

God's Final Call

The Last Words – Part II

Revelation 22:10-17

Introduction

In our previous discussion I referred to General Douglas MacArthur, the Commander of the Allied Forces during World War II. After the surrender of Japan, MacArthur led the ceremony aboard the *USS Missouri* as the terms of surrender were signed on September 2, 1945. The war was finally over.

I found it interesting that as Douglas MacArthur led the reconstruction of Japan, he would issue a challenge to the Western world to send one thousand missionaries and ten million Bibles in order to deliver the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many responded.

In fact, Shepherds Seminary just graduated a student who is now in Japan as a third generation missionary pastor. He is following in the footsteps of his grandfather who was among the many to answer the call.

For one particular soldier, however, it would be years after the surrender of his homeland before he would personally surrender. Hiroo Onoda had been left on the Philippine island of Lubang under orders to keep the area secure while the rest of the Japanese forces were evacuated. Nine months later, the war was over and Japan surrendered – but Onoda refused to believe it or surrender.

For the next twenty-nine years, Onoda lived off the land in the mountains by raiding the fields and gardens of local citizens while ignoring the leaflets dropped from planes announcing Japan's surrender. The leaflets said that Japan was now an ally of the United States, but he believed these to be Allied propaganda intended to deceive him.

Nearly a million dollars was expended and 13,000 men were used to find this soldier. Finally, in March of 1974, almost thirty years after World War II ended, Onoda was found and brought before his former superior who read the terms of surrender to him. Onoda surrendered his rusty sword to President Marcos and, for him, the war was finally over.

This soldier was twenty-two years old when he was left on the island of Lubang. When he finally reached his homeland, he was fifty-two years old.ⁱ

I find this story compelling on a number of different fronts, not the least of which is the cost and effort expended to get this soldier to understand the war was over. Imagine that over a period of twenty-nine years, with several countries involved, the aid of 13,000 men was enlisted and nearly a million dollars spent to deliver the news of peace to one man.

Should this not be the urgency of the church; is this not the commission given by God to the body of Christ – to deliver the message to a world at war with God that the terms of surrender and peace are available at the cross of Christ?! We should spare no expense as we accept the urgency of the gospel message to deliver to our world the news that through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, they can be at peace with God (Romans 5:1).

Is it any wonder that as the last book of the Bible comes to an end, among the last words of God are words of invitation?

In Revelation chapter 22, the epilogue continues and John wraps up what are effectively the last words of God. It is no surprise, yet still an amazing revelation of the grace of God toward a sinful world

which refuses to surrender, that He offers a final call for mankind to accept His terms of peace through Jesus Christ our sovereign Lord. Let us pick up our study at verse 10.

The Command to Expound the Written Word

John records,

And he [the angel companion] said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.” (Revelation 22:10)

John is effectively given the opposite command that Daniel the prophet received after recording his vision of prophetic future events. Daniel was told,

“. . . keep the vision secret, for it pertains to many days in the future.” (Daniel 8:26)

Later, Daniel was again told by God,

“. . . conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time . . .” (Daniel 12:4)

However, with the opening of the church age, these future events could happen at any time. So now the message is to get the word out because heaven or hell is at stake; invite the world to surrender.

Paul wrote,

. . . Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

How will they preach unless they are sent? . . .

(Romans 10:13-15)

In verse 10, John adds to the urgency of the message given to the church when he writes,

“. . . the time is near.”

In other words, “These end time events are just around the corner and are going to happen, so expend all the resources you can.”

John writes,

. . . “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy . . .”

This is saying that the “logos” (τουσ λογουσ) – the words of scripture – are to be opened.

In other words, God wants the actual words of His revelation, not just someone’s thoughts or

interpretations, to be expounded and proclaimed. We are not to keep them under lock and key.ⁱⁱ

Ladies and gentlemen, the book of Revelation is an open book. Do not conceal it. Do not hide it.

To fail to preach the truth of Revelation is to rob the believers of the end of the divine story of history in all its wonder and fullness.ⁱⁱⁱ

Failure to deliver the truth of Revelation would also rob the unbelieving world of a final warning of the coming wrath of God on earth when the final judgment and eternal condemnation will confine them to hell forever.

Verse 10 of Revelation 22 is nothing less than a command to expound the written word. And what happens when the words of God are expounded from pulpits, classrooms, cubicles, and back yard fences?

Two categories of people are created in response to the words of scripture. Notice verse 11.

Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.

In other words, the response of people to the proclamation of the truth will fix their eternal destiny.^{iv}

The results of the exposition of God’s word will cause some hearts to be softened in belief and others to become hardened in unbelief.

To one, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, the gospel is the aroma of death, but to another, the aroma of life (II Corinthians 2:16).

Let me put this in our nomenclature. When we deliver the gospel to one person, he will say, “That stinks! Are you kidding? I’d never believe that rubbish!” However, another will say, “What you’ve just delivered to me is so wonderful! I must have it.”

Paul wrote,

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (I Corinthians 1:18)

I have had doors slammed in my face and I have been told a few times where to go – and it is never to heaven. However, I was reminded in my study this week of a woman to whom I delivered the gospel not too long ago. She wept, saying over and over again with incredulous joy, “No one ever told me God would forgive my sins for free.”

John writes that the preaching of the words of this particular book will also either bring great blessing to people or repel them in disgust, eliciting anger, ridicule, or apathy to the truth of the end times.

Jesus Christ Himself continues to be the most mocked religious leader by our world today.

I was given a newspaper clipping recently saying that one network is planning a cartoon series on the life of Christ. He will be depicted as “a regular guy who moves to New York because he wants to escape from having to live under his father’s enormous shadow.” His father – the father of Jesus – is caricatured as an apathetic old man who would rather play video games than listen to his son talk about his life.^v

Why would anyone be interested in watching a show such as this? Is it just because Christianity is a major world religion and attention can be gained by mocking it? It is just fun to violate taboos, no doubt.

However, in verse 11, John says that those who refuse the gospel will choose instead . . .

. . . to still be filthy . . .

This could also be translated “dirty”.

In other words, these people want to keep their sin. So, they gather security and solidarity by mocking the gospel and, in this, they gain a sense of boldness in their mockery.

Peter wrote,

. . . in the last days mockers will come . . .

. . . saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? . . .”

(II Peter 3:3-4)

In other words, “All this talking about Jesus coming back, c’mon, you can’t be serious! He’s just another prophet. He was a good teacher and a good man who got a bum rap. Tough luck. End of story!”

The truth is that they are headed for an eternal confirmation of their sinful state and unbelief.

In this final invitation from God through John the Apostle, we are given the command to expound the written word. Let us look at something else we are given.

The Credentials of the Living Word

Several descriptive titles of Jesus Christ are given in this final invitation, telling us just who He is. Notice that Jesus Christ is the one speaking in verse 12.

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

Jesus Christ says, “Look! Take note! I’m coming quickly. It’s going to happen before you know it.”

The King is indeed coming!^{vi}

He will have full and final judgment; He will have the last say.

We have already covered the final judgment where mankind is judged by their deeds (Revelation 20:11-15).

However, by way of a reminder, this does not mean people are going to hell because they were bad any more than it means believers are going to heaven because they were good. In fact, John will clarify this point later in verse 14 so that no one could possibly misunderstand the truth – that the difference is a person’s relationship to the sacrifice of Christ.

Before we get to verse 14, notice how Jesus Christ speaks through John the Apostle and delivers five titles that not only confirm His deity, but clarify His right to judge mankind and rule for eternity.

- **Notice the first title of Jesus in the first part of verse 13.**

I am the Alpha and the Omega . . .

This is the fourth and final time we will read this remarkable name “Alpha and Omega”. Keep in mind that this title is used in reference to God in chapter 1. It is used again to refer to God in chapter 21. It is applied to Christ in chapter 2 and in this verse in chapter 22.

- **The next two titles Jesus claims for Himself are in the last part of verse 13 of chapter 22, where we read that He is, . . . the first and the last, the beginning and the end.**

These are also used in reference to God in chapter 21, but then to Christ in chapter 22.

Centuries earlier, God spoke through the prophet Isaiah and said,

. . . I am the first and I am the last . . .
(Isaiah 44:6)

All three titles – Alpha and Omega, first and last, beginning and end – which can apply only to a non-created, eternally existing God, are applied not only to God the Father, but now to Jesus Christ – God the Son.

These titles alone are convincing declarations that Jesus Christ literally claimed to be by divine nature equal with God the Father and God the Spirit.

Jesus Christ is literally adopting and claiming divine titles.^{vii}

This means either He is deluded, a blasphemer, or a liar perhaps, or He is indeed un-created, eternally God the Son who took on flesh and came to offer up His own death as a sacrifice for the terms of surrender and the conditions necessary for a peace treaty between God and man.

Christ has become the fulfillment of 300 Old Testament prophecies, types, and illustrations. He is:

- the ark of Noah;
- the Passover Lamb;
- the table of showbread and the brazen altar;
- the Kinsman Redeemer buying His bride out of poverty.

Jesus Christ was not merely a great prophet, a good moral teacher, or a misguided martyr. He is God the Son, the infinite, eternal, boundless, timeless second Person of the Trinity.^{viii}

Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

These titles relate to His eternity, deity, and authority. He indeed has the power to judge the world and claim His right as God incarnate to rule as sovereign over all.

The rabbis had been teaching for centuries that God was the beginning, the middle, and the end. Since He was the beginning, He had received His power from no one; since He was the middle, He shared His power with no one; since He was the end, He would never hand over His power to anyone.^{ix}

Now if these first three titles are not dramatic enough in what they declare of Christ, the last two titles are even more remarkable.

- **The fourth title is found in the middle of verse 16, where Jesus Christ calls Himself, . . . the root and the descendant of David....**

Christ says, “I am the origin of the Davidic line and I am a descendant of this same royal line.”

How can someone be both an ancestor of David and a descendant of David?

Some of you have grandchildren – that is all we ever hear you talk about! They are wonderful, are they not? That is because you have dramatically changed.

You *never* let your *children* have ice cream before bedtime; your *children* never got to eat popsicles *inside* the house and on the *carpet* – not without losing a limb. But your grandchildren can – they are perfect.

You just do not have to be responsible for their actions! The parents are working overtime trying to civilize the little barbarians and grandma and grandpa come over and say, “Where are our little angels?”

Fallen angels is more like it!

I loved my maternal grandmother who lived nearby when I was growing up, and it was fun to be her grandchild. She let me drink coffee when I was seven. That was big. Back then they used to say it would stunt your growth and ruin your memory . . . and something else.

She let me eat Captain Crunch cereal when I went over to her house. Yes, it has been around that long! I could eat the whole box if I wanted to, and I usually did in one sitting.

All we had at my house was Bran Flakes. I am old enough now to know why. I still do not like it, but we have to eat it.

As perfect, brilliant, and bright as your grandchildren are, can you imagine how worried you would be if one of them started telling people they were older than you – and they actually believed it? If they said and believed they had been around long before you, you would stop giving them coffee. A child who grew up and began believing stuff like that would be a little off . . . or something else.

This is why Jesus Christ made headlines and enemies one day when He said as a young man to the Jewish leaders,

“. . . before Abraham was . . . I am.”
(John 8:58)

In other words, “I’ve been around longer than Abraham!”

Now in this title in Revelation, Jesus is saying, “I am the root of David, that is, I was around long before King David’s family tree sprouted limbs and leaves. I predate David.”

This was not all. Jesus Christ was also saying, “I am a descendant of David as well.”

How can this be? There is only one way.

Jesus Christ has to be fully God and fully man. He has to be eternal God, in order to predate David, and He has to be man in order to have been born into the family of King David. Both were true.

In His deity, Christ was David’s root, and in His humanity, Christ became a descendant of David’s.^x

... ***I am the root and descendant of David*** ...

In other words, I am *the* God-man.

- **There is one more title Christ adopts in verse 16. In fact, it is the only time in the entire Bible the full description of this title is attributed to the Lord. He is called, ... *the bright morning star.***

To call someone a star today is to refer to someone famous – a star athlete, a star singer, or a star actor. “She’s a star or he’s a star” means we have to wait in line for their autograph because they are a celebrity.

This expression actually has its roots in the Old Testament where faithful ambassadors of God are promised that they will “shine ... like the ... stars” (Daniel 12:3).

To be called a star was significant. The coming Messiah was prophesied to be a coming “star” (Numbers 24:17).

Even the angels at the dawn of creation were called “morning stars” (Job 38:7).

One particular angel who wanted to overthrow the glory of Christ was named Lucifer. He was, at his height of usefulness to God, referred to as a “star of the morning” (Isaiah 14:12).

Lucifer, of course, was the same angel who revolted against the throne of God, leading millions of angels in this coup attempt which failed, confirming them as fallen angels or demons.

The name Lucifer can be translated as “day star” from the Hebrew word which can also be translated “the bright star of the dawning”.^{xi}

The only time the title “morning star” is found in the New Testament, however, is this title in verse 16 which describes Jesus Christ.

In this verse in Revelation, for the first time and in its fullest expression, Jesus Christ is called,

... ***the bright morning star.***

The conclusion is inescapable – Jesus Christ intends to call attention to the fact that Satan, in all of his attempts throughout world history to usurp His glory and steal His worship, has utterly failed. Jesus Christ, not Satan, is the bright star whose coming will announce the dawn of a new, eternal day.

Henry Morris put it this way when he wrote,

The entire history of the world and the entire Word of God [has] been occupied, directly or indirectly, with the great conflict of the ages between [God the Son] and Satan, the seed of the woman and the [serpent]. Satan had claimed to be the rising star of the heavens, who would exalt his throne above the stars of God and ascend above the heights of the clouds ... but [in the end] his star has fallen from heaven ... The Lord Jesus Christ, on the other hand, was [and is] the true morning star, the bright morning star, [His] light will never be dimmed and [He] will never fall from [His eternal throne].^{xii}

At the end of the Bible and the end of human history as we know it, as the eternal state begins, the message is clear – Satan loses and Jesus Christ wins.

The battle is over. In fact, it has been over, but there are still people who have not surrendered their rusty swords and personally believed the peace treaty can be theirs in the name of heaven’s great champion and Lord.

Those who surrender are on the inside – those who refuse to surrender are on the outside. “Outside” is an expression for those condemned to everlasting judgment in the lake of fire.

How important is the truth of Revelation?

It is so important that it becomes a virtual fork in the road, and it asks, “Which way are you going?”^{xiii}

Notice verse 14.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to tree of life ...

This borrows from the language of chapter 7 where we learned that the believers had washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

The point is not how good they were at washing their robes, but that they came to the Lamb – they trusted in the sacrificial cross work of Jesus Christ.

In this verse John writes that they, and all of us who have done the same, will have access to the tree

of life. Earlier, in chapter 22, John described heaven as a place where the tree of life bore fruit for the inhabitants of heaven. The tree of life is both literal and illustrative of our eternal life and satisfaction in heaven.

John also writes in verse 14 that believers . . .

. . . may enter by the gates into the city.

We already learned that the gates were made of pearls the size of stadiums.

The main point is clear – we, as believers, get into heaven; we are on the inside of glory! Why? Because we came to the cross of Christ and believed by the grace of God!

However, notice the other category of people in verse 15.

Outside [note this word] are the dogs . . .

What does this mean?

By the way, I got an email this week from a guy who told me that he knew I would be covering this verse this week. He wrote, “As an owner of two cats I was pleased to read in the book of Revelation that dogs won’t be allowed into heaven.”

At the end of Revelation and all my sarcastic comments, I suppose I deserve that.

There is not one verse that says cats will not get into heaven, but there is a verse clearly saying dogs will not get in.

I just could not believe the implication, so I did a little Greek word study and found out about the word translated “dogs” in this verse. If it is transliterated into Aramaic and then again into Latin and then spelled backward, it actually says, “feline”. Can you believe that?

All right, back to the real truth.

The word for dogs in this verse is a word used in the Bible for people of low repute – like the scavenging dogs that milled about the village garbage dump. To call a person a “dog” in the Old Testament and New Testament was to describe that person as one of low character.^{xiv}

John goes on to add the word,

. . . sorcerers . . .

The Greek word for this is “pharmakia,” which gives us the word for drug user. In this context it is the illicit use of drugs, most often used by the ancients in their occult practices and supposed magical potions.^{xv}

The next description is the,

. . . immoral persons . . .

This comes from the Greek word “ pornos ” (πορνος), which gives us our word “ pornography ”. The word refers to those who engage in sexual activity of any kind outside the bonds and blessing of marriage.^{xvi}

The next word that John adds is,

. . . murderers . . .

This also appears in an earlier list by John the Apostle in chapter 21. It is a word that refers to the taking of a life without just cause.

John adds the word,

. . . idolaters . . .

This is the one who chooses to worship something or someone, including himself, rather than the one true and living God.

Finally, John adds the phrase,

. . . and everyone who loves and practices lying.

Frankly, there are only two categories – those on the inside of heaven and those on the outside.

We are clearly told that those on the inside are sinners who have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb and those on the outside are sinners who have wanted to keep their sins.

John lists a few of the sins of those on the outside.

It is not that these are the really bad sins, for James 2:10 says,

. . . whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

The truth is that we are all sinners (Romans 3:23).

The point is that the people on the inside wanted the Savior more than they wanted their sin and the people on the outside wanted their sin more than they wanted the Savior.

God gave them their wish. Those on the outside get to keep their sin, but they cannot keep their sin and get to live forever with the Savior.

My friend, what have you chosen? Have you chosen your life of sin or the life of the Savior?

Are you saying, “I’ve heard enough – I don’t want to be on the outside, I want to be on the inside.”?

Then this last invitation is especially for you.

We have been given the command to expound the written word. We have been given the credentials of the living Word. Let us look at one more.

The Final Call to the Only True Way

Look at verse 17.

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

The most wonderful word in the gospel is this four letter word “come”.^{xvii}

This verse is both a prayerful desire and an invitation.

The Spirit and the bride, and all who hear and believe by faith, say, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

In other words, we say to the Lord, “We want the presence of our Lord. We want to be with the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Come, Lord Jesus.”

However, to the world we say, “Come to the Lord Jesus.”

This is God’s final call. We who are His voice and His hands, through the power of His Spirit, say, “Come to Christ!”

Like Philip who met Christ and then went to find Nathaniel and said to him,

... “Come and see.” (John 1:46)

Are you thirsty? Are you bankrupt?

You can drink from the water of salvation and it is free! It is without cost to you because Jesus Christ paid it all!

On the last day of the feast of booths inside the city of Jerusalem, Jesus Christ stood and cried out, saying,

... “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.” (John 7:37)

Every day during this festival, the priest had taken a golden pitcher and paraded through the streets of Jerusalem until he reached the pool of Siloam. He then filled the pitcher with water and walked back through the Water Gate with the people following and chanting the words of Isaiah,

... you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation. (Isaiah 12:3)

The water was then carried to the temple altar and poured out on top of it symbolizing the water gushing from the rock in the wilderness that saved the lives of the thirsty Israelites.

However, on the last day of the festival, the one the Apostle John carefully noted as the day Christ gave this invitation, the people would gather their palm branches, which were used to make their small booths outdoors, and parade through the streets as the priest went to get the water. When the priests returned, they all marched around the altar seven times, poured out the water, and then chanted the prayer of Isaiah prophecy, “O bring now then salvation.”

On this day, Jesus Christ effectively said, “I’m here! Your prayers have been answered! In the same way the Israelites were saved by drinking from the water from the rock, come to Me and drink and I will give you everlasting life.”

... “If anyone is thirsty, let him come . . . (John 7:37)

There is that word again – “come”.

... “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me...

No one else will do – we must come to Christ.

This invitation is still open today. If you are thirsty, if you want forgiveness from your sin and a life led by the Savior – the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the root and descendant of David, the bright and morning star – come to Christ alone.

This is another way of saying, “Surrender your old, rusty sword. Stop hiding out in the mountains of your own sin, your own will, your own way. Accept the terms of surrender and sign your name to the peace treaty of everlasting life – in the name of Jesus Christ alone.”

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 6/13/2010 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiroo_Onoda.

ⁱⁱ Henry M. Morris, The Revelation Record (Tyndale, 1986), p. 174.

ⁱⁱⁱ John MacArthur, Revelation; Volume 2 (Moody Press, 2000), p. 297.

^{iv} Ibid., p. 297.

^v Associate Press, "Comedy Central considers series about Jesus Christ," News and Observer (May 7, 2010).

^{vi} Sam Gordon, Worthy is the Lamb: A Walk Through Revelation (Ambassador, 2000), p. 450.

^{vii} Stewart Custer, From Patmos to Paradise (BJU Press, 2004), p. 260.

^{viii} MacArthur, p. 306.

^{ix} William Barclay, Revelation: Volume 2 (Westminster, 1976), p. 226.

^x MacArthur, p. 307.

^{xi} Morris, p. 481.

^{xii} Ibid., p. 481.

^{xiii} Stephen J. Lawson, Heaven Help Us (NavPress, 1995), p. 177.

^{xiv} MacArthur, p. 309.

^{xv} Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Regency, 1976), p. 863.

^{xvi} Ibid.

^{xvii} Gordon, p. 453.