

086: The Last Words of Jesus  
Andrew Kneeland, May 29, 2022  
Revelation 22:16–21

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Jesus was a miracle worker. He performed many miracles during His years of ministry.

He turned water into wine. He walked on water. He fed thousands of people with just a few loaves of bread and some fish. He also raised people from the dead, including himself!

Just about everything Jesus did would have been fascinating to see. But one of the most impressive and awe-inspiring things, I think, would have been to watch the Ascension.

Today is Ascension Sunday, when we remember how—40 days after his resurrection—Jesus was taken up into heaven. He was “taken up before their very eyes” until “a cloud hid him from their sight.”

Wouldn't that have been an amazing thing to see? It sounds like something out of a movie. The last time the apostles saw Jesus.

Or was it?

The Apostle John got to see Jesus again. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this book of Revelation several decades after Jesus' ascension. In this book, the last book in our Bibles and probably the last book of the Bible to be written, John sees a vision of Jesus.

It's an amazing vision that John shares in this book of Revelation. Visions of what has happened, what is happening, and what will one day take place. Revelation is filled with confusing and strange images, but the theme throughout the entire book is that Jesus is the King, and Jesus is in control.

Our text today from Revelation 22 includes the last words that Jesus spoke to us. The last words of Jesus before he comes back to rescue us from this sin-filled world.

His last words are words of INVITATION, WARNING, and of PROMISE.

See if you can hear these three themes in these verses from Revelation 22:

*“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” 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 desires take the water of life without price. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.*

*Let’s pray: Father God, thank you for this word. Thank you for this opportunity to study your word. Use it to stretch us, to encourage us, to convict us, and to reassure us of your victory and love toward us. In your name we pray, amen.*

The first words that Jesus speaks to us here in the last chapter of Revelation are words of **invitation**.

God’s word to us in verse 17 is “come.” God calls us anyone and everyone who hears his voice to come to Him.

We all have a tendency to go in our own direction, don’t we? We like to go our own way and wander off on our own paths. We enjoy being in charge of where we walk, of deciding which direction to take, of how fast or how slow we go. We like being in charge.

We follow things that distract us, we run toward things that sound appealing or attractive. The book of Proverbs is filled with warnings about taking wrong, sinful directions.

Proverbs 7 says that evil tries to lure us down the wrong path. “With much seductive speech she persuades him,” it says. “With smooth talk she compels him. All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter... he does not

know that it will cost him his life.”

We like to go on our own paths... but Jesus INVITES us to join HIS path.  
“Come.”

Our paths are dangerous. His path is secure. Our paths lead to pain and heartache and death. His path leads to life.

He says: “Let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.”

Free and living water that makes us free and living people. Free from the curse of sin and the weight of our guilt and the harsh demands of the law... and living through the nourishment and provision of the daily forgiveness of our sins that brings the guaranteed hope and assurance of eternal life.

Jesus invites us to COME. He offers anyone and everyone these gracious words of invitation.

But Jesus also left us with firm words of **warning**. These are the last words of the last book of the Bible... this canon of books—from Genesis to Revelation—is the Word of God. The words of Jesus. And Jesus cares a great deal about his words.

He warns us about adding and subtracting. He said that if anyone ADDS anything to his words, he will ADD to them. He’ll add all the horrible plagues that John recorded earlier in Revelation. Painful, brutal, never-ending plagues. People who ADD to Scripture will experience suffering so great it would make even dipping a toe into water feel like sweet relief.

But there is no water where those people are headed. For people who ADD to Scripture, there is no relief; no stopping the plagues and suffering they will endure. They won’t even have death to look forward to.

But what does it mean to add to the words of Jesus’ book? It doesn’t just mean adding new sentences or putting new words into our Bibles.

Do you add barriers to salvation? Do you do anything to make it more difficult for someone to hear about Jesus?

When you pray about your unbelieving friends and family—IF you pray about

your unbelieving friends and family—is there someone you *conveniently* forget to mention? Someone who just isn't worth the time to pray for?

Jesus warns people who ADD to this book, but also people who TAKE AWAY from his words. If they TAKE AWAY the words, God will TAKE AWAY from them their share of eternal life.

These words of warning are especially true for preachers and teachers. The people who are given the job of bringing God's Word to the people are often the ones *most* responsible for being unfaithful to it. They might add requirements to being saved, or invent fancy and unbiblical practices that just aren't found in Scripture. Or they might take away from the words of Jesus; dulling the sharp words of God's Law or not applying the healing words of God's Gospel.

This doesn't mean that prophecy has ended. God still gives the gift of prophecy, and we should carefully listen to those who claim to have a prophecy from God. But these same warnings apply to them: God never changes, and he will never give a prophecy that adds or removes or changes the simple Gospel message. A legitimate prophecy will never add a requirement to salvation, and a legitimate prophecy will never cheapen or take away some portion of God's perfect word.

Whenever we hear a prophecy we should take John's advice and "not believe every spirit, but *test* the spirits." As Moses said, if the words of anyone's prophecy does not come true, they are a false prophet who is not speaking for God.

Anytime *anyone*—prophet, preacher, teacher, or friend—if *anyone* adds or takes away from the simple words of Christ, they are being unfaithful to Jesus.

If the message of salvation is any more complicated than it needs to be, Jesus has firm words of warning. "All are sinners. Christ died for everyone. Anyone who repents and believes will be saved." That's it.

Jesus is firm and stern here at the end of Revelation not because he's an angry or wrathful God who wants to catch us in the act of disobedience and smite us in our sin. He has firm words of warning because of how important this is. These aren't just everyday words in an everyday book. These are the words of life.

These words are more than ordinary words. We know that words can make us

*feel* things, right? If we read a sad story, it might make us feel sad. If we read a funny or happy story, it might make us feel good. Words can change things in us. But even the most well-written words in the best-selling book have no power to change *spiritual* things. THESE words can.

These words of life CAN and DO change *spiritual* realities. When we read them with believing hearts these words create faith. They declare to us that our sins are forgiven and they move us from the family of death to the family of God. No other book can do that. These words are important.

Jesus ends this final book of the Bible with beautiful words of **promise**. He said: "Surely I am coming soon."

Jesus promises to come back the same way his physical body left: in the clouds. He is coming soon. We don't know when; we don't know what "soon" means to the God of the Universe and the One who holds the stars in their places. Over the years people have tried to guess the date of Christ's return; they've tried to develop special mathematical formulas and equations that tells them when the Lord of Heaven's Armies is scheduled to arrive. They've all been wrong. No one knows the day or the hour except God alone.

But that's okay. If we needed to know when Jesus was coming back He would have told us. Our God is infinitely wise and infinitely good; we can trust that he knows best.

This incredible promise is the last word of Jesus. He doesn't tell us *when* he's coming back. But he does promise us *that* he's coming back.

Knowing this doesn't take away any of the painful or hurtful experiences of our lives. We can join those saints in heaven who longingly cry out: "How long, O Lord? How long until you come and judge the wicked and save the righteous?"

This time that we're in is a waiting time. It's a time to wait and to endure, but Jesus' last words of promise remind us that this world is not our home. The oceans may rise and the mountains may fall—sickness and illness, tragedy and shame, trial and persecution—these things deeply affect us and hurt us, but in the end they all remind us that there is something better coming. JESUS is coming.

There will be no more sickness when Jesus returns. No more sadness. No more broken homes, broken families, broken marriages. No more discontentment. No more pride or embarrassment. No more comparison or shame. No more *wondering* what God's doing. No more *questioning* what the future holds. No more *doubting* God's good promises.

Instead, all of our needs will be forever and perfectly met by the tree and water of life. God himself will live among us and he will be our bright morning star.

Amen.