

Sermon. The Last warning and Invitation

Reading: Revelation 22:12-21

Introduction

Have you ever received an invitation late? Everyone is speaking about going to the event having already received their invitation, but you haven't got one! How hurt and insignificant we may have felt not being invited. Then the invitation arrives, what joy. How we respond to God's invitation is crucial. And yet when I hear the excuses many make for not turning to Christ how foolish it all sounds, it's not convenient for me to come, but I will think about it for another day! How many treat God's gracious invitation in this way! In this last chapter of Revelation we discover God's last words of invitation and warning to those who have yet to come into the Kingdom.

A question to begin, have you ever wondered what the last recorded words of Jesus? Some think it's the Great Commission, Jesus speaks to His disciples before His Ascension saying, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age' (**Matt 28: 18-20**).

There are later recorded words! Jesus tells John in the book of Revelation to write seven letters to seven churches. In all but two of the churches, Jesus tells His churches to 'repent' (**Rev 2-3**).

However the last recorded words of Jesus in Scripture are found on the last page of Revelation, Jesus says, "Yes, I am coming soon" (**Rev 22:20**). What goes through your mind when you hear these words?

Context

John the evangelist has been exiled on the Island of Patmos for his testimony and sharing the gospel. While there he probably thinks his work is done. There is nothing else he can now do. John is now in his eighties, an old man, surely there is nothing else I can do for the Kingdom! All the other disciples who were with Jesus have all died and entered into glory (except Judas). John is the last remaining Apostle of Jesus. Just when He thinks its all over, and there's nothing more to do, God turns up! John is invited into the throne room of God and sees a series of visions of all that is to come in the end of earths history.

John sees the Father seated high and mighty upon the throne and describes the awesome power emanating from the throne, like lightning and thunder which shakes the very thresholds as God speaks.

The prayers of God's people have filled the throne room and Jesus in response to the cry of His people steps forward and takes the scroll from the hand of the Father and initiates the judgements which are to bring about earths final years. As Jesus breaks open each of the seals we discover they unveil a series of events which will result in a series of judgments which will fall upon the earth in the last days. As Jesus breaks open the first 4 seals, John describes the 4 horsemen of the apocalypse.

The last chapters of Revelation John sees the rise of the final beast empire and the war which is waged against God's people (Jews and Christians). John witnesses the empire crashing down, not by the will of man, but by the power of God. The Beast and the False Prophet are thrown into the eternal lake of fire. Satan is bound and thrown into a

bottomless pit for a thousand years. After Armageddon and the final battles on earth, Jesus judges the world. Satan is defeated and thrown into the lake of fire, finally defeated and destroyed.

Then John describes the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven, dressed as a bride, beautiful and pure ready to meet her husband. The throne of God is now established on earth and God dwells with His people. Heaven and earth together Sin vanquished and the earth restored to the Paradise of Eden, as God had intended.

All of this has come at a great cost to God. For He has grieved in His heart over His creation, He watches as His only Son was crucified. Jesus knew there was no other way in which mankind could be redeemed and the world restored to the glory of God.

The Warning

When St. Paul writing to the Corinthian church says, 'For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.....Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' **(2 Cor 5:14-21)**.

We are called to be reconciled back to God, through repentance and faith. We are living in a time of God's grace, but there is coming a time when the door will be closed. The trumpet will blast and time will be no more. Jesus final words are 'Yes, I am coming soon', He will return with the emphatic 'YES' .

Earlier in this chapter Jesus says, 'Look' **(Rev 22:12)**. 'Look I am coming soon' Jesus is telling us to open our eyes and see. We can only see clearly when we come into the light and open our eyes, but sadly people prefer the darkness **(John 3: 19)**. While we remain in the dark, we think we are playing in sand pits building sand castles, but when the light shines it reveals something very different.

Jesus is returning and is coming with His reward, giving to each person according to what they have done. **(Rev 22:12)**. We should pause at these words, spend a moment to reflect. What goes through our mind at this point. Does this provoke great a sense of excitement as a child would knowing the time for opening up their gifts is almost here, or do the words, 'I am coming soon and will reward all for what they have done', concern us? Have we wasted our time? Have we ignored God's invitation? Am I ready to meet Jesus face to face? Is my soul prepared? If you know you are not ready, then take this time now to turn to Christ for He will reject no one who comes with a humble, broken and contrite heart. Accept the invitation, RSVP now!

The passage goes on to speak about those who have taken the invitation seriously and therefore in Christ have 'Washed their robes' **(Rev 22:14)**. We know how important it is to keep ourselves and our clothes clean. Dirt, smells and lice soon move in when we keep wearing dirty and soiled clothes. Clothes washed clean, white as snow, show no dirt, grime or lice. This is symbolic for those who are dressed in the appropriate wedding attire, clean and ready to enter the festivities. Their sin has been removed, they are no longer in condemnation but live alive in Christ.

Jesus warned us in the parable of the foolish virgins (**Matt 25:1-13**), those who were found to be without oil in their lamps (without Spirit) were locked out of the Kingdom and could not enter. This is reiterated here, 'Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood (**Rev 22:15**).

We have yet another list of sins which will keep the foolish people out of the Kingdom. The list of sins is not exhaustive of course. But whenever we read a list of sins which keep people out of the Kingdom, the same sins are often repeated. As this book is an end time revelation, it's not unreasonable to think, these sins be those which will be so prevalent in society in the last days? Look at the first two and see what you think? Those who practice magic arts and the sexually immoral, these are linked with murderers!

Magic arts?

What is the New Testament referring to when it speaks of magic arts? Sorcery and magic arts refers to dealing with drugs, poisons and occult practices. The New Testament Greek word translated "sorcery" is *pharmakeia*, which is the source of our English word *pharmacy*. Drug taking and occult practices (drug abuse, physic readings, tarot, contacting to the dead, witchcraft, spells etc), sadly are increasing in our culture. The Scriptures are clear, warning us to avoid these demonic activities, they are not fun, leisurely, intriguing but serious and spiritually dangerous.

Sexual immorality has become a blurred area when it comes to the church! The Scriptures once the standard by which morality was measured no longer is seen with authority. The question the church has to consider carefully is this, is human sexuality and relationships a secondary issue which the church can move on with in order to relevant to culture or does sexual practices which go beyond what God has established in marriage between a man and a women become a salvation issue?

In the Middle East, dogs were not seen as pets but as scavengers who dwell near rubbish heaps spending their days rummaging through garbage and chewing at carcasses which have been thrown into these dumps. This is not a pleasant image to bear in mind when Jesus is referring to how blind people are when they prefer to remain in the dark and live on trash when they were given an opportunity to wear white robes and feast at the greatest banquet ever seen. People loved the darkness (**Jn 3:19**), they think they are playing in sandpits when in fact the light reveals they are living in filth, playing in the dung heap and consuming sin.

Jesus warning comes through an angel, 'I Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony' (**Rev 22:16**). We know the angels of the church are those leaders appointed to preach the message in truth, watch over the flock and teach all that Jesus has taught them. Jesus here is affirming John as the angel, referring to the one who is writing this book. As ministers of the Word we do not bring our own message but the message of Him who calls and sends us, it is His message, His standard, His judgments, His Kingdom. For He is the One who holds the keys of death and Hades. The Scriptures say, 'If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book, God will take away from that person any share in the Tree of Life and the Holy City' (**Rev 22:18-19**). The one who corrupts the Word of God will be deprived of access to the tree of life, despite whatever claim he thinks he has to that fruit.

There is an interesting phrase where Jesus referring to Himself says, 'I am the root of the Offspring of David' (**Rev 22:16**). This is a direct reference to the Incarnation and deity of

Jesus. Jesus here is speaking of his Incarnation, both fully Divine and fully human. No one but Jesus could be the root (Before David) and then be the Offspring of David. The reference to the bright Morning Star, is the sign of hope in the dark night. This morning star is the one star which shines brighter than any other before the dawn breaks. It's a hopeful reminder to us, no matter how dark things may seem, the morning is coming with the rising sun.

The invitation

Now we have covered the warning, we come to the invitation, 'The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!"' (**Rev 22:17**). This passage contains the word, 'Come' three times. God's invitation through the Holy Trinity is seen through Scripture.....as the Father is heard saying, "Come now, and let us reason together" (**Isa 1:18-19**). The Son said, "Come to Me, all you who labour" (**Matt 11:28-30**). The Spirit here says, "Come" (**Rev 22:17**). The invitation is for all who are thirsty. What an amazing thought, Heaven's King invites us to 'Come' to Him. In this case through an invitation, not simply as a guest, but to live with Him forever.

Invitations are sent to the thirsty. The Lord offers water to those whose hearts are thirsty for forgiveness (**John 4:14; 6:35**); Whose minds are thirsty for truth (**John 8:32**); and whose souls are thirsty for Him (**Psalms 42:1; 107:9**). Self-satisfied people are uninterested in invitations to church. With no thirst, they want no water. They are like those who warm their hands against a painted fire place, thinking everything is ok, why do I need God for I have got a cosy fire by which to warm myself, when in reality there is no warmth, no heat, no light, no truth. It's flat. Life in this world without Jesus is like existing in a two dimensional illusion, it's playing in the dung heap mistaking it for the sand pit.

Why does the Spirit say, 'Come?'

A careful reading of the text reveals there are two distinct invitations. The first part is a prayer addressed to Christ to "Come" We can see this in the prayers of the people in chapter 6 as the prayers fill the throne room of God. The second is addressed to unbelievers to, 'Come' and put their faith in Christ to receive salvation.

It's intriguing when we think the Spirit says, "Come". How challenging it must be for the Holy Spirit, who has been dwelling in this world for 2 millennia after the Father and the Son have sent Him to be our most precious gift. The Holy Spirit has been convicting the world of sin and righteousness for two thousand years and still the heart of humankind remains hardened and wicked to God. How the Holy Spirit must long for Jesus to return, so that Jesus may be glorified and take up His rightful place as this world's true King. The Spirit longs to see Jesus exalted on the earth and the Father glorified in all of creation.

Summary

The final 9 verses of this remarkable book are both invitation and a warning to those who have not yet responded. All who are thirsty must come to the spring of waters of life to be satisfied. The waters are given freely, without cost. Jesus is the host, He has already paid the great price through the shedding of His own blood. Only those who recognise their hunger and thirst before God, will come humbly to receive. Each person must come to Christ for themselves. For Jesus says no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless they are born again.

You have now received the invitation to come into the world's greatest celebration at the commencement of the New Creation, some may have received their invitation later than others, but none can ever say they have not received the invitation. Remember Jesus said, 'Yes, I am coming soon'. Hallelujah, Praise the Lord, come Lord Jesus come. **Amen.**