus: and the Christian's warfare is carried on in the exercise of casting down imaginations [reasonings], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4, 5).

The soul, therefore, that is spiritual, under divine teaching, cannot fail to be jealous for God's Word. The old sin of making the Word of God of none effect by man's tradition is still round about us; for the unsubdued will is ever ready to own any other authority than God's and follow any other guidance. Man's traditions, however, alter according to circumstances, and the commandments of men pass away with those who decree them; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever {1 Pet. 1:25}.

Jesus said,

If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part [portion] out of the book of life, 12 and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:19).

Again and again, as we have before noticed, the Lord announces at the close of this book that He is coming quickly, and each announcement is connected with a different character of thought, which we

may do well to consider. The first is, Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book (Rev. 22:7).

We were assured, at the opening of the Revelation, of the blessing connected with those who keep the things written therein; and though, doubtless, such feel now the blessing of God in all their endeavours to keep what is here set forth, still the Lord's own testimony of approval will be specially known by each one at His coming. This prophetic book shows us the working of principles, and their results. Lawlessness is here described in all its horrible ungodliness. Religiousness comes out in dark forms of infidelity and superstition. Things true and things false stand here in widest contrast. Christ and Antichrist, the remnant and the apostate people, the bride and the harlot, are all brought out. Every vision carries with it some deep, searching, moral testimony to the affections and conscience. The sayings of the prophecy of this book are powerfully commended to the heart and judgment. The Lamb in majesty and glory is here seen. He is the great object of attraction. "No place too high for Him is found, No place too high in heaven."

It is therefore an eminently sanctifying book, most awakening to the spiritual affections and desires, most instructive as to the principles of everything at work around us; so that those who heed its teaching must get immense blessing now, and find the Lord's approval at His coming. Secondly, we find in the 12th verse, Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be (Rev. 22:12).

I have given them thy word {John 17:14}. Thy word is truth {John 17:17}. Sanctify them through thy truth {John 17:17}.

12. "The book of life" is generally rendered "the tree of life." It is not the same thing as the present possession of eternal life; nor is it "the Lamb's book of life," or a reference to the names written therein before the foundation of the world.

Not a cup of cold water given to a disciple out of love to Jesus shall lose its reward then. When our Lord spake of making a feast, and calling the poor, the lame, the halt, and the blind, He said,

have us in the posture of patiently waiting for Him, and occupying till He comes.

Thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14).

A hearty sympathy with our Lord's announcement is then brought out --

Those who do not glide down the religious stream, but are separate in heart and walk unto the Lord, in subjection to His word and Spirit, must be content to be present losers, to be misunderstood, and not surprised at having their motives misjudged; but we must walk before Him who searches the heart, and by whom actions are weighed, knowing that when He comes again He will not withhold His Well done {Matt. 25:21, 23}

from what He can approve. How different will many things appear then! How much that is now applauded will be found lighter than vanity, when tried in the balance of the sanctuary; and how truly it

will be manifested then, that things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God. But Jesus says, My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

How encouraging! We have now to fight the good fight of faith {1 Tim. 6:12},
to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints {Jude 1:3},
to keep the word of His patience {see Rev. 3:10},
to be obedient children {1 Pet. 1:14};

in a word, to follow Christ. We are to suffer with Christ, and suffer for Christ; to bear the reproach of Christ; to be rejected with Christ; not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ; and in all things to serve the Lord Christ. We are to be mindful of everything around us only in relation to Christ; to have an eye to His glory, to walk worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing, to continue in His love, and manifest true friendship to Him, so that His joy may remain in us, and that our joy may be full. Happy are those who can esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of the world, because they have respect unto the recompense of the reward; or, like the apostles, can rejoice at being counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. We now come to the third and final announcement of our Lord's return. They are the Lord's last words to the Churches, and are most cheering -Surely I come quickly {Rev. 22:20}.

This assurance leaves no room for a question. What our Lord's thought of "quickly" may be, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, is a point we might consider; but certain it is that He thus leaves his Church in the position of expectancy of Himself. Whatever events have been recorded, He presents Himself as the alone hope, and He would

Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching (Luke 12:37).

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

It is not merely, "Come," but, Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Nothing can be plainer. It is the outflowing of affection to the Lord Himself. It is the longing heart of Jesus meeting with true response in His saints. Are we, beloved reader, in sympathy with the blessed Lord? It is possible to hold the doctrine of the Lord's coming, and to have knowledge of prophetic truth, without having the Lord Jesus, as the longing desire of the soul. It is not knowledge, but the hope, that purifies, and separates us unto the Lord (1 John 3:3). I ask, then, Is He the hope of our souls? Is it Christ Himself that we are looking for? This is eminently practical, and soul-purifying: for a believer not to be waiting for God's Son from heaven is sadly defective, and connected with great spiritual loss. The time may be short or long, according to human reckoning, before our Lord's return; but during the interval there is all-sufficient grace in Him for every need and distress; and thus the Revelation concludes with, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with yon all. Amen {Rev. 22:21}. "Lord Jesus, come! Nor let us longer roam Afar from thee, and that bright place Where we shall see thee face to face: Lord Jesus, come! "Lord Jesus, come! Thine absence here we mourn. Nor joy we know apart

from thee, Nor sorrow in thy presence see: Come, Jesus, come! “Lord Jesus, come! And claim us as
thine own; Our weary feet would wander o’er This dark and sinful world no more: Come, Savior,
come! “Lord Jesus, come! And take thy people home, That all thy flock, so scattered here, With thee in
glory may appear: Lord Jesus, come!”