

We come yet again to another time when we can open up the Word of God and allow the Spirit of God to speak through it to us. Take your Bibles. Turn to Revelation chapter 22. Our study of Revelation has been an amazing journey and we are now nearing the end of this study. It began on January 4, 2009. This is the 62nd exposition of this book with a few more to go. And may I remind you that this is the revelation of Jesus Christ. The **APOKALUPSIS IESOU CHRISTOU**. It is an interesting word, **APOKALUPSIS** (ap-ok-al'-oop-sis). **APO** in the original language means to take away and **KALUPSIS** is a cover. So this literally means an uncovering. This is a laying bare, a disclosure of things that have been concealed, a revealing of divine truth from God that lays bare that which has been hidden regarding the coming judgments upon the earth and the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me read the text that we will study here this morning. It begins in verse six and this is actually now the epilogue of the book of Revelation. We are going to look at verses six through 12 this morning.

And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place. And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book." And I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God." And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy."

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."¹

As we study the book of Revelation we see that the world is not randomly spinning out of control, but rather it is spinning in the precise direction that our sovereign God has ordained for it to spin. We have been reminded in our study of the majesty and the excellency of the ascended Christ, the Lord of the Church. We have learned much about the Church itself when we studied the seven churches that illustrated the kinds of churches that had existed perennially down through Church history. We have learned about the kind of worship that is going on in heaven which helps us understand how we should worship here and how we will worship one day in glory. We have learned how the world is being prepared for the rule of the antichrist and of the false prophet and what

¹ Revelation 22:6-12.

that will be like. We have learned about the cataclysmic judgments that are going to one day fall upon the earth as God pours out his wrath upon those who scoff at him. We have learned about the faithfulness of God to his covenant people Israel. We have learned about the return of the warrior king, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah who will come and establish his glorious kingdom on earth. We have learned about the judgment upon the unbelieving dead at the great white throne judgment. The Lord has revealed to us about the coming dissolution of the current heavens and earth when it will all pass away with a roar and then he will create a new heaven and a new earth. And, of course, recently now we have marveled at the new Jerusalem, heaven's holy city. We have rejoiced over those exhilarating realities that will one day be ours.

Now we come to the epilogue of the revelation of Jesus Christ. And here we have a series of exchanges between one of the angels of the seven last plagues that will come upon the earth and the apostle John and also between John and Jesus, exchanges that confirm the divine inspiration of the prophecy, that confirm and underscore the imminence of Jesus' return, that describe to us unbelievers and warn unbelievers about the coming of Christ, exchanges, also, that invites believers to enter the holy city.

Think of it this way, dear friends. We now come to a climactic crescendo of a magnificent prophetic oratorio that perfectly summarizes itself in the words of Jesus when he says, "Yes, I am coming quickly,"² in verse 20 of chapter 22.

These are words of comfort for the saints. But they are words of warning for those who do not know Christ.

So the question before us is: So what? As we look at this epilogue. In fact, I have entitled this discourse, "Jesus is Coming—So What?" In light of that, what would God have us do? Now, over the course of this study we have seen by God's grace several people in this Church and in other places in the world come to a saving knowledge of Christ and, certainly, that is where you must begin. We have also seen others who have been edified and encouraged. Some have been shocked and sobered. The question is: How has this study impacted you? What would the Lord have us do based upon what he has revealed to us? Said a little bit differently: How should this change your life?

Well, the Lord answers these questions in a sequence of statements that offer us very practical instructions. And this morning as we examine verses six through 12 we are going to see that the Lord demands that we do five things.

One, sharpen our awareness.

Two, safeguard his word.

Thirdly, strengthen our worship.

² Revelation 22:20.

Fourthly, sound the warning.

And, finally, step up our service.

That is what the Lord would have us do.

Now I want you to remember something very important. This book was not written for our entertainment to be awed with the things that are going to happen. It was not written for us to somehow create the perfect chart and timeline when we would know precisely when the Lord is going to come because we don't know. But rather it was written to teach us. It was written to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. In it we have very practical considerations that we are to obey. It is not some mystical, unintelligible allegory as some would have us believe. If that were so, our Lord's promise in chapter one verse three and also in verse seven here of chapter 22 where he tells us that he is going to bless those who hear and read and heed the things that are written in this prophecy, all of that would beg for relevance if this was merely some allegory that we couldn't really understand.

But, rather, it is filled with very clear and practical truths, exhilarating promises. And it is for this reason that God even adds a very stern warning to us not to in any way tamper with this text. We see that in verses 18 and 19 here in chapter 22. In fact, there we discover that anyone who would dare falsify or mitigate or misinterpret or in any way alter this book or any other passage of Scripture will be subject to the horrific judgments. And there they are described as “the plagues which are written in this book.”³

He says, “God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”⁴ That is a very stern warning. In fact, it is one that I have had sitting before me over the last year and a half as I study this to make sure that before the Lord I have done everything I possibly can to rightly divide this text and be able to stand before you and say, “Thus saith the Lord.”

In fact, you realize that there is no other book in the Bible that has such a strong safeguard placed upon it or a more forceful command to study it and to live it out in faithful obedience. This should be sobering to each one of us.

Unfortunately, many Christians—perhaps you—live out their Christian life as if none of this is ever going to happen, as if this is just religious fiction, as if this is kind of an ancient version of Star Wars entertainment.

Now you would expect unbelievers to read Revelation and laugh. They have no capacity to understand the Word of God. But this is not to be expected of the redeemed. In fact, in 2 Peter three Peter warned about the prejudice of those who mock and who are indifferent towards the return of Christ.

³ Revelation 22:19.

⁴ Ibid.

In verse three he says, “Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts.”⁵ And, of course, that describes the character of the type of people that will mock the coming judgments and the coming of Christ. They will be the type of people that are literally living according to their own desires. They are controlled by their passions and their emotions. They have no fear of God.

Peter went on to say what they are saying. “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”⁶ So they have this fallacious argument since the patriarchs of the Old Testament era, everything just keeps on going. Nothing ever changes ever since creation. So all this stuff about Jesus coming again, that is a big hoax. It is never going to happen. That is the fodder of fools, they would say.

Peter went on to say:

For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.⁷

Tragically, the lost believe that even though the Bible says that God created the heavens and the earth, they believe that that is not true, that that is a farce. And so they don't understand that even as Peter is telling us here, even though God spoke and the world and the heavens were created, even as he spoke and waters covered the earth in the great flood, even so God will some day speak again and his fiery judgment will begin.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 13 verse 40:

Just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”⁸

I told people about that before. Perhaps you have, too. And when they hear that they laugh. In fact, they laugh angrily. It evokes within them scoffing. That is ridiculous. How could anybody possibly believe that.

⁵ 1 Peter 3:3.

⁶ 1 Peter 3:4.

⁷ 1 Peter 3:5-7.

⁸ Matthew 13:40-42.

The apostle Paul addressed this in 2 Thessalonians one and verse six. He says:

It is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.⁹

I've heard it many times. In essence people say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. You Christians have been making this claim for centuries that Jesus is going to come again."

Peter addressed this in 2 Peter three verse eight. "But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."¹⁰

In other words, to the cynic the passage of time seems to be the final proof against the coming judgment and the coming of Christ. The assumption they have is since nothing has happened in a long time, it never will. But time, dear friends, from God's perspective is utterly inconsequential. He is eternal. His timetable is in no way tied to ours or our consideration. He is in no hurry. For him a day is no different than 1000 years.

Peter went on to say in verse nine, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you."¹¹ In other words, all who will come to Christ in faith, all of the elect, "...not wishing," he says, "for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."¹²

And finally he says in verse 10, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief."¹³ What a powerful metaphor. How does a thief come? He comes suddenly. He comes unexpectedly. And his consequences are disastrous. You see, one day God's patience is going to run out. The last of his chosen ones will be saved and he will delay no longer. The opportunity for repentance will be over and it will be time for judgment.

So Peter says, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."¹⁴

Well, the promise of our Lord's return has always been a certain and blessed hope of the saints down through redemptive history. In fact, the first century saints would greet each other saying, "Maranatha," which means "Lord, come quickly."

⁹ 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8.

¹⁰ 2 Peter 3:8.

¹¹ 2 Peter 3:9.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 2 Peter 3:10.

¹⁴ Ibid.

That would be a good greeting for each of us. “Maranatha, Lord, come quickly.” Indeed, all who love Christ long to see him return.

So let’s examine this amazing—and I would emphasize—very practical epilogue of our Lord’s revelation where he speaks very directly to us through his angel and through his own words. Beloved, please listen carefully. Please ask the Spirit even right now to help you to examine your heart because these things are so very important for each and every one of us. Grab hold of them with all of your heart.

First of all, he would have us sharpen our awareness, the idea of waking up, being vigilant about the Lord’s return. Notice verse six. “And he,” referring to the angel, “said to me, ‘These words are faithful and true.’”¹⁵ In other words, John, everything that you have seen and heard, all that you have written, all of the warnings of the seven sealed scroll and the trumpet and the bowl judgments, all of the promises, they are faithful, meaning they are sure, they are trustworthy. And they are true. They are genuine. They are real.

The word in the original language means that which is the opposite of a counterfeit, that which is the opposite of something that is imaginary. So, John, all of these things are true. This is the authoritative, inspired Word of God. And he goes on to say, “And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place.”¹⁶

In other words, the one who inspired his spokesmen of both testaments to write has now come and shown this to you. He sent his angel, it says, to show. The term literally means to give evidence to a person’s eyes, to give proof of something. I have shown it to you. God has shown it to you and to all of his bondservants, all of his slaves. This is a powerful affirmation, by the way, that John was indeed inspired by the living God to pen these words even as were all of the authors of holy writ.

I am constantly awed with the intricacies of Scripture, especially as you look at the prophetic Word. When we study all of the prophetic passages, we see an amazing tapestry of breathtaking truth. All of them are woven together with an intricacy that defies any explanation of human origin or of human design. No man would possibly come up with this, especially over the millennia of time that the Scriptures were written.

You see, only God could conceive of such a plan. Only God could piece together such a masterpiece. Only God could actually accomplish all that he has decreed, all that he has ordained in eternity past. Hundreds and hundreds of prophecies. Over 300 prophecies fulfilled precisely even at Jesus’ first coming which affirms the fact that the rest will also be fulfilled literally as promised.

¹⁵ Revelation 22:6.

¹⁶ Ibid.

So the angelic spokesman is here stating that all of the prophets declare the Word of God pertaining to the things now which must shortly take place. Shortly take place. It is the idea in the original language of that which must happen soon. It is the idea of both immanence as well as speed. The term “shortly” is **TACOS** (takh'-os) in the original language. Our word tachometer comes from that. Many of you guys know what a tachometer is. You have them in your vehicles. It is a device that measures the rotation speed of an engine or whatever it is measuring. And so the term means quickly, rapidly, speedily.

This does not necessarily mean that the Lord is going to come immediately in the future. Obviously he hasn't come in a long time; although the constellation of prophetic signs today point to the fact that that may be very true. But this is rather the idea that all of the events of Bible prophecy are ready to explode upon the scene in their final completion. These things are imminent. And when they happen, they are going to happen quickly. They are going to happen suddenly, rapidly. God speaks through his prophets, then, to tell us of these things which must shortly or quickly or rapidly occur.

Now think about it. Like an explosion, one day God is going to rise from his sovereign throne. His mercy and grace will be over and he is going to say, “Enough. The cup of wrath now overflows.” And with that the end will instantly be set into motion. There will be no time of repentance, only time for judgment.

It is interesting. Jesus spoke of this in Matthew 24 verse 27, describing his return. He says, “For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.”¹⁷ A reference here to the utterly shocking display of the glorious light of the divine presence, the shekinah, the glory of God, the effulgence of his glory that will suddenly blast upon the heavens and the earth when he returns.

Well, think about it. Is there anything more rapid and explosive than lightning? It comes instantly. It comes unexpectedly. It comes on the heels of deafening thunder. When it lightnings it never goes unnoticed. Everybody sees it. Everything stops. People are in awe of the glorious spectacle, even terrified. It may come from the east, but it is going to be visible all the way to the west. That is the idea.

It is no wonder and in Revelation one and verse seven we have a description of Christ's appearance. And it says, “BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him.”¹⁸

May I remind you of the psalmist's words in Psalm 97 beginning in verse one. He describes this scene.

The LORD reigns; let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad.
Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are

¹⁷ Matthew 24:27.

¹⁸ Revelation 1:7.

the foundation of His throne. Fire goes before Him, And burns up His adversaries round about. His lightnings lit up the world; The earth saw and trembled. The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples have seen His glory. Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, Who boast themselves of idols; Worship Him, all you gods.

Zion heard this and was glad, And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced Because of Thy judgments, O LORD. For Thou art the LORD Most High over all the earth; Thou art exalted far above all gods.¹⁹

Now with that in mind we come back to verse six. And when you read this you get a sense of what is going on with the angel. It is as though the angel is so passionate he is just out of breath, not literally, but figuratively speaking. It is as though he is out of breath and he is grabbing John by his tunic and he is pulling him up to him and he is shaking him and he says, ““These words are faithful and true’; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place.”²⁰

And then what is fascinating here in verse seven, the Lord himself speaks and says, “And behold, I am coming quickly.”²¹ “Quickly” is from the adjective **TACHYS** (takh-oos’) which means quickly, speedily, without delay. It has the same force as the verb that we looked at in verse six, the word for shortly. And here he is underscoring the immediacy, the urgency, the speed of what is going to happen when the Lord sets it into motion. And so he is communicating to us that this is a matter of eternal life and a matter of eternal death. It is as if he is saying, “Look with all your might. I am coming quickly. Be aware. Be prepared.”

Oh, child of God, can’t you see this? One day the Lord is going to come and he is going to snatch away his bridal Church. Then after the tribulation like a bolt of lightning he is going to descend in the glory of his fury and his wrath.

Based on all of this the question before us is: What would he have us do? And the answer is: Sharpen our awareness of his imminent return. It is going to happen. This is not some fairy tale. Wake up. The night is almost over. The storm clouds are gathering. Be vigilant, dear Christian. Keep looking up.

And not only would he have us sharpen our awareness, but secondly, safeguard his Word. And here the Lord continues with another short burst of truth for us to grasp in verse seven. He says, “Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”²²

¹⁹ Psalm 97:1-9.

²⁰ Revelation 22:6.

²¹ Revelation 22:7.

²² Ibid.

Heed is a participle form of the verb **TEREO** (tay-reh'-o) and it means to safeguard. It means to hold something fast, to keep something that is precious, to tend to something very carefully. And here this beatitude underscores the practical purpose of this book which, I would add, disallows for a figurative, allegorical interpretation, that not only disregards the normal understanding of Scripture, but also imposes upon the text a vast array of interpretations governed only by the mind of man, not by the mind of God.

And so he says here, “Blessed is he who heeds [or holds or keeps fast] the words of the prophecy of this book.”²³ I would ask you this morning: Do you heed the words of this prophecy? Do you hold it fast? Do you attend to it carefully?

To be sure, all of Scripture is to be safeguarded. The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Timothy six verse 20, “Guard what has been entrusted to you.”²⁴ And he goes on to say, “Retrain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” And then he adds, “Guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us the treasure which has been entrusted to you.”

But I would also add the concept of heed here carries with it the idea of safeguarding or holding fast the truths of this prophesy in your heart and in your mind, the idea of living it out. In other words, these truths are to be guarded in such a way that they govern how we live our life. That is the idea. We need to live in light of his coming. We need to prioritize our lives around all that we have learned.

Now many will say, “But, pastor, there are so few commands here in the book. So just what is it that we are supposed to heed?”

Well, the answer is: Our lives must be shaped by the theme of the book. And what is the theme? The theme of the book is to reveal the holiness of God and the glory of his Son who will soon return as King of kings and Lord of lords. And so in light of that, we should be increasingly amazed by his grace. We should be devoted to his glory. We should be disciplined in godliness. We should be exhorted in holiness. We should be deepened in our worship. We should be separated from the world’s system. We should be confident in the sovereignty of God. We should be committed to being ever more conformed into the image of Christ. We should be laying up our treasures in heaven not on earth. We should warn sinners of the wrath to come. We should live with an intense awareness that Jesus could come at any moment. These great truths should be the center of gravity around which our lives orbit. And when they do Jesus makes a special promise. He says, “Blessed, “which literally means happy, blissful, “is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”²⁵

Recently I was talking with a lady who complained, “Pastor, I am just so sad. I just find myself just being kind of down all the time. My life is so boring.” She went on to lament

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ 1 Timothy 6:20.

²⁵ Revelation 22:7.

how she had very few friends, real friends. Then she said, “Basically, I am miserable.” And she was asking me, “What should I do?”

And as tenderly as I knew how I asked her if she wanted me to tell her the truth? And, of course, she did. And I said, “My dear, the reason why you are experiencing these things is because you are filled with pride and selfishness and rebellion.”

Well, that was shocking to her. And over a period of time I was able to carefully lay before her the Beatitudes the Lord describes, the blessings when we truly walk with him. And I even took her to this text. Unfortunately, she didn’t take it very well. Frankly she, like many people, would rather be sad than obedient.

But what we have here is a promise that we will be blessed. We will be happy. We will be blissful if we heed the words of the prophecy of this book, if we live in light of his return, if we are obedient to Scripture. You know, I have never in my life, never seen a Christian who is obedient to these truths who describes themselves as being chronically sad and overwhelmed and lonely and just miserable in life. The two don’t go together.

In light of his return, how should we live? In 2 Peter three verses 11 and 12 and 14 Peter describes these judgment. “Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be?”²⁶ And then he describes it. “In holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.”²⁷ And he went on to say, “Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.”²⁸

Beloved, this should be the dominant theme of your prayers. To be able to say, “Lord, do whatever it takes to make me holy in my conduct, to make me godly. Ignite within me a passion to be constantly looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God. Cause my eyes to literally strain to look for your return. Help me to long for your return. Help me to be,” as Peter says here, “diligent, to be found in you in peace spotless and blameless, because, Lord, I know that when these things are reality in my life, when by your grace you cause me to live these out, I know that what you say is true. You have promised that you are going to bless me. I am going to be happy. I am going to be filled with joy regardless of my circumstances.”

So here we see that we are to sharpen our awareness and safeguard his Word. But, thirdly, we are to strengthen our worship. Notice in verse eight. “ And I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things.”²⁹ By the way, that is how John received the revelation, through his ears, through his eyes.

And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

²⁶ 2 Peter 3:11.

²⁷ 2 Peter 3:12.

²⁸ 2 Peter 3:14.

²⁹ Revelation 22:8.

And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God."³⁰

Now we have to smile here. Put yourself in John's place. Come on. You have seen all of these things. It is absolutely inconceivably overwhelming, especially given the fact that you have been languishing on this isle of Patmos, this Roman penal colony and you are somewhere up in your 90s and all of the sudden you see what awaits you. He is absolutely overwhelmed by what he has heard, what he has seen. And so it is as if his knees begin to buckle under the weight of all of the glory. You see, what he has experienced evokes something within him, something that should happen to all of us. He immediately fell on his face in instant worship.

You see, he is awestruck. He falls prostrate on his face. He is lost in the wonder of it all. And, of course, not thinking, he inadvertently directs his worship to the wrong object, and we know that angels are never to be worshipped. We are told in Hebrews 1:14 that they are ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation. They are not to be worshipped. But John's reaction here is precisely the response that the Lord intends. He intends for this book to strengthen or intensify our worship, to deepen our worship. You show me a man who can read these truths and not be moved to a whole new depth of worship and I will show you a man who does not love Christ. It is as simple as that. Beloved, an understanding of the book of Revelation should be both life changing and life dominating. You should never be the same because of this.

Here, the aged and beleaguered apostle actually witnesses the glory that awaits all of the saints and the horrors of hell that awaits the lost. And he is so caught up in it all that he is just consumed with worship. Here the words of Peter come alive in 1 Peter 1:8 where he said, "Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you [what?] greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."³¹ That is what John was experiencing.

Now I ask you. Does this describe you and your life? Or are you one of these sour and sullen saints, kind of chronically angry, sad, miserable. If so, my friend, you have no real secret devotion to God if truly you know him. And certainly you have no depth of worship, but rather your worship is as shallow as water on a plate.

But oh the joy that is ours because of Christ, because of all that he has promised. Think about it. We cannot even conceive of the blessings that he gives us in this life, much less fathom those that await us in heaven. Like the beloved apostle here struggling to survive on this island. All of this should evoke within us the same kind of veneration.

³⁰ Revelation 22:8-9.

³¹ 1 Peter 1:8.

We were studying the other night with our S I T guys Thomas Watson's great work on the Beatitudes with the great Puritan theologian. Here is what he said back in the 1600s, quote, "The saints may said in this light to be blessed because all things tend to make them blessed. All thins work together for good to them that love God." He went on to add, "Prosperity does them good. Adversity does them good. Nay, sin turns to their good. Every trip makes them more watchful. Their maladies are their medicines. Are not they happy persons that have every wind blowing them to the right port?" end quote.

How true? How true? And to think that ultimately the port that all of the winds of life are blowing us to is heaven. Therefore, our ultimate priority should be worship.

What do you mean?

Oh, there are so many things. But fundamentally it means to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. Your whole life should orbit around giving him glory. And also loving your neighbor as yourself. It means having a heart filled with thanksgiving. It means being consumed by his grace. It means proclaiming the gospel of Christ to the nations. It means exalting his name wherever you are. It means obeying his Word. It means trusting him in every area of your life. It means being separate from the world. It means living your life as though Christ were walking right alongside you because, in fact, he is. It means living your life in light of the reality that at any moment he could come. That is worship. And when you do that you will be blessed because you are heeding the words of the prophecy of this book.

Not only will you be blessed, but you will fall down and worship. It won't be something that you kind of have to muster up the will power to do. It will be automatic. You see, when saints truly understand what God is doing, they don't have to have somebody whip them up into some kind of frenzy to get them to worship. They can't "hep it" as we would say here in Tennessee.

So the Lord would have us sharpen our awareness, safeguard his Word, strengthen our worship and, number four, sound the warning. Verse 10. "And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near."³²

"Seal up" is an interesting term. It is **SFRAGIZO** (sfrag-id'-zo) in the original language and it means to conceal or to keep secret or hide. And he is saying here this book is not to be hidden. This book is not to be some secret thing that is sealed up.

Why? Because the time is near. It is imminent. It is the next thing that is going to happen. It is on the horizon. And when it happens it will explode upon the scene. Jesus is coming. Judgment is coming. So order your life around its truths and sound the alarm to those who are perishing.

³² Revelation 22:10.

You see, Christians are to not only know what this book says, but also to tell others what it says. Friends, to do otherwise would be disobedient. You say, “Well, I am just confused about a lot of it.” Then go back and listen to these expositions again. I could point you to other people who have done the same. You can read them in the transcripts. If you still don’t understand, that’s fine. Come and talk to me. But know what the Word of God says.

It is so tragic. So many Christians are clueless about the Word of God, especially the book of Revelation. They have never been taught. And therefore they have been deprived of the exhilarating truths that caused the apostle John to fall on his face and worship.

If you were in a church where the book of Revelation is not taught or if it is taught it is spiritualized and allegorized to the point where its truths are eviscerated and you don’t have a clue nor does anybody else what it means, I would encourage you to very kindly, prayerfully and lovingly confront your pastor and the elders and ask them to explain this text. It says here that we are not to seal up the words of the prophecy of this book for the time is near. The apostle Paul said in Acts 20:27 that, “I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.”³³ How could anyone possibly not want to know how the story ends? Have you ever read some great book and you get to the last chapter and you say, “You know, I just don’t really want to finish this”?

And can I digress for a moment because I know I have a number of pastors that listen to these expositions? May I speak to you for a moment?

Very often my dear brothers will tell me, “Dave, it is just too confusing. It is just too confusing. So I just kind of stay away from it.” If that is so, then why would God begin the book and end the book with a promise that those who hear and read and heed will be blessed? Dear brothers, you are depriving your people of these great truths.

Others will say to me, “It is just too controversial.” And my response is, “So what? Of course it is. Truth is always controversial. In fact, it is offensive.” Are you playing for the fans or for the coach? That is the question. Did not Paul tell us that all Scripture is inspired by God and it is profitable for teaching and reproof and correction and training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work? Did he not say that we are to preach the Word in season and out of season? The idea being that we are to preach it when it is popular, when it is not, knowing that most of the time it will not be popular. Of course it is controversial. But I would say to any dear pastor we are not called to be popular. We are called to be faithful. And you will only be one or the other and you must choose which one you will be.

Others will say—and I have heard this many times, “Dave, if I preach this stuff, I will lose my church.” And my response is, “Dear friend, you don’t have a church. You have a crowd. And your fear of man is perpetuating the very thing you abhor.” You know, it is

³³ Acts 20:27.

not your church to begin with. It is God's church. Jesus is the Lord of the Church. And has God not promised to build his Church?

So my response is, "Trust God with what happens when you preach the truth. Certainly preach it kindly, but forthrightly. Preach it winsomely and yet tenderly and patiently. But whatever you do, preach it." Let God handle the outcome. Wouldn't it be wonderful if he would bring you a new church? You know, I would rather be faithful in preaching to one than popular preaching to 1000. So may I encourage you pastors.

As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 16:13, he said, "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."³⁴ That is the admonition. I love that phrase. "Act like men."³⁵ It literally means in the original language "man up." Where I come from we would say, "Cowboy up." Yeah, it is tough. Quit whining. Get with the program. Cowboy up.

But I might add, dear friends, that this applies to all believers. We are not to seal this book up. You are not supposed to say, "Boy, that was an interesting study and then that is the end of it." You are to preach it. You are to proclaim it. Proclaim these truths to your family, to your friends. Write them letters. Tell them, "Wow, God spoke to me in this passage in Revelation. I am so excited. Here is what is going to happen. Jesus is coming soon. I hope you are ready." Point them to the CDs and the MP3s. Point them to books that great men have written. Sound the warning.

Why? Because Jesus is coming. That is what the Lord would have us do. And remember that God's Word will never return back to him without having accomplished all that it was intended to accomplish. Whenever you preach the Word, whether it is from a pulpit or whether you have written it in a card, it will accomplish what God has intended. It will either soften or harden the heart, one or the other. That is up to God. Your responsibility is to proclaim it.

Remember, that the same sun that melts that wax, hardens the clay. Those who are hostile or indifferent are going to hear and they are going to scoff. And with every snicker and every guffaw, their heart will become increasingly hardened. But to those who are being saved, their heart will melt. They will hear the truth and respond to it in humble conviction.

In fact, that is the meaning of the next verse, verse 11. "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy, still be filthy."³⁶ By the way, the adverb there "still," $\epsilon\tau\iota$ (et'-ee) in Greek, means further or yet more. So let the one who does wrong even further or yet more do wrong. And let the one who is filthy yet more be filthy. In other words, don't seal up the prophecy here. Sound the warning. The wicked will be increasingly fixed in their unbelief and in their wickedness. And implied here is a big so what. Let me handle that.

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 16:13.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Revelation 22:11.

But also notice the contrast. “And let the one who is righteous, still [or further] practice righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.”³⁷ The point is simply this, dear friends. The time is short. So let people continue in the way that they have chosen. Don’t be distracted by their response. Just keep preaching the gospel and the wicked will become more wicked and the righteous will become more righteous. That is God’s promise.

But there is one final thing that the Lord would have us do and that is, number five, step up our service. Notice verse 12. “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”³⁸ Again, Jesus is coming quickly. His return is imminent. Dear Christian, get your spiritual house in order. The master is coming. We don’t know when. If you knew for sure that next Sunday at 12:00 o’clock the Lord was coming what would you do? Your week would look radically different, wouldn’t it? That is the idea. Mark 13:33 we read, “Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time is.”³⁹

But, friends, we know that when he comes his reward will be with him for us and our reward will be greater opportunities to serve him in glory based on our faithfulness in this life. And so may I encourage you in closing this morning anything that distracts you from worshipping and serving God must be jettisoned. Ask yourself: Where am I serving the Lord? And I would underscore this. Be brutally honest because the Lord is. Where can the Lord see, yes, here is where you are serving. Here is where you are being used for my glory.

Don’t miss any opportunity to serve him. Don’t miss any opportunity to learn of him, because everything else in life, dear friends, is frankly eternally inconsequential. Much of what we do in life is a waste of time, isn’t it? Much of what we do is like a man collecting pancakes, how utterly absurd. So I would encourage you. Step up your service. Where are you being affirmed in the body of Christ? Wherever that is, roll up your sleeves and work harder for the Lord. Don’t forfeit your reward. John spoke of this in 2 John eight. “Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.”⁴⁰

Dear Christian, many times I will hear people ask, “Oh, if I could only know God’s will for my life.”

Well, here are five things right here. Here are five things right here. Sharpen your awareness. Safeguard his Word. Strengthen your worship. Sound the warning. Step up your service. Why? Because Jesus is coming. He is coming quickly and his reward is with him to render to every man according to what he has done.

Let’s pray together.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Revelation 22:12.

³⁹ Mark 13:33.

⁴⁰ 2 John 8.

Father, thank you for these exhilarating truths. May they become a part of our life. May they change us forever beginning today. And for those who are lost, oh God, would that you would convict them of their sin. Cause them to fall on their face in repentance and faith believing in the risen Christ who is coming again for it is in Jesus' name that I pray. Amen.

Transcript Explanation: Each transcript is a rough approximation of the message preached and may occasionally misstate certain portions of the sermon and even misspell certain words. It should in no way be considered an edited document ready for print. Moreover, as in any transcription of the spoken word, the full intention and passion of the speaker cannot be fully captured and will in no way reflect the same style of a written document.

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