

The Glorious Invitation – Part 2

Revelation 22:18-21

Will you join me once again by taking your Bibles and turning to Revelation chapter 22?

After over a year and a half this is now the final exposition of this amazing book. We come to the epilogue of the book of Revelation and, once again, we will focus on the final verses in Revelation chapter 22 beginning with verse 13 through the end. Let me read this portion of Scripture to you to refresh your mind of some of which we studied last week and part one of what I entitled “The Glorious Invitation” so that we can better understand what the Lord has for us in the final part.

Revelation 22 beginning with verse 13. The Lord Jesus says:

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star. And 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 wishes take the water of life without cost. I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.¹

It is the settled longing of every saint to behold the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and enter into the fullness of his glory and his presence for eternity. And isn't it good news to know that one day this battle of life will be over? This battle against sin and Satan and death will come to an end. All of the enemies of God will one day be vanquished. All of the mockers of the Word of God will be judged and finally the savage siege against the gospel will be over.

Every day of our lives we experience our Lord being mocked and ridiculed and his Word blasphemed. We see the gospel of grace trampled under foot by fools. Then we come together like this on a Sunday morning to express the very opposite of the world's sentiments, to exalt the name of Christ and bow before his Word. But as soon as we walk out these doors we will once again enter into the fray.

¹ Revelation 22:13-21.

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But mark it, dear friends, a day of wrath and a day of vengeance is coming. And with it will come the promised King and his kingdom which will never end. Then all of the blasphemies will cease. Don't you long for that day?

This has been the theme of the Lord's revelation, the apocalypse before us, the fitting conclusion of the entirety of his revelation that we find in the Word of God the Bible. And here in the apocalypse the Lord reminds us more of who he is, that he is the crucified, yet the risen Son of God. And he is depicted ministering to the Church of which he is head. He describes himself as the faithful witness, the first born of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth, the alpha and the omega, the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty, a son of man, the one who was dead that now is alive forever.

Repeatedly as I move around through this world I hear people use the Lord's name in vain and whenever I do I have compassion and pity on those people because they do not understand who he really is. This is who he really is. He describes himself as the Son of God in the book of Revelation, the one who is holy and true, the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb in heaven with authority to open the title deed to the earth, the Lamb on the throne, the Messiah who will reign forever. He is described as the Word of God, the majestic King of kings and Lord of lords who will return as he has promised in his glorious splendor and he will conquer all who oppose him. And finally he is described as we studied last week, the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star. And he is the one that says, "Yes, I am coming quickly."

Can you imagine if that were not so? Imagine for a moment that Christ was not going to return. Imagine for a moment that the Church had no hope. Imagine for a moment that we were without supplication when we cry, "Lord, come quickly, maranatha." If the world is this wicked today, what would it be like in 1000 years? The whole creation the Bible tells us groans for his return. Indeed, this has been the lamentation of all of the redeemed down through millennia. What if the humiliation of the cross had to forever bow to the exalted Satan in this world? What if the present moral degradation and the political disintegration of the world were allowed to continue unabated? Can you imagine that? What if there were no covenantal promises to Israel and the masterpiece of divine mercy had no canvas? What if the dead in Christ had no hope of the redemption of their body? What if they had no hope of being raised imperishable? What if the redeemed had no hope of being changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye? What if there was no hope that death would one day be swallowed up by victory and lose its sting?

I cannot bear the thought of that. And thankfully I don't have to, nor do you, because a God who cannot lie has promised otherwise and proven his faithfulness over and over.

Once again there are over 300 prophecies that were fulfilled precisely regarding the Lord's first advent. Certainly all of the rest will be fulfilled in like manner.

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In Acts chapter one when Jesus ascended back into glory two angels in the form of men, you will recall, appeared to the awestruck disciples who were watching him rise up. And they said to him, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”²

In other words, Jesus’ second coming will, therefore, be both personal, physical and it will be—I might add—public to everyone, visible to all. Jesus has promised his return in Matthew 24 beginning at verse 29. He said this.

But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.³

Now, of course, the world scoffs at this and yet others twist it and distort it to make it into something that somehow fits their scheme of theology. Satan is notorious for doing this. You may be surprised to learn that the Second Coming of Christ is something that Muslims also believe in. Although it is not explicitly mentioned in the Koran, there is a Hadith (which is a tradition) that gives a detailed series of events connected with the Second Coming. It speaks of Jesus going to Jerusalem with a lance in his hand with which he will kill the antichrist. Then he will kill the pigs, break the cross, demolish oratories and churches and heal Christians, except those who believe in him, that is in the Muslim sense as a prophet, not as the Son of God. And then, according to them, he will tarry on the earth for as long as God wills, perhaps about 40 years. Then he will die and the Muslims will pray over him and bury him.

Now, of course, all of that is a lie along with all of Islam. The Word of God says differently. The Lord Jesus says differently. The prophet Daniel tells us in Daniel seven in his vision of the Messiah’s return, he describes it this way.

“And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man.”⁴

You will recall that Son of Man was the title that Jesus liked to use of himself in order to depict his messiahship.

One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion,

² Acts 1:11.

³ Matthew 24:29.

⁴ Daniel 7:13.

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Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.⁵

Thus saith the Lord. God revealed the same magnificent event to his prophet Zechariah. In chapter 12 and verse eight we read, “In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”⁶

In verse nine it goes on to say, “And it will come about in that day that I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”⁷ And then in chapter 14 beginning in verse three he says:

Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley.⁸

And, again, in chapter 12 and verse 10 he says, “And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.”⁹

Indeed he predicts that unbelieving Israel, his covenant people, will some day, some remnant of them will some day be saved. Yes, Jesus the eternal Son of God is going to return in unrivaled majesty as the sovereign ruler over his creation. And all that are in the world that are alive on that day will witness this terrifying event.

Jesus begins his revelation to man by stating in chapter one and verse seven, “BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.”¹⁰

And then in the middle of the apocalypse, chapter 14 verse 14, John is an eyewitness to the great harvesting of the earth when the Lord comes in judgment. And he says, “And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head, and a sharp sickle in His hand.”¹¹

⁵ Daniel 7:13-14.

⁶ Zechariah 12:8.

⁷ Zechariah 12:9.

⁸ Zechariah 14:3.

⁹ Zechariah 12:10.

¹⁰ Revelation 1:7.

¹¹ Revelation 14:14.

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And then at the end of the apocalypse in chapter 19 and verse 11 John says:

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems.¹²

And then in verse 16 it says, “And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’”¹³

And, lastly, at the very end of his revelation here in chapter 22 and verse 12 he says, “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”¹⁴

And then, finally, he closes in verse 20 and says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.”¹⁵

Now in the epilogue of the book of Revelation, in verses 13 through 21 the Lord reveals four final truths that summarize the entire Bible. He reveals, number one, a series of calls; secondly, a striking contrast; third, a sober caution; and, finally, a suitable conclusion. Last week we examined the series of calls. First, the Holy Spirit and the Church call for Christ to come in verse 17. “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’”¹⁶ And, indeed, we do. We say, “Lord, come quickly.”

But also, secondly, the Lord calls sinners to come to him in repentant faith. He says, “And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.”¹⁷ And here we see the transcendent, glorious God of the universe calling sinners to repentance, calling them to come. Indeed, he is the one who is the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star. There is no more glorious being in the universe to make such an invitation.

So now we come, secondly, to a striking contrast in this epilogue. Here we see, dear friends, the contrast between those who are blessed versus those who are cursed. Notice in verse 14. “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.”¹⁸ Here Jesus pronounces the seventh and last beatitude of the book, the last blessing in the book.

¹² Revelation 19:11-12.

¹³ Revelation 19:16.

¹⁴ Revelation 22:12.

¹⁵ Revelation 22:20.

¹⁶ Revelation 22:17.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Revelation 22:14.

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In chapter one verse three he says, “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”¹⁹

In chapter 14 verse 13 he says, “‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.’”²⁰

In chapter 16 and verse 15 he says, “Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.”²¹ And in chapter 19 verse nine he says, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”²²

In chapter 20 and verse six he says, “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.”²³ And in chapter 22 verse seven he says, “Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”²⁴ And now, finally, in verse 14 he says, “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.”²⁵

Now, the question would arise: What does it really mean to be blessed? And, to put it simply, it means to experience a supernatural joy and a confident hope regardless of life’s circumstances. It is a Holy Spirit induced happiness on earth as well as a coming ecstasy in heaven. Nothing on earth can bring such satisfaction.

You see, the desires of the soul are eternal and the things of the earth are temporal so there can be no satisfaction from anything here on earth. If you don’t believe me, the next time you have a wounded or some troubled spirit, try applying some worldly remedy to your troubles and see how effective it is.

The great Puritan Thomas Watson back in the 1600s said this, quote, “True blessedness must have eternity stamped on it. Blessedness is a fixed thing. It admits of no change or alteration. God says of every child of his, ‘I have blessed him and he shall be blessed.’ As the sunshine of blessedness is without clouds, so it never sets. ‘I give unto them eternal life,’ quoting John 10:28, the words of Jesus.” He goes on and he says, “‘And so shall we ever be with the Lord,’ 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Eternity,” Watson says, “is the highest link of blessedness. Thus, we have seen that this diamond of blessedness is only to be found in the Rock of Ages. ‘Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord,’” end quote.

¹⁹ Revelation 1:3.

²⁰ Revelation 14:13.

²¹ Revelation 16:15.

²² Revelation 19:9.

²³ Revelation 20:6.

²⁴ Revelation 22:7.

²⁵ Revelation 22:14.

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Dear friend, please hear me. True blessing begins when a soul is united to God in saving faith. Peter reminds us of this. He says that it is his divine power that has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence. He goes on to say that true blessedness occurs when we are made partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world, 1 Peter one.

And this is precisely what the Lord tells us here in verse 14. He says “Blessed are those who wash their robes.”²⁶ Now this is a curious statement. What does this mean to wash your robes? Well, the answer can be found all through Scripture because this is a dominant theme that we find in Scripture, the theme of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ whereby a sacrifice is made to remove guilt from the guilty party and thereby be reconciled to God, to be restored into fellowship with him. So this is the picture of the forgiveness of sins, to have your robes washed.

We read in Revelation seven and verse 14 of the great multitude of saints that are pictured in heaven glorifying God and they are described as ones who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. You see, all men have sinned. All of us have defiled our spiritual garments you might say. And the only thing that can remove the vile stain of sin is the blood of Christ. And Jesus says that he will make us white as snow.

I am reminded of King David and his great sin. And you will recall that he cried out to God for forgiveness of sin and he said in Psalm 51 verse one, “According to Thy lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.”²⁷ In verse seven he says, “Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”²⁸

Now, of course, David knew nothing of the coming Savior, of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ that would pay the penalty for his sin and our sin on the cross of Calvary. But it was on the basis of that future atonement that God saved him and all of the Old Testament saints and cleansed them and cleanses all of us from our sin. You see, all sinners are saved by grace through faith. The Lord spoke of this very truth in Isaiah one and verse 18 when he said, “Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.”²⁹

My friend, look closely at this invitation. Once again, do you realize that it is the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star that makes this invitation? This is the transcendent

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Psalm 51:1.

²⁸ Psalm 51:7.

²⁹ Isaiah 1:18.

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Creator and sustainer and consummator of all things that offers sinners forgiveness on the basis of his own blood.

It is inconceivable. It is glorious beyond words. There can be no greater love than this nor can there be a greater price for our redemption. In fact, we understand this more when we examine the great doxology of Peter's heart in 1 Peter one when he gives voice to this ineffable wonder of the Lord's atoning work.

He says in verse three, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."³⁰ And then in verse 18 he says this. "You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."³¹

Now I ask you, have you been washed by the blood of the Lamb? Or will you choose to remain dressed in the sin stained robes of your corruption? How thankful we can be that the bridal Church has been made ready for her groom to be presented at the marriage supper of the Lamb as we read in Revelation 19 verse seven. In verse eight of that text we read, "And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean."³² What an amazing picture.

I want you to notice the great privileges associated with those who are blessed, those who have been washed by the blood of Christ, verse 14. Again, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city."³³ Now, you will recall the tree of life is described in chapter 22 verse two and it is emblematic of the endless cycle of provision and the infinite selections of things that the Lord will have for us to eat. It pictures an infinite array of unimaginable pleasures that will cause us all to remain in a perpetual state of joy. And all of this will exist, of course, in the holy city, the new Jerusalem.

But keep in mind, only the blessed whose sins have been forgiven will be able to enter by the gate into the city. Only the redeemed will have the right to the tree of life. This, I might add, refutes the heresy that is gaining more traction even today than it has in many years known as universalism. It is a heresy that denies the biblical doctrine of eternal punishment and affirms the idea that somehow all souls eventually are going to be saved. This has been popularized lately by the paperback novel *The Shack* that spent more than 100 weeks on the best seller lists in both the Christian as well as the secular worlds, really a testimony of the utter lack of discernment that is in the Church today.

Dear friends, universalism is a lie that is as old as Christianity. It dates all the way back.

³⁰ 1 Peter 1:3.

³¹ 1 Peter 1:18-19.

³² Revelation 19:8.

³³ Revelation 22:14.

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We read it back in the Gnostic heresies, the Gnostic teachers. Even one of the early Church fathers, Origen, believed that even the devil would eventually be saved. But here the Lord makes it clear that not everyone goes to heaven, only those whose sins have been forgiven by the blood of Christ.

And whenever I talk about this in many circles someone will inevitably say, “Do you mean to tell me that only people who believe in Jesus Christ are going to heaven? Are you saying that all of those people who have other faiths are going to be excluded?”

That is precisely what I am telling you because that is precisely what the Word of God teaches. Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”³⁴

And in Acts 4:12 we read, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”³⁵ And here in the apocalypse in chapter two verse seven we read, “To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.”³⁶ And who are those who overcome? 1 John five and verse four says, “And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”³⁷ In other words, those who have placed their faith in the saving, atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse five it says, “And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”³⁸ Said real simply, if you do not believe the gospel of Christ, you will never enter into paradise. Don’t be deceived, my friends, Only those who believe in him for the forgiveness of sins will have eternal life. Only those whose names have been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain, Revelation 13 and verse eight.

Now notice the striking contrast between the blessed verses the cursed. In verse 15 we have those who are cursed. It says, “outside.” Now let’s stop there. This is referring to outside the gates of the holy city and, frankly, in the lake of fire, those who are in hell, not in heaven. The Lord has made it abundantly clear, yet again in chapter 21 verse 27.

He says, “Nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”³⁹ Now notice the sampling of sins that is given to describe the character of those who remain unforgiven, those who are defiled, those who are denied access into the city and remain outside. It says, “Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the

³⁴ John 14:6.

³⁵ Acts 4:12.

³⁶ Revelation 2:7.

³⁷ 1 John 5:4.

³⁸ 1 John 5:5.

³⁹ Revelation 21:27.

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murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.”⁴⁰ These are the ones who have never had their robes washed by the blood of Christ. And, frankly, it is a description that would include all of us prior to being washed by his forgiving work. And I might add that this is merely a representative sampling of sins. It is not to be some exhaustive list. In fact, we see other representative samples of sin in similar lists in other passages of Scripture.

For example, 1 Corinthians six and verse nine we read:

Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you.⁴¹

And then he goes on to say something very importantly. “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.”⁴² Therefore, dear friends, on the basis of the righteousness of Christ we are allowed entrance into the presence of God.

Now let’s look closely at this list in verse 15. He begins with the term dogs. This is very curious. You must understand that in the orient in the ancient days and, frankly, in many places to this day, dogs are nothing more than loathsome scavengers that thrive on garbage. They were not some domesticated little pet like your little Twinkles, ok? They were wild dogs know as curs. In fact, when I was thinking of this text, immediately a memory popped in my mind. It was a cold kind of crisp New Year’s Day morning and I was having breakfast with my grandparents on the farm in Kentucky and all of the sudden my grandfather jumped up and he went and he looked out the window and then he hollered at me and he said, “Son, grab your gun. There’s a bunch of old cur dogs after the cows.” And I grabbed my gun and I went after cur dogs. And that is what they were often called, old curs.

So when you think about dogs you begin to understand why they would be used metaphorically to describe a despicable kind of person. When you think of a dog you must acknowledge that they have absolutely no shame. They will defecate, urinate and copulate anywhere and everywhere. They are totally driven by their animal instincts. I guess I could put this way. They are utterly bereft of any moral restraint or any semblance of dignity. That is a dog. So in Scripture we see them being used as a metaphor of those who are morally impure, who sin with impunity.

I might add that the first place we find this in Scripture is in Deuteronomy chapter 23 and verse 18 to describe homosexual prostitutes. That they are listed first in this list indicates

⁴⁰ Revelation 22:15.

⁴¹ 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

⁴² 1 Corinthians 6:12.

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that they are the most depraved of the depraved. They are impudently impure, addicted to unnatural sins. In fact, the dogs replace the, quote, abominable in the list that is found in chapter 21 and verse eight. We also read in Scripture the Gentile unbelievers as well as Judaizers were called dogs in Scripture. So it is a very vile epithet. None of these will be allowed access into the holy city unless they repent and have their robes washed by the blood of Christ.

Also excluded are the sorcerers. It comes from the Greek word **PHARMAKOS** (far-mak-os'). We get our word pharmacy from that. And it pertains to magical arts. In fact, in the ancient days magic was often associated with drugs which were used to alter the mind and induce a euphoria that would elevate people into what they believed would be the presence of whatever deity they worshipped and frankly all it did, as it does to this day, is bring people into the presence of demons. Those people will be excluded.

It also says and immoral persons, immoral **PORNOS** (por'-nos). We get pornography from that. This is translated fornicators or the old King James called it whoremongers. It is used to describe not only male prostitutes, but also anyone who indulges in unlawful sexual intercourse which frankly describes the majority of the world. I don't need to give you examples of that. And I might add that if this is the pattern of your life, you will not enter the gates of the new Jerusalem, but you will remain outside because you have never been washed by the blood.

It will also exclude murderers. It is very obvious what that is, those who kill innocent people. This would include everything from abortionists to serial killers as well as, he says, idolaters. An idolater is anyone that worships a false god. But I might also add an idol is anything that we desire more than God. There is the rest of the world, right?

It also says, "And everyone who loves and practices lying."⁴³ In other words, those who enjoy being perverse and deceitful, those whose character is false. This would include everyone from a con artist to old ladies that gossip, everything from religious charlatans to braggarts down at the barbershop, from politicians to popes, everyone who practices lying and who loves to do so. Everyone who habitually clings to sin, whatever it is and, therefore, making their sin the defining mark of their character. That is why many times sins become characterological we call it. If a man's sin is drinking eventually we call him a drunkard and so forth.

So here the Lord gives a striking contrast between the blessed and the cursed, those who will enter the holy city and those who will be denied in the main outside unless they respond to the Lord's invitation. "Let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."⁴⁴ So here we have seen a series of calls and a striking contrast, but thirdly I want you to notice a sobering caution.

⁴³ Revelation 22:15.

⁴⁴ Revelation 22:17.

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Verse 18.

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.⁴⁵

Now, this authoritative warning that comes from the Lord Jesus is rooted in Deuteronomy chapter four and verse two where we read, “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it.”⁴⁶

Let me digress for a moment. This is very fascinating. In Deuteronomy, which is the last book of the Pentateuch and the Pentateuch as a whole is really the first book of the Revelation of the Bible that was given to Moses from God. God is clearly saying, if I could put it in my vernacular, “Don’t tinker with the text. Don’t add to it. Don’t take anything from it.” In fact, later on in Deuteronomy chapter 12 and verse 32 he says, “Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.”⁴⁷ So you have that in the Pentateuch.

Later on in the wisdom literature you see the same emphasis. In Proverbs chapter 30 and verse five we read, “Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.”⁴⁸ We see the same emphasis in the division of the prophets. We find the warning in Jeremiah 26 and verse two where it says, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Stand in the court of the LORD’S house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, who have come to worship in the LORD’S house, all the words that I have commanded you to speak to them. Do not omit a word!’”⁴⁹ And then, finally, at the close of the New Testament revelation and ultimately the last book of the entire canon of holy Scripture Jesus says here in verses 18 and 19 of chapter 22, in essence, “Don’t add and don’t detract to the words of the book of the prophecy.”

Now in the context of that day, if we understand it properly we would realize that here the Lord is warning the seven churches and, frankly, every church since that day, that Jesus’ prophecy is the only one. This supersedes all others including the prophetess Jezebel, you will recall, in the Church of Thyatira in chapter two and verse 20, including the heresies of the Nicolaitans that the people in Ephesus had rejected as we read in chapter two verse six. I might add that even though it doesn’t tell us this, I am sure when this letter, when this book was first read to those churches, remember somebody went around and read it to all of them, I am sure that whomever this woman was and the Nicolaitans and all these people, I am sure they got up and stormed out of there.

⁴⁵ Revelation 22:18-19.

⁴⁶ Deuteronomy 4:2.

⁴⁷ Deuteronomy 12:32.

⁴⁸ Proverbs 30:5.

⁴⁹ Jeremiah 26:2.

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And so the Lord made it clear. Don't believe them. Believe my apostle. Believe what I have said right here. You see, Jesus was concerned. The Church was filled then as it is today with those who falsely profess to have a gift of prophecy or those who allegedly exercise the gift of distinguishing of spirits as we read in 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14. So Jesus gives this stern, very authoritative warning to prevent them or anyone else from deliberately falsifying or distorting the teaching of the book of Revelation and, frankly, by extension, the entirety of Scripture.

I am convinced that with the completion of the last book of the New Testament canon, here the book of Revelation, the gift of prophecy became both unnecessary as well as obsolete. Robert Thomas states, and I quote, "Since Revelation purports to cover the entire period from the time John the apostle wrote it until the eternal state, any alleged prophecy subsequent to that is counterfeit," end quote.

So very simple. The Lord says, "Don't tamper with the text. Don't add to it. Don't come up with other stuff." Notice this applies to, as the text says, "everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book."⁵⁰

That means that we must reject anyone that denies the authority or the accuracy of this prophecy or any other portion of Scripture since Revelation is the capstone of all Old Testament and New Testament prophecy. You see, God's revelation is complete. He has nothing more to say, nothing more needs to be said. Therefore, when somebody comes to you and says, "Well, God told me..." And they start telling you what God has revealed to them, you should kindly say, "No." Point to this. Point to other passages.

You mean to tell me that what Joseph Smith said was revealed to him by God needs to be rejected? Mormonism should be rejected? Absolutely. What about Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science? She was a fraud. She added and detracted. What about Charles Russell and the Jehovah's Witnesses? A charlatan. What about Ellen White with the Seventh Day Adventists that repeatedly describe how God told her special things? Once again, a fraud. What about Joyce Meyer, Marily Hickey, Kenneth Copeland, Joel Olsteen and whole host of these others word faith prosperity preachers?

Dear friends, they are imposters. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. They are not genuine believers. Why? Because they make millions of dollars off of deliberately falsifying and erasing the truth of Scripture. Where is the discernment in the Church today?

Now notice the terrifying judgment that awaits them in verse 10.

If anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book

⁵⁰ Revelation 22:18.

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of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.⁵¹

There is a play on words here. If you add to my words, I am going to add to you the plagues. If you take away from my words, I am going to take away your part from the tree of life, from heaven. Does this mean they are going to lose their salvation? No. Because what it tells us is they were never saved in the first place.

You see, people who were truly born again love the Word of God. They are going to humble themselves before it. They are not going to tear out this page and tear out that page and twist this to make it say that for their own ends. That is what deceivers do. Said simply, all prophets, preachers, teachers as well as selected hearers that deliberately falsify the Word of God, all of those who purposefully misinterpret or reject certain passages of Scripture, they are not believers and they are going to perish in their sins.

You see, again, no true believer is going to intentionally deny the veracity and the authority of the Word of God. There is going to be things we don't fully understand and we may not get right. But it is not because we are deliberately trying to falsify the Word of God. Jesus said in John 8:31, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine."⁵² And, by implication, if you don't, you are not. In John 10:27 he says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they [what?] they follow Me."⁵³ They don't distort my words and come up with something different.

Well, then, finally, John closes with this benediction by quoting the Lord he loves and this is what I would call, fourthly, a suitable conclusion to all that has come before. In verse 20 he says, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.'"⁵⁴ Isn't this precious, dear friends? These are the last recorded words of our Lord in Scripture. "Yes, I am coming quickly."⁵⁵

Indeed, he is coming. His coming is immanent. It is the next thing that could happen. The question is: Are you ready? Have you washed your robes in the blood of the Lamb? Are your sins forgiven? And if the answer is yes, then you will be able to echo the response of all of the saints that so perfectly and simply stated here by John. He says, "Amen." In other words, the Lord says, "Yes, I am coming quickly,"⁵⁶ and he says, "Amen."

Can't you just hear him? A 90 year old man on that old island, that Roman penal colony is struggling to stay alive and he sees all of this and the Lord says, "I am coming

⁵¹ Revelation 22:18-19.

⁵² John 8:31.

⁵³ John 10:27.

⁵⁴ Revelation 22:20.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

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quickly.”⁵⁷ Yes, amen, which means, “Let it be. Let it be, oh Lord, let it be.” And then he says, “Come, Lord Jesus.”⁵⁸

My friends, the date of grace is still open today. But I believe that one day soon it is going to close. The day of grace is not yet over, but I believe the sun is about to set upon it. And because of grace John concludes with this most suitable, this most appropriate conclusion, verse 21. “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”⁵⁹ How precious once again. If you will recall John’s salutation at the beginning of the book began with the word grace. And now he closes with the same because, indeed, all that God has revealed comes from his grace. All of salvation is of grace.

I wish to leave you with a quote from Bunyan’s great allegory *Pilgrim’s Progress* in hopes that by grace those who choose to enter by another gate may be convinced of the folly of their ways because that is a fatal mistake.

The context here is that Hopeful, a man named Hopeful and his companion Christian have now completed their journey of life. They have escaped to the City of Destruction. They have gained entrance into the new Jerusalem. They have come through the narrow gate of grace. And at the close of Bunyan’s great work he says this, quote, “Now while I was still pondering all these things, I turned my head to look back and I saw Ignorance approaching the far bank of the river. Soon he was able to cross over with less than half the difficulty that the other two men had experienced. For it just so happened that there was a ferryman there named Vain Hope. And he ferried Ignorance across. So Ignorance, like the others, ascended the hill to reach the gate. He came alone, however. No one met him with the least bit of encouragement. When he approached the gate he looked up at the writing above and then began to knock supposing that he would quickly be admitted.

“The men on top of the roof looked down and asked, ‘Where have you come from and what do you want?’ “And he replied, ‘I ate and drank in the presence of the King and he taught in my streets.’ “Then they asked him for his certificate so that they might take it in and show it to the king. So he fumbled in his clothing, but found none. Then they asked, ‘Don’t you have one’

“Ignorance remained silent.

“So they told the King, but he would not come down to see him. Instead, he commanded the two shining ones who had escorted Christian and Hopeful to the city to go out and take Ignorance and bind him hand and foot and have him carried away. So they seized him and carried him through the air to the door that I had seen in the side of the hill and there they cast him. Then I saw that there was a way to hell not only from the City of Destruction, but even from the gate of heaven itself,” end quote.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Revelation 22:21.

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Dear friend, don't be like Ignorance and try to enter the gate of heaven based on your own religious creed. You will only be allowed to enter if your robes have been washed by the blood of the Lamb. If you come through the narrow gate of repentance and brokenness, thirsty for the fountain of life, for forgiveness of sin, you know, that is the good news of the book of Revelation. The gate of mercy and grace is still open. But one day it is going to close forever. And I would just ask you. Won't you please place your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ today and be cleansed and be eternally blessed?

Let's pray.

Father, our hearts are overwhelmed when we think of the glorious truths that we studied. I can only pray that you would be gracious and merciful to those who are lost and to the redeemed that we might live unto your glory. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

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