

"Keep These Words Until I Come"

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[0:00] Well, when Jenny and I have visitors coming to our house, whether that's planned or unplanned, I go into clean mode. It's kind of scary, actually, as my family would attest.

I want our house a welcoming place. Jenny, don't get me wrong, she does a great job keeping her house clean, but when people are coming, I want our place clean and tidy for people to come in and feel welcome.

But what can happen is, in my cleaning, I can forget who's coming. This morning, we can be so occupied with the things of God that we can forget who's coming.

This morning, we're wrapping up the book of Revelation, and we're going to be in the epilogue of the book of Revelation, the last word, the afterword of the book of Revelation, and we're going to see the last words of Jesus in the entire Bible, Bible, in which he says, I am coming soon.

Are you looking forward to his coming? Famous last words. Apparently, Jack Daniel, of Jack Daniel's fame, his last words on his deathbed were, one last drink, please.

[1:21] Winston Churchill, on his deathbed, said, I'm bored with it all. The moment he died, I don't think he was bored anymore.

Steve Jobs, of Apple fame, his last words were, oh wow, oh wow, oh wow. And the moment he passed into death and stood before Jesus, I'm guessing it turned to, oh no, oh no, oh no.

Oh no. Edgar Allan Poe, of the Raven fame, his last words were, Lord, help my soul. Joan Crawford, of actress fame, said, don't you dare ask God to help me, and died.

Harriet Tubman, the abolitionist, said, swing low, sweet chariot, come. This morning, we're looking at Revelation chapter 22, through 6, through 21, and we're going to see the last words of this book, the last words of the Bible, even the last words of Jesus, recorded in Scripture.

And this afterward, it's kind of a summary, and when it talks about these words in 22, 6, it's talking about all of the words of the book, of the prophecy of Revelation.

[2:53] This entire book shows us vision after vision of not only what's to come, but of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so this morning, as we wrap up this book, and we have received the message of this book, we've got to ask the question, what do we do now?

In between Jesus' first coming and second coming, having received these words of the book of Revelation, what do we do now? Well, the point of this section in Revelation 22 is, we must keep these words of this prophecy until He comes.

We must keep these words. And this morning, I just want to walk you through seven truths about these words that we must keep.

So I'm just going to pull them out of the text, and they're going to provide somewhat of a summary of our study of the book of Revelation. And so, we need to keep these words of the prophecy of this book until Jesus comes, and He has promised to come.

I'm coming soon. So, truth number one. It's in 22, 6. The angel says to John, these words are trustworthy and true.

[4:25] So, the first truth of these words, these words are true words. These words are true words. And the angel, when he says these words, he's referring to all of the book of Revelation from chapter 1 through chapter 22.

All of the visions. All of the glories. What chapter 119, what God tells John to write down for us. All these words are trustworthy and true. Another way you can say that, trustworthy and true, you could say that these words of this prophecy are reliable and accurate.

Because they are God's words. Revealing reality. I'm not sure if you noticed this, but in verse 6, these words are trustworthy and true.

And then we read, in the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place. In that little section, there is a process of transmission of these words that start with God, go through his prophet, and land in the church.

[5:40] These words are trustworthy and true because they are originally from God. These words, the book of Revelation, these are God's words.

They're true. They depict reality. They show us what is to come. Did you see the show? He has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.

And the book of Revelation is showing us. We see again and again these visions of what's to come and of our great God.

These words are reliable and true because they are ultimately from God and they show us reality.

And if I were to sum up, what is the reality that this book shows us, what God is showing us?

He is showing us this. that all of humanity is basically split into two groups of people. Those who belong to the Lamb and those who belong to the Beast and one is worshipping the Lamb and one is worshipping the Beast and God is gradually moving all of history until that one great day in which he judges all.

[6:58] This book, these words show us what is to come. It's a prophecy. It reveals what is going to happen when he comes and he makes all things right.

So the first truth is this. These words are true. They're from God. They show us reality.

Things as they truly are. And that's why he must keep them until he comes. The second truth I want you to see is this. These words, all of them, from beginning to end in the book of Revelation, they must be kept.

In verse 7, we read, Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

Because these words come from God and they are trustworthy and true and they are clear depictions of what reality is, we must keep them. We must believe them.

[8:11] We must obey them. We must align our lives with them accurately. And so, this does include all the moral commands from the book of Revelation and there are many. If you remember from the seven letters to the seven churches, Jesus comes out strong.

He squarely rebukes Pergamum and Theotira for their sexual immorality and he calls them to repent. Not just of their sexual immorality but of the teaching that undergirded it.

Called them out of that. And so, for all of us in the room, the call there is to, if you're involved with sexual immorality, if you're doing something sexually that God forbids through his word, repent of it. We gotta obey these words. We gotta keep these words. But that's not all that we are to keep.

Because in the book of Revelation, there are these truth claims all throughout of what reality truly is and we must keep hold of those despite what CNN says, despite what Fox News is saying, despite what you may be reading on your NPR app, this book tells us how things truly are.

It's a revelation. It pulls back the curtain and helps us to see what's truly going on. And so, for example, the book of Revelation reveals to us that God is on his throne reigning on high and that Jesus, the Lamb, has been given the scroll with seven seals and he is the divine executor of God's will, carrying out God's plan for the fullness of time.

[9:59] This book, these words claim a reality. God is in control. We don't live in a random universe. More so, this book claims in Revelation 12 and 13, we have spiritual opposition as followers of Jesus.

We have an enemy, the evil forces of darkness, the anti-trinity, actively seeking to deceive and destroy and dismay right now.

It's not just creative writing. It's making a truth claim as to how things truly are. So, you can't walk away from the book of Revelation and say, yeah, I think that the whole dragon devil business, I think that's just kind of metaphoric.

It's a claim that there is an enemy of our soul. He is seeking to work us woe, but his days are numbered and he will be tossed headlong into the lake of fire.

Furthermore, there's another claim and we see it throughout this text. If you look at verse seven, we see red ink, Jesus saying and behold, I am coming soon. In verse 12, red ink, behold, I am coming soon.

[11:19] And then in verse 20, surely I am coming soon. Three times in this text, Jesus says, I'm coming back soon. We've got to hold on to that. We've got to keep those words. It's a claim of reality.

Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven, sitting on G, waiting on O, from the Father to come back. We're one day closer. These are all these truth claims.

So not only do we need to obey the moral commands of the book of Revelation, we need to obey the truth claims. Keep them how things truly are.

And here's what this means. When we keep the words of this prophecy of this book, we don't need to freak out and wonder if the earth is going to eventually be invaded and colonized by these slimy aliens that will make all humanity their slaves.

We don't need to worry about that because that's not in the book. Nor, if we keep these words, we don't need to worry about a zombie apocalypse. We need to be aware of an apocalypse, not a zombie apocalypse.

[12:29] So if you're a fan of The Walking Dead, throw it out. It's not determining, it's not what's going to happen. It's not if we keep these words, we don't need to fear that the earth will be devastated by a giant meteor wiping out of all the entire human race.

But, if Revelation 8, 10, and 11 is accurate, the third trumpet, it looks like there is going to be a meteor strike that will devastate a third of the drinking water on the planet.

that will result in the deaths of a third of humanity. I mean, it doesn't mean we're going to send Bruce Willis up into the sky and try to destroy the asteroid.

This is God at work. If we keep the words of this book, it means that as we are paying attention to global warming happening all around us, if you keep the words of this book, it raises the possibility of a third explanation for global warming.

Explanation number one, natural causes. Explanation two for global warming, it's human intervention, the result of human activity. The explanation three of global warming is that it's actually God at work allowing the earth to heat up.

[14:11] Revelation 16, 8 through 9, the fourth bowl judgment, the sun was allowed by God to scorch people by its fierce heat. It's possible.

It's an explanation. It may happen. It may happen. We must keep these words. And when we keep these words, we don't need to despair that the bad guys are going to get away with it because there is a great white throne judgment coming.

So these truth claims of this book function in our lives of what reality truly is. Did you notice in verse 7, the blessed?

Blessed are those who keep the words of this book. Blessed is the one who obeys. Blessed is the one who does the words of the prophecy of this book.

This is the sixth blessing pronounced on those who have been bought by the blood of the Lamb who obey Him. It's the sixth of seven. The seventh blessing is in verse 14.

[15:29] Blessed are those who wash their robes. To be blessed means to experience God's unmerited grace, undeserved favor.

The Old Testament described it as when God would shine His face upon you. God shines His face upon us, not because of anything we have done, but because He's a God of grace.

So here's what this means when we read these blessings in the book of Revelation. We keep these words not to be blessed. We keep these words because we already have been blessed.

We've already been bought by the blood of the Lamb. And so those who have been blessed with salvation and live faithfully to the Lamb. And they are a blessed bunch.

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. So when you keep these words of the book of this prophecy, the result is obedience to Jesus.

[16:49] us. Persevering through hardship, tribulation which are surely to come, the result is faithful discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Okay, we've hit the first two truths, now the last five, and we're going to speed up the pace. The third truth is this. These words must not be sealed.

In verses 10 and 11 we read, and he the angel said to me, do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.

There's some Old Testament background you need to know. In the book of Daniel, God reveals these visions to Daniel of what will happen in the distant future. And so in Daniel chapter 12, verse 4 and verse 9, God tells Daniel, after giving these visions, to seal up the words of the prophecy of the book, until the end.

Here in verse 10, stark contrast to Daniel, which was intentional, the angel commands John to not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book.

[18:19] And why not? For the time is near. The time of tribulation, the time of increasing judgment, the end is near.

It's no longer far away, Daniel chapter 12. It's no longer distant, which means this, we need these words now.

Don't seal them up. Don't close the book. These words need to be available and functioning in the life of God's people. We need the words of the prophecy of this book now to understand the conflict we are in and what is soon to come and to give us these glorious visions of a risen, radiant, and reigning Christ who makes it all worth it.

You need the book, you need these words now to faithfully follow Jesus in the midst of the situation we find ourselves in, challenging on all sides.

We need these words now because we live in between his first coming and his second coming and that's the point of verse 11. When we live in between, there will be two groups of people.

[19:40] There are those who follow after the beast, evil doing evil, filthy being filthy, and those who follow after the lamb, righteous doing right, holy being holy, and we need these words unsealed, functioning in our lives to show us how to remain faithful to the lamb, to walk with him because he's worth it.

So brothers and sisters, here we are at the end of the book of Revelation and I need to tell you, don't close it up. Don't come back to it in two years. Don't think about our working through the book of Revelation from September of 2018 to June 2019 as a notch we put on our belt.

This book, these words, are to be functioning in our lives. We're to live by them. We are to keep them. We need them now so that these words don't seal them up, don't put them away.

Let them speak. The fourth truth about these words is that these words warn. Look at verse 12. Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me to repay each one for what he has done. Now, this verse warns all of us in the room and around the world that we will one day stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and give an account to him.

[21:17] When he comes, he will reward or punish. These words warn us because our actions reveal who we worship.

What we just saw in verse 11, evil being evil, filthy being filthy, righteous doing right, holy being holy, those actions reveal who they are living for.

And because our actions reveal who we worship, they reveal whose mark we bear, who where our loyalties lie.

These words warn those inside the faith as well as outside the faith. I'm not sure if you, verses 8 and 9 caught your attention. They're fascinating to me.

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. He's saying, I'm a prophet. These visions were given to me. And when I heard and saw them, what does he do? I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me.

[22:36] But the angel said to me, what do you think you're doing? You must not do that. I'm a fellow servant with you and your brothers, the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book.

There again, keep the words of this book. And then the angel says, don't worship me, worship God. And it's a warning for us all. These words warn us.

Think about it. If John, the disciple who put his head on the chest of Jesus and received these divine visions from angels, if he was tempted to worship an angel, what does that mean for us? us. As Christians, we can worship things that are not God. We can worship certain preachers, whether of a bygone age or present.

We can actually worship the Bible. We can put the Bible on the same par as who God is. We can worship theology or a theological system.

[23:51] We can worship worship. We can spin greed into a worship.

worship. You see, these words, they warn us inside the faith. They warn us to worship God alone. He is worthy of our exclusive devotion. But these words also warn those outside the faith. If you looked at verses 14 and 15, we read, blessed are those who wash their robes so that they may have the right to the tree.

of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Those inside the faith, in the city, robes washed white. And then in verse 15, outside are the dogs and sorcerers and sexual immoral and murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

These words of the book of Revelation from beginning to end, they are warning those inside the faith, don't go after things that aren't God. And it's warning those outside the faith, stop your worship of that which is created.

[25:11] In verse 15, those outside the city of light, the new Jerusalem, living in Jesus' word, in darkness, these are the ones who are evil and filthy, verse 11.

Again and again, all throughout the Bible, all throughout the book of Revelation, there is warning after warning, warning about the dragon, warning about the beast, warning about the false prophet in Babylon, warning of the judgment to come, warning about the lake of fire, and it's all designed to warn someone outside the faith, stop what you're doing.

You must repent and turn to the living God. Don't worship that which is not God. God is maybe you notice that these outsiders are called dogs and you're like, oh, that's not too nice, but when you realize that it's actually a fitting description because they're just behaving like the one they're worshipping, the beast.

There's a little beast. Now, if you're in the room right now and you are feeling this sense of conviction that you are outside of God's people, that you've not been taking God's word seriously, I'll tell you what, not only is God warning you today, He's inviting you because the fifth truth I want you to see is that not only do these words warn those inside and outside the faith, these words invite.

All throughout the book of Revelation, invitation after invitation to come, come to the one. In verses 16 and 17, we read that Jesus, I Jesus, this is Jesus speaking, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches.

[27:13] Again, it's this transmission of these words starting with God, going through Jesus, moving to an angel, then to John, to the churches, to the world. Lord, and here we have Jesus saying, I sent these words to you for the churches.

And then we see in verse 17, midway through, we read this, and let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

the one speaking is described as the root and descendant of David. Verse 16. It's a claim of messiahship, of kingship, of authority.

He's described as the bright morning star. It's a picture of hope. So this king, who is the giver of hope, is calling out to those on the outside and thirsty, come drink of the water I give.

Come and drink. There's an invitation here. These words invite those who are thirsty and on the outside to come in and drink of the water of life.

[28:37] And from 22.1, we learn that this water flows from the throne of God in the new Jerusalem. To drink the water of life that Jesus offers is to come under the life-giving authority of God and the Lamb.

Do you remember in John 4, Jesus is speaking at the woman at the well. She had gone through a lot of men. And Jesus says to her in verse 14, whoever drinks of this water that I will give will never be thirsty again.

Again. Again. And maybe you walked into this building this morning and you didn't think yourself thirsty.

You don't need a drink of water. But you know your soul is thirsty because of your guilt and your shame, your anger, your lust, your greed.

The result of all of that has made you soul thirsty. You can't find anything to quench it. And today Jesus is saying to you, come to the waters I can give.

[29:55] At no cost to you. It's paid by him. Come and drink. You're invited to come. If that's you this morning, will you take what Jesus gives?

Just say to him, I'll take it. I'll take the water that you alone offer. quench my soul. These words not only invite, these words, the sixth truth, these words stir longing in our hearts.

There's another kind of invitation happening in this passage. passage. It's coming from those who've been quenched by the water of life.

Let me help you see it. Remember in 22.7, Jesus says, behold, I'm coming soon. In 22.12, Jesus says again, behold, I'm coming soon. And then in 22.20, Jesus says, surely I'm coming soon.

There's a response to that in this passage. there's a response of longing among those whose souls have been quenched by Jesus.

[31:16] We see it in verse 17. The spirit and the bride say, come. Jesus says, behold, I'm coming soon.

The spirit and the bride say, come. The spirit is the Holy Spirit and the bride, of course, is the church of God. Those who have been bought by the blood of the lamb, the blessed ones.

And if the church is the bride, that makes the lamb the groom. And so when you read these words, the spirit and the bride say, come.

Think of it this way. The Holy Spirit who indwells each of us is stirring our hearts for our bridegroom. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, bridegroom. But we also read, and let the one who hears, verse 17, say, come.

[32:24] Those who hear these words of Jesus, behold, I'm coming soon.

These words, and by the way, these words of Jesus coming, they start in verse 8 of chapter 1.

The one who hears these words, let him say, come, Lord Jesus. Come. come. And in verse 20, John, the prophet, the apostle, he hears Jesus say, surely I'm coming soon, and John himself says, amen, so be it.

Come, Lord Jesus, come. Why are all these people saying come? Come. Because all of their souls have been quenched by Jesus, and their greatest longing is for their bridegroom, who is saying, I'm coming soon, but you may be sitting in your pew saying, wait, hold on a second.

John was given this vision in 96 AD. If Jesus said, then I'm coming soon, that is a really long soon. In 2 Peter 3, 3-4, Peter describes scoffers who scoff at these very words of Jesus, in which he says, I'm coming soon.

[34:02] The way that Peter describes it is, these scoffers are saying, where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were.

That the first generation has died and nothing's changed. Where's your Jesus? He hasn't come and he's saying he's coming soon. And here we are almost two millennia later, since he said these things to the churches.

You know, it can raise in your heart, it can make you wonder, are these words trustworthy and true? I'm coming soon?

In 2 Peter 3, 8, 9, and 10, Peter answers the scoffers and those of us who wonder, how much longer? Why the delay?

Peter says, God does not work on your timetable.

[35:25] God has a different timetable. But that's not low, he says. He then goes on to say, God is not slow to fulfill his promise, I'm coming soon, but is patient towards you all, not wishing that any shall perish, but that all should repent.

So not only on a different timetable, he's got an unfinished task he's doing. And then Peter says, but the day of the Lord will come like a thief, imminent, unexpected.

So when Jesus says three times in Revelation 22, 6 through 21, I'm coming soon, he means it. He's just working off a different timetable and finalizing an uncompleted task.

The delay is so all those written in the Lamb's book of life will repent and wash their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, Revelation 7, 14.

And as we wait for him to finish his great harvest, Revelation 14, those of us with quenched souls, we say, oh, come, come, I don't know how much longer, but come, come.

[36:56] His promise stands, surely I am coming. So let me ask you this question this morning. Is your soul longing for your bridegroom?

Or is your soul longing for something else? When he comes, and he will come, remember what he brings, a new heavens and a new earth, a new Jerusalem, no more tears, no more sin, no more struggle, no more threats, I was threatened this week, no more conflict, no more fears, no more anxiety, no more depression, no more hatred, no more disappointment, no more, no more tears. Come, Lord Jesus. 1 John 3:2 says, beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

I am coming soon like a thief, anytime. The seventh and final truth about these words is my favorite. These words of this book, of this prophecy, they show us time and time again what's to come, yes, but even more gloriously, it shows us our Jesus.

[38:48] It's a magnificent, magnificent book revealing the glory of our Christ. It paints glorious pictures of who he is.

Here in our passage, we learn that Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, 113. He's the first and last, the beginning and the end. You can look at the beginning and the end and say, well, that's interesting. You know what the claim is? He's the source of all and he is the end of all. All things exist by him and for him. That's the claim of those three words.

But we also, he's the root and descendant of David. He is David's greater son. He's the bright morning star. In him is our hope. Revelation, over and over again, paints these big pictures of Jesus for us because they're true.

And God knows what we need when life gets hard. He's showing us over and over again how worthy is the lamb who was slain. Endure.

[40:08] If you flip back in the book of Revelation to Revelation 1:1, the first five words of this book say the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The revealing, the disclosing, the unveiling of Jesus Christ. And so in chapter 1, 12 through 16 we see this glorious picture of the risen radiant and reigning Christ.

Remember those fire eyes? He's holy. Chapter 5, the one seated on the throne holds up a scroll.

An angel says, who is worthy to take up the scroll and break its seals?

And then in 5:5, and 6, the lamb who was slain is standing in the middle of the heavenly entourage and he takes the scroll and all of heaven bow down and worship the lamb.

That is the one who's saying, I am coming soon. In chapter 12, there's a child born of a woman and the dragon sought to devour him.

[41:29] But this child is the fulfillment of Psalm 2, 9. He will rule the nations with a rod of iron. That is the one who is saying, I am coming soon.

Chapter 19, the rider on the white horse, he returns faithful and true with the word of God. He has a name that only he knows. And the greatest title, the king of kings and lord of lords.

This is the one who's promised, I am coming soon. He is the millennial king reigning over the old earth during the thousand year reign.

That's who's coming. He is the judge on the great white throne. That's who's saying, I'm coming soon.

And in chapter 21, this one who's the temple of the new Jerusalem, who lights up the place with lamb light, the one whose face we will see, he is our bridegroom.

[42:51] and he's saying, I'm coming soon, bride. I will wipe away your tears. These words show us Jesus.

And that is what I love so much about the book of Revelation and why this book has done my soul and maybe your soul so good over the last several months, again and again and again.

These words give us Jesus, the one who was slain for us and the one who has promised to come back for us. Well, this morning we've wrapped up the book of Revelation in not a notch on our belts. These words we must keep. Famous last words. The book of Revelation, even the entire Bible closes on these words.

Surely I am coming soon. So how must we live having received these words and yet Jesus has yet to return?

[44:07] We don't seal them up. We keep these words until he comes because these words, chapters 22, verse 21, they are the grace of the Lord Jesus for us.

Amen. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Let's pray. God, thank you for this book. Would you now press it into our hearts so that we may keep them until you come because we can't wait to see you face to face.

It's in your name we pray. Amen.