

Revelation 22:6 - 21

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[0 : 0 0] Who can you trust in an age of fake news?

Who can you believe? Whether we like it or not, we are in the midst of a general election campaign. And one of the things that I've been struck by as I've been listening to the different candidates and representatives of the different competing parties, one thing that struck me, a few things have struck me, but one thing that struck me is what appears to be a deliberate strategy on the part of the opposition parties, or those who currently are opposition parties, to at every opportunity call into question the trustworthiness of the current prime minister.

And so you hear the same language being repeated time and time again, really whatever the subject matter is. You can't trust any of his promises. I don't believe a word he says, and other affirmations in a similar vein.

Now to be clear, I'm not expressing an opinion on whether he is or is not trustworthy. I'm not voicing an opinion on that. But I am on board with the implicit assumption that the truth is important.

We need to be persuaded that what we are being told by any of the candidates is true, that the one speaking is trustworthy. So when they say, well, this is what we intend to do, we can take it as reasonable that that is indeed what they will at least endeavor to do.

[1 : 4 6] When they claim something to be true, to then justify some conclusion, we like to imagine that, well, what they're saying is true. At least we know it's important that it should be true.

Now with this in mind, it is striking to see how this final section of the book of Revelation begins with this claim. These words are trustworthy and true.

There in verse 6 of chapter 22, the very beginning of the reading that we had just a few moments ago, the angel said to me, that is to John, these words are trustworthy and true.

Now much of what we will be promised and assured in the next five weeks or so will be neither trustworthy nor true.

But these words, the angel assures us, are both trustworthy and true. But what words are being described in this way?

[2 : 5 3] Well, all the words found in the book of Revelation. Indeed, I think it's reasonable to amplify that and extend that to the whole of the Bible. Certainly that is the claim that is made in other parts of the Bible for the totality of it.

The words contained within it are trustworthy and true. All the words that John has employed to paint for us the vision that he has been given.

What he shares with us is a true record. It is an accurate description of what it is that he saw. And the words that he relays to us are words that are trustworthy and true.

And of course, that includes the words in this final section to which we want to turn our attention this morning. And in this final section that we've read, there is one declaration or announcement that dominates the final section.

And all the material or all the true and trustworthy words in the section revolve around this pivotal announcement. This thrice-repeated announcement that we find in this final section.

[4 : 10] The words, look, I am coming soon. We find it there in verse 7. Look, I am coming soon. In verse 12. Look, I am coming soon. In verse 20 at the very end.

Yes, I am coming soon. And what I want to do this morning is to examine this announcement. And in addition, examine an invitation and a prayer, both of which respond to the announcement and share the same key verb.

So, you have the announcement. I am coming soon. You have an invitation there in verse 17. Come, let the one who is thirsty come. And let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

And then you have a prayer in verse 20. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. So, an announcement, an invitation, a prayer that all share the central key verb.

An announcement of one who is coming. An invitation to others to come. And a prayer that the one who has said he will come would indeed do so.

[5 : 18] So, that's what we want to think about this morning. First of all, an announcement. What can we say about this thrice-repeated announcement? Well, let's pose and answer a few questions to discover what this announcement is all about.

First of all, a very basic question. One that is relatively easy to answer, but important nonetheless to just make clear. And the question is this. Who is speaking?

Who is making this announcement? Well, the prayer at the very end of the chapter that we'll come to in a few moments explicitly identifies the speaker.

Because there in verse 20 we read, He who testifies to these things says, Yes, I am coming soon. And the response is, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

And so it's very clear that the I of the I am coming soon is Jesus. It is Jesus who is making this announcement. Jesus is declaring that He is the one who is coming soon.

[6 : 17] Now, Jesus in turn self-identifies in this passage in ways that establish or confirm key aspects of His identity.

So, for example, in verse 13, again, immediately following the second time you have this announcement, Look, I am coming soon. And then in verse 13, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Now, these are divine titles that Jesus is attributing to Himself. At the very beginning of the book of Revelation, chapter 1, if you can cast your mind back to when we began studying this book.

And in chapter 1 and in verse 8, we read, I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. The Alpha and the Omega, a divine title.

Here at the close of the book, Jesus attributes to Himself. I am coming soon. I, the one who is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

[7 : 34] Jesus is effectively saying this, I am the one speaking, and I am God. Now, this is really by any reasonable measure an outrageous claim, but it is a true claim, for these words are trustworthy and true.

But that's not the only way in which Jesus identifies Himself. He also identifies Himself in verse 16 with other titles. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches.

I am the root and the offspring of David. Now, this is a Messianic title. Jesus is declaring Himself to be the promised Messianic King.

And so, the one who was promised in the Old Testament to God's people, the Messiah who would come, the King who would rule, we discover to be Jesus.

He says, I am the Messiah. I, the Alpha and the Omega, am at one and the same time, the promised Messiah. So, who is the one making this announcement?

[8 : 46] Well, it is Jesus. And what is He announcing? Well, that's fairly clear. The language is simple enough. Look, I am coming soon.

And very specifically, He is referring to His second coming. Jesus came 2,000 years ago. And when He ascended to the Father, He promised to return.

And here He is assuring His people that His promise is soon to be fulfilled. But more significantly, perhaps, for us, is to dig a little deeper and say, well, not only acknowledge that He is coming, but what is He coming for?

What is the purpose of His coming? I think we can answer that question as well from the passage before us. Even the fact that we are acknowledging that this is the very end of the book, the very end of the vision.

And as such, it seems reasonable to conclude that Jesus will come to bring to pass everything that has been announced and anticipated in the vision.

[9 : 53] And we can maybe just pinpoint two elements of that. First of all, He is coming, or He will come, to establish His kingdom. He also identifies Himself there in verse 16 as the bright morning star.

Now, that's a title that has its origins back in the book of Numbers. We don't want to spend time reflecting on that, but even the name of the title is very suggestive.

It's very evocative. The bright morning star. It's a title that points to the dawning of a new day or a new era that Jesus will usher in.

Why is He coming? Well, He is coming as the bright morning star to usher in a new day, to usher in a new heaven and a new earth, a new order of things, for pain and suffering and death are no more.

He is coming to establish His kingdom and to govern over His kingdom. Notice that in the passage, there are explicit references to the previous chapter or the beginning of this chapter, indeed, where we have a description of the temple city and of Eden restored.

[11 : 13] There in verse 14, where it speaks about the tree of life and going through the gates into the city, referring to the very new heaven and new earth that had just previously been described.

Jesus is coming to usher in that new heaven and that new earth, to establish that holy city where His people will dwell with Him.

That's why He is coming. But we can also say, alongside that, that He is coming to bring His reward. And that's something that Jesus Himself explicitly indicates in this passage.

In verse 12, on the second occasion, where He declares, Look, I am coming soon, He then goes on to say, My reward is with Me. And I will give to each person according to what they have done.

So Jesus is anticipating His coming, and He says that when I do come, I will bring with Me this reward that will be given to each person.

[12 : 23] Everybody, on that day when Jesus comes, will receive their reward, to use the language that we have here in the passage. But what is this reward?

Well, in what follows, it's clear that it will be given according to what they have done, according to what each of us have done. And what that means is further explained in verses 13 and 14, or rather in verses 14 and 15.

Those who have washed their robes will be welcomed into the city. We read there in verse 14, Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

So those who have washed their robes, that will be their reward. They will be welcomed into the holy city. And those who have not washed their robes, those described in verse 15, will be left outside.

Verse 15, outside. Outside of the holy city. Outside of the new heaven and the new earth. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, and the list goes on.

[13 : 42] Now we've already come across the picture of robes being washed back in chapter 7 and verse 14 of Revelation. Let's just remind ourselves of what that involves, this washing of robes.

As with the whole book, we're confronted time and time again with pictures that describe spiritual realities. And what about this picture of washing our robes?

Well, let's just remind ourselves of what we have thought about previously in chapter 7 and verse 14. Speaking of those who are praising God, they are described in this way.

These are they who have come out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

What is this about? Well, this is about trusting in Jesus and what He has secured for sinners by His death on the cross. As we put our trust in Jesus and on the work that He has done for us, our sins are forgiven and His righteousness is credited to our account as a garment to clothe us with His perfect obedience.

[15 : 01] So what determines the reward we will see? Jesus is coming with His reward which He will give to everyone. What will determine what our reward will be?

What will determine whether we will be on the inside or the outside? Will not be if we have sinned. We are all guilty in some measure of the sins listed in verse 15.

But what will determine our reward will be if we have been washed. If we have washed our robes in the blood of the Lamb, then our reward will be to be welcomed in to the holy city.

But if we have not washed our robes, if we have not put our trust in Jesus, then we will be consigned to the outside. And so the question for all of us this morning is simply this.

Have we washed? Have you washed your robes in the blood of the Lamb? Have you experienced the forgiveness that comes to those who put their trust in Jesus as we confess our sins and repent of them and ask Him to forgive us?

[16 : 12] The contrast that is painted in terms of the reward that will be given is indeed a stark one. Will you be welcomed in or will you be consigned to the outside?

Revelation, the book of Revelation, uses some very vivid and terrifying imagery to describe the fate of those who reject Jesus. One particularly vivid image that is employed is of the lake of fire.

We came across that just a chapter or so ago. Thrown into the lake of fire. It's very vivid. It's very shocking, terrifying imagery. But I don't know about you, but I find this one word the most haunting of all.

They will be outside. Those who wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb will be inside. And those who fail to do so will be outside.

But nobody needs to be left outside. The invitation is extended to all. Come to Jesus. John Owen, who was a 17th century Puritan preacher, once described Jesus as the safest place in the universe.

[17 : 28] It's a beautiful description, and it is true to the Scriptures. Jesus, the safest place in the universe. If you are looking for safety, for security, for eternal security, if it is your desire to be on the inside, not on the outside, then come to the safest place in the universe.

Come to Jesus. Embrace Jesus. Put your trust in Jesus. Why is He coming? Well, He's coming to establish His kingdom. He's coming to bring His reward.

Then one further question we want to ask about this big announcement. Look, I am coming soon. When is He coming? Well, the very announcement seems to give some kind of time reference, I suppose, when it says, Look, I am coming soon.

Now, the immediate response to that statement, a reasonable response would be, Really? When was this announcement made? A couple of thousand years ago, the announcement was made.

Look, I am coming soon. And still, no, there seems to be no time when it will actually happen. It doesn't seem that soon to us.

[18 : 47] I think the language that Jesus employs can be explained in a couple of complementary ways. Certainly, both of the explanations can be taken together, though they could also be taken, one or other, as being the more significant in terms of explaining the language that Jesus employs.

First of all, with regard to the actual meaning of the word, Look, I am coming soon. The word translated soon there could also be translated, it could have the sense of, Look, I am coming quickly.

Or, Look, I am coming suddenly. So, when He comes, whenever that might be, it will be sudden in its character, in its nature. And the point, of course, there is that we are being warned and advised to be prepared, for He is coming soon or suddenly.

That's one way we could maybe understand the language that Jesus is using. But another way of understanding it is to think of it in terms of the perspective of the one speaking.

The word soon needs to be understood from the perspective of the one employing the word. That's Jesus. For Jesus, His coming is soon, even if for us, the time that has elapsed would preclude the use of that particular word.

[20 : 09] As I was thinking about this, the illustration that came to my mind was of a family car trip. And a wee boy, the wee son, was wondering, When?

When will we ever reach our destination? And so, he despairingly asks his father, Are we nearly there? Maybe some of you have been there.

And Dad can honestly reply from his perspective as a grown-up who knows the route and knows the destination. He can honestly reply, Yes, we're nearly there. But for the wee boy, even another five minutes without reaching the destination calls into question the assurance of his father.

And it's all really a question of perspective. For Jesus, it makes perfect sense to declare, Look, I am coming soon. From His perspective, it is indeed soon. It's imminent. But for us, it just seems to be so long.

The important thing really for us is not to stress ourselves out trying to establish how soon is soon, but to be ready. He is coming. He is coming soon.

[21 : 20] He will come suddenly. Are you ready for His coming? So, we have an announcement, but we also have in this passage an invitation that shares the same key word that we would come.

Jesus has announced He is coming. But what about the invitation? Well, the invitation there is in verse 17. The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let the one who hears say, Come.

Let the one who is thirsty come. And let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life. Who extends this invitation?

Well, we're told, The Spirit and the bride say, Come. The Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, and the bride, the church, speak with one voice.

Indeed, we can understand this along these lines. The Holy Spirit, through the church, extends this invitation. But also we're told that the one who hears extends the invitation.

[22 : 21] And I think there, the idea is that the one who hears and responds to the invitation then in turn invites others. That would be me and you. If you're a believer this morning, if you have responded to this invitation, if you know what it is to take the free gift of the water of life, then it is now your duty and your privilege to extend that invitation to others.

this is our task as disciples of Jesus. And to whom is the invitation extended? Well, this threefold repetition of the invitation to come that you have in verse 17 seems to echo, possibly deliberately, the language of Isaiah chapter 55 in the very first verse of that chapter.

Come, come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters. And you who have no money, come buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

But who is invited? And what is he or she to do, the one invited? Well, who is invited? Well, again, the matter is stated relatively clearly.

Come, let the one who is thirsty come. Who is invited? The one who is thirsty. Anybody who is thirsty is invited.

[23 : 52] Thirsty for love. Thirsty for forgiveness. Thirsty for belonging. Thirsty for security. Thirsty for satisfaction.

Thirsty for purpose and direction in life. Thirsty for life in all its fullness. The one who is thirsty is invited to come and to drink.

If you are thirsty, then you are invited. But it's interesting that the invitation goes a little bit further. It says, the one who is thirsty and let the one who wishes.

It's not sufficient just to be thirsty, but there's also this need for there to be a desire to be satisfied. Many are thirsty.

I think you could make a case for saying that all are thirsty, whether that thirst is acknowledged or not. All are thirsty, but not all wish to respond to the invitation.

[24 : 58] Well, may God grant to all of us the desire to be satisfied. And I think this invitation, we think of it largely in terms of an invitation to unbelievers. And it is indeed an invitation that can be extended to unbelievers.

But I think there's a sense in which we can extend that invitation to one another as believers to be ever coming to be satisfied by the water of life.

May we always have that thirst and that desire to be satisfied. The one who is thirsty, the one who wishes, and what are they to do? Well, take the free gift of the water of life.

You need to take the water and drink of the water. What does that look like? Well, again, it's a picture that's being employed, but what does the picture portray? Well, again, this is all about Jesus and trusting in Jesus.

Jesus can speak for Himself on this one. Listen to Him and words that we have recorded in John 7 and verses 37 and 38.

[26 : 03] Jesus is speaking, Let anyone who is thirsty come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within Him.

Jesus identifies drinking with coming to Him, and He identifies coming to Him with believing in Him. So, to drink of the water of life is to believe in Jesus.

It is to trust in Jesus as a Savior and to follow Him as a Lord. And so, the invitation is extended.

Come to Jesus as the fountain of the water of life and drink, drink deeply and drink often. So, we have an announcement. See, look, I am coming soon.

We have an invitation. Come that the one who is thirsty come. But we have also in the third place a prayer in verse 20 at the very end of the chapter, at the very end of the book and the very end of the Bible.

[27 : 07] In verse 20, we read, He who testifies to these things says, Yes, I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Come, Lord Jesus. This is how we, as God's people, are to respond to the announcement of Jesus. I think we can identify three aspects of a fitting response to the announcement of Jesus.

Look, I am coming soon. I think the threefold fitting response can be captured in these words, trusting, longing, and living.

And let me just note each of them very briefly. Trusting, longing, and living. This is about how we respond to the announcement. Trusting in His return. Trusting in the truthfulness of His announcement.

You see, Jesus has just declared there in that verse, Yes, I am coming soon. And the response of John and that we take for ourselves begins with the word, Amen.

[28 : 10] What does that word signify? Well, it signifies that the one declaring that word, Amen, is saying, I believe what you have said. I trust in your promise.

If you say you're coming, then you're coming. I rest in the reality that this is a trustworthy promise, that you will come. And I am persuaded of that.

I am convinced of that. I trust your word. I trust your promise. And so we respond to the announcement of Jesus by saying, Yes, I believe that.

Yes, that is true. You are indeed coming. And I await your coming. So trusting in his return, but also longing for his return.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. You might say, Well, that's a prayer that's superfluous. He's already told us that he's coming. We don't need to exhort him, to entreat him to come.

[29 : 08] If we believe that he's coming, then we simply wait for him to come. And of course, at one rather cold level, that is true. But there is in the believer a longing for his coming. And so, yes, we know he's coming, but we long for him to come, and so we entreat him.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. We're speaking of this as a prayer. It's a grammatical curiosity that this is in the form of a command, but not an improper command, a polite entreaty on the part of the believer who longs for Jesus to return.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. This prayer that closes the book of Revelation is the Greek form of an Aramaic prayer that we find in 1 Corinthians 16 and verse 22.

Maran ata. Normally spoken of as one word. Maran ata. Come, Lord. Come, Lord. This is the prayer of the believer who longs for the coming of Jesus.

As believers, we are to be those who long for his coming. Do you remember Paul's words to Timothy as death loomed large before him?

[30 : 26] In 2 Timothy in chapter 4 and verse 8 towards the end of the letter, Paul expresses himself in this way. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing, who have longed for his coming, who have longed for the day when Jesus will return.

And why do we long for his appearing? We long to be delivered from this body of death. We long to be shot of sin. We long to see him face to face.

We long for his appearing. How do you respond to the announcement, look, I am coming soon? Well, we respond by saying amen. We trust that it is true. We respond by longing for his appearing.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. But thirdly, we respond to the announcement by living in the light of his return. Living in the light of his return.

What does that look like or involve? Well, in this passage, there are elements that we can draw out that would describe what living in the light of his return looks like.

[31 : 46] It is a life characterized by worship. In this section, there are a couple of verses that we haven't really given much thought to at all when John bows before the angel and he's reprimanded for doing so.

And at the close of that, the angel gives him a very wise instruction. Worship God. Worshiping God should be at the heart of what it is to live in the light of his return.

We worship God. And part of worshiping God is that we keep God's word. Indeed, on the first occasion that Jesus announces in verse 7, look, I am coming soon, he immediately goes on to say, blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.

Living in the light of his return is a life of worship. It is a life of obedience, of keeping God's word. And it is a life where we share God's warnings and God's invitation.

We don't seal up the words. In verse 10, John is given this instruction. Then he told me, do not seal up the words of the prophecy. Make them known.

[32 : 59] Don't hide them. Don't keep them hidden. Don't keep them to yourself. Don't seal up the words. Make them known. Tell the world the words of this prophecy.

We share God's warnings, but we share also God's invitation to all who are thirsty. Well, let me close by relaying to you one more time the words of Jesus in this announcement.

Look, I am coming soon. And these words are trustworthy and true. He is coming soon. And as He is coming soon, be sure to come soon and often to Him for safety and for security and for satisfaction.

Let us pray. Even then, go ahead ... on the Dionysus and conscious and have awry that can be done.

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