

The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back then to the passage of scripture that we have read, the book of Revelation in chapter 22. And we can read again at verse 16.

I, Jesus, have sent by an 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.

Particularly the words at the beginning of verse 17. And the spirit and the bride say, come. And let the one who hears say, come.

The book of Revelation is a book that many people find extremely difficult to understand.

[1 : 08] And that is perhaps not surprising. It is written in symbols.

And in order to understand much of what goes on in the book of Revelation, you have to understand the significance of the symbols.

And you have to know the symbols. And in among that is, of course, the use of numbers. Numbers. And you will find that throughout the book of Revelation, numbers have a particular significance.

And we'll come to that in a moment or two. And the book of Revelation that John is given in the island of Patmos basically closes what we call the canon of the New Testament.

In the same way as the books of Ezekiel and Daniel close the canon of the Old Testament.

[2 : 20] And you cannot understand Revelation without having a knowledge of the books of Ezekiel and the books of Daniel.

All of them are revelations and prophecies of things still to come. John has been taken and imprisoned in the island of Patmos probably around about the year 85, AD 85 and probably by the Emperor Domitian.

Some think it was by Nero beforehand but probably Nero is dead at this time and Domitian has taken over. But again, that's debatable. And under the final years of Nero, the Christian church has undergone a persecution that has perhaps never been seen in its history up until that particular point.

And you will all be familiar, of course, of stories of Christians to the lions and all the rest of it and so on. Again, I'm not going into the detail of that.

But John is taken from Ephesus where he was and imprisoned on the island of Patmos which is in the Aegean Sea.

[3 : 49] And if you go to Patmos nowadays you can see reputedly the cave in which John lived while he was there and so on. Whether that is true or not, that's a matter of opinion.

But the very things that John has revealed to him are of extreme significance for you and I and for the church in general.

And we need to look at the book of Revelation very carefully to see how it fits in to the whole of Scripture.

The Word of God in the book of Genesis begins with a creation. In Revelation it ends with a new creation.

Life begins in a garden, in the Garden of Eden. And you see here at the beginning of this chapter the same thing.

[4 : 57] The angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb through the middle of the street in the city. And on either side of the river the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit.

Now you can see from that it's not just one tree. There is in fact a large number of the trees of life. Remember in the Garden of Eden there was only one but here there are many.

And they have twelve kinds of fruit yielding twelve different fruits each month. Some think that that represents the fruits of the Spirit.

But that again is debatable and I'm not going to go into these particular details just now. And the first part of this chapter in chapter 22 really belongs with the section in chapter 21.

It's a bad chapter division that is made there. The chapter should really begin at verse 6. Because here it shifts our attention away from the vision that John is seeing of the end times the study of eschatology as theologians will call it the end times and it shifts our attention to the one who has revealed this to him.

[6 : 24] Now in the first instance the one who has been speaking to him and given him as it were a sort of visual tour of many of these things has been an angel.

And we see that in verse 8. I John am the one who heard and saw these things. And some people argue as to about which John this is.

I don't think there's any question again I'm not going to go into the debate on this I don't think there's any question that this is the apostle John. This is the same John who writes the letters and the same John who has written the gospel.

And the letters that John writes are written after the revelation when John has returned from Patmos to Ephesus. And it's a very interesting fact that John is the only one of the twelve disciples who does not die a martyr.

He dies in old age in Ephesus probably in his late 90s. and the historian Irenaeus tells us of John being carried into the church in his old age by the young men of the congregation in order to be present with them.

[7 : 44] I John am the one who heard and saw these things and when I heard and saw them I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me.

And it's interesting that even in spite of everything that John has seen that this is the second time that he makes the same mistake.

He has already done it in chapter 19 and verse 10. Fallen down at the feet of an angel.

The angel who showed him these things. And the angel is very clear. He said to me you must not do that. I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets and with those who keep the words of this book worship God.

And there is a warning there to us this morning. A warning to all believers of how easy it is for us to slip into idolatry.

[8 : 54] To fall at the feet of the angel. Do not do it. Worship God. And you and I perhaps should spend more and more time meditating on our own particular idols.

How many idols do we have that keep us away from the things of God? And these are just sort of passing thoughts at this stage.

And he said to me in verse 10 do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book. There are certain things before this that John was told to seal up.

And if you find and look in the book of Daniel you will find it in Daniel's visions as well. In the same way there were certain things that he was to seal up.

There are certain things that are not revealed to us in scripture. And you and I should be quite clear about that.

[10 : 07] There are certain things that we do not understand. there are certain things and details that are not revealed.

For example we were debating last night when were the angels created? Were the angels created before man along with man?

And why did certain angels fall? And so on. And there are many interesting questions tied up to that. But scripture is silent on the creation of the angels.

Doesn't really matter. There are things that are far more important than debating certain questions like that. Although these questions are interesting in themselves.

do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book for the time is near. I want you to notice that the book of Revelation is a prophecy.

[11 : 19] The term is used there. It's used again by Jesus himself. In verse 18, I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book.

And in verse 19, 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.

And there are certain things that we can say very clearly about prophecy. First of all, all prophecy in scripture is infallible.

It either has come to pass or it will come to pass. And all we have to do in that is look at some of the things that we see even in this chapter itself.

In the time we have this morning, we can only scratch the surface of many of the things here. But we see in verse 16, I, Jesus. Curiously enough, this is only the second time in the New Testament that Jesus identifies himself by name.

[12:33] I, Jesus. The only other time that he does it is in the vision to Saul of Tarsus. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches.

I am the root and descendant of David, the bright morning star. And immediately, logically, you think, well, how can he possibly be both the root and the descendant?

But then again, if you look at the genealogy in Matthew 1, you see, of course, how Jesus is descended through Adam, right through David, and right through to his own coming.

The prophecy is fulfilled. It was the same prophecy that was there in Genesis 3:16, that he would bruise the head of the serpent.

And if you've looked at the previous chapters in Revelation, you have seen that the serpent, that is Satan, has finally been destroyed in chapter 20 in the judgment and defeated and that in itself is one of the most difficult chapters there is in scripture.

[13:47] It's what's known as the millennium chapter, the meaning of the term a thousand years. And again, I'm not going to go. Time will not permit me to go into that.

And then chapter 21 shows us the vision of the new Jerusalem coming down. This is what has been promised since the very beginning of the Old Testament.

I am the root and descendant of David, the bright morning star. And the bright morning star, the term reminds us of the prophecy made in Numbers 24 and verse 17 by Balaam.

When he began, he was brought to curse Israel and he ended up blessing them and he refers to the bright and the morning star.

And the star is the symbol of royalty. That's how it's used throughout scripture, as a symbol of royalty. That is why it is the star that leads the wise men to Bethlehem because a king had been born.

[15:04] I am the root and descendant of David, the bright morning star. The prophecy is fulfilled and everything that goes through scripture in terms of prophecy will be fulfilled.

It is spirit inspired and therefore infallible. And as Jesus then speaks, and perhaps it's difficult sometimes to separate where Jesus begins to speak in this chapter and takes over from the angel. Some think that it's at verse 12 and others think it's at verse 10. But it doesn't really matter because the angel previously has been speaking the words that the Lord Jesus Christ has given him to speak.

The spirit and the bride say come. Many people immediately question, well, what does that mean? The Holy Spirit and the bride, what is the bride? The bride, of course, is the church. And you find that very, very clearly in chapter 21 and verse 2 when he says, John says, I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

[16:45] And if you look again at the symbolism of scripture, you will see that all throughout scripture, the church is described as the bride of Christ.

That's the imagery that is used in Song of Solomon. That's what Song of Solomon is all about. The relationship between the bride and her husband.

And in Jeremiah, God says, I, the Lord, am thy husband. So the bride of Christ is the church.

And here it is the church militant. That is the church here still on earth. Because remember that the things that are written here have still to occur.

There is, of course, a church triumphant in heaven of the saints who have gone to their eternal rest. But it is the bride, the church militant, here on earth, that says come along with the spirit.

[17:56] and the bride can only say come because she is inspired by the spirit to do so.

Nobody can wish for the second coming of Christ unless they have a knowledge of the spirit, the holy spirit of God.

Now that in itself is a very solemn thing. And perhaps one of the best ways of illustrating it is like this.

I want you to assume that in front of you on your pew this morning you have a little button, a green button, although the color doesn't matter.

and if you press it, the second coming of Christ will occur right now.

[19 : 09] How many of you would actually press it? Your first reaction as a believer is to say even what we have here, let the one who hears say come, come Lord Jesus, and you think, oh yes, oh come Lord Jesus and take us with you to our eternal rest in heaven, where all the glorious things that we have seen in the previous chapter will be fulfilled, and where we will spend eternity in the worship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

yes, I want to press the button, but the more you think about it, you say, not yet, not yet.

I have family, I have friends, I have people I know whom I still want to come to faith. no Lord, don't come yet, because if you do come, there will be no further possibility of anyone else coming to faith. It's a phrase that we used to hear so often, we are still here on mercy's ground, and while we are still here on mercy's ground, the Lord will make up his jewels, none of them will be lost, none will be lost.

But you and I don't know who the jewels are, only God knows that, and therefore all of us probably come to the conclusion about the button and say, Lord, not yet, not yet, that there would be still times of refreshing, times of renewal, before you come again.

[21 : 23] But nevertheless, in your heart and in your soul, the Spirit and the Bride say, come. How wonderful it will be when all the disasters and sadness of this world are over.

How wonderful it will be for God's people when they are taken into eternal communion with them.

So that's what we see at the beginning of the chapter in the description of the city in verse 3.

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and the Lamb will be in it and his servants will worship him. That is something surely that every Christian looks forward to.

The day that you will be finally in glory worshipping forever and ever. They will see his face, his name will be on their foreheads, night will be no more, they will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light and they will reign forever and ever.

Isn't that something wonderful to look forward to for every Christian, every believer this morning?

These are the promises of Scripture and in the same way as the words of the prophecy of this book is infallible, these things are also infallible.

[23 : 10] They will come to pass. But you notice that along with this wish there is still the possibility, our Lord Jesus makes it so clear here, there is still the possibility of coming to faith.

Let the one who hears say come, let the one who is thirsty come, let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

Christ. Why? Because the price has already been paid. The price was paid at the cross.

The price was paid by the blood that was shed. This is what you see throughout the whole of Scripture from the Old Testament through to the cross.

The Old Testament was a shadow of the things to come. And the New Testament fulfills the things which are to come, except for the second coming of our Lord.

[24 : 33] And this is what the book of Revelation basically is about. It's about the second coming of the Lord. Something that Jesus himself spoke about frequently in the Gospels and now reveals in detail to John in the vision that he sees.

And you remember that the first part of the book of Revelation are the letters to the seven churches, the seven churches of Asia. And each one of those churches has been told that there is something that they need to correct.

and every single one of us has a warning. We are told in chapter three, he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

That's the church in Sardis and it's repeated to the church in Philadelphia and so on. But along with the warnings also comes the same message.

in chapter three and verse 20, the angel says, and it is Jesus speaking, Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

[25 : 48] If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.

and he is knocking this morning at the doors of any hearts here who have yet not opened their hearts to him.

And the promise is that if you open the door, he will come in. And it's exactly the same thing that we have here. Let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

the price has been paid. This is the same water of life as Jesus spoke to the woman of Samaria about.

It's the same water of life as you see in the prophecy of Ezekiel and in the vision of Ezekiel's temple. But there the river flows by the temple.

[26 : 54] Here, the water of life as you see in the first verse, that it flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. And you notice how the Lamb again fulfills the symbolism and the prophecy of the Old Testament from the Passover onwards.

It was by the blood of the Passover that the Israelites were delivered from the death of the first born. But remember again, it is no good just having the blood.

The blood must be applied. It had to be applied to the doorposts and the lintels. And then the angel would pass over.

That's where the term Passover comes from. blood. And in the same way, the blood has to be applied to your heart and to mine, so that the water of life will flow freely.

That's what brings us to life. That's what Jesus discusses with the Samaritan woman. Let the one who desires, take the water of life, without price.

[28 : 51] It's available for you free of charge. But there are many who do not desire the water of life.

What will be your end? Your end you can read in chapter 20 in the judgment before the great white throne.

Then I saw a great white throne on him who was seated from his presence earth and sky fled away and no place was found him. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened.

Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books according to what they had done. God. Now there are some who think by that, that that means that it is by your works that you are judged.

But you interpret scripture with scripture. And scripture is very clear that it is not by works that you are saved.

[30 : 02] Go to Ephesians 2. you are saved by faith. Not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. And it ends in chapter 20 with these fearful words.

If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. So there you have the two alternatives laid out clearly for you.

either eternal damnation in the lake of fire or eternal glory in the new Jerusalem. Now the new Jerusalem is of course symbolic.

If you look at chapter 21 and you look at the dimensions of the new Jerusalem, you will see again that it is all in multiples of twelve.

The city has twelve gates, the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the name of the twelve tribes. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the land.

[31 : 18] And as I said to the children, as you look through the things in Revelation, you will find that numbers are used frequently and numbers are extremely symbolic.

even at the start of the book, we saw the seven angels speaking to the seven churches of Asia. Asia, of course, being modern-day Turkey.

there are far more than seven angels. John saw a little earlier in the chapter or in the book, he saw ten thousand times ten thousand.

That's over a million. And then he goes on to say an innumerable host of angels. seven is used as a symbol.

Seven churches, seven seals, seven angels, seven scrolls. And you go back to Genesis and you find that the week has seven days.

[32 : 26] You see, God's perfect number is seven. And that is why seven is used as a symbol. And the numbers that follow are all symbolic.

three is the number of the Trinity. And four is the universal number. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three.

Three persons in the Godhead. Four is the universal number. Three times four is twelve, and twelve is the number of the church. And so you find that the city has twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, twelve foundations, twelve apostles.

All these things are symbols of what was originally written throughout the Old Testament. percent. And if you look again at the size of the city, in verse 15 and 16 in chapter 21, the city lies four square, its length the same as its width.

[33 : 33] And he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia, all multiples of three times four. And the city is a cube, it's a perfect cube, length the same as its width.

Go back to the tabernacle and you find that the Holy of Holies was also a perfect cube. The place where God is to be worshipped in holiness is perfect in every single way.

The numbers are all symbols. some people get very confused when they look at one of the earlier chapters of Revelation and they see the number of those sealed as being 144,000.

And remember again, of course, that that is twelve times twelve. Twelve of the twelve tribes.

There's a curiosity there, by the way.

If you look at that passage, the twelve tribes, the tribe of Dan is missing. And if you go back to the book of Judges, towards the end of the book of Judges, you'll find out why the tribe of Dan is missing.

[34 : 57] It was the first tribe to introduce idolatry into Israel. And it's blotted out of the book of life. And when you come to this symbolism, you see that it all brings you down to let the one who is thirsty come.

Let the one who desires take the water of life without price. The offer of the gospel is open to everyone.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. walk. And I know that there will be some here this morning who will say, well, but what about election?

I can only come if I'm elect. You're absolutely right. You can only come if you're elect.

elect. And then people say, but if I'm not an elect, then it's not my fault, it's God's fault, because he hasn't elected me.

[36 : 11] So basically, you end up blaming God for your lack of desire. You see, you have to look at election from a different viewpoint.

might. Maybe I've said this before here, but it's worth repeating again. And I don't mean to be rude. Election is none of your business.

It's God's business. We don't know who the elect are. You don't know who the elect are.

Every single one of God's people who has come to faith had no wish to come to faith themselves at first.

They only came to faith because of the work of the Holy Spirit. And perhaps there are some here this morning who have still to come to faith and to come among the elect.

[37 : 23] And you see the scriptural promises that none will be turned away. If you use election you are using an excuse.

You are using the same excuse as is here as not desiring. Let the one who doesn't desire not come. It's exactly the same thing.

The Spirit and the Bride say come. That is what you and I as believers look forward to. We look forward to the presence of the Holy Spirit with us in every act of worship, in everything that we do every single day.

And yet we sin in thought, word and deed. Why? Jeremiah tells us that the heart is desperately wicked above all things.

and in spite of that, Jesus is still saying come. Let anyone who hears say come.

[38 : 42] Come. But you have to be thirsty and you have to desire. And if you have no thirst and no desire, you will not come.

Don't blame God. Blame yourself. Blame yourself. And finally, Revelation closes with a warning.

I warn everyone. And who is warning? It is Jesus who is warning. 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.

Some people debate whether these words simply apply to the book of Revelation. Others say they apply to all of Scripture.

Personally, I believe I believe that the word book here refers to the whole of Scripture, not just to the book of Revelation. If you add anything to it or if you take anything away, think how many things have been added to the word of God over the centuries by the various churches.

[40 : 14] Bits and pieces of legalism and tradition here and there and time has passed. I can't really go into that in detail. So many things added which are not scriptural.

And yet at the same time think of how nowadays we seek to take away from the word of God. How often we say all these things are not relevant in the 21st century.

They no longer have a place in our worship of God. And there are some who even go further and deny parts of scripture. I heard not so very long ago of certain ministers in certain churches in parts of England and elsewhere saying that the virgin birth was a myth.

That it didn't really happen that way. Taking away from the words of the book of this prophecy. And you see that is the problem that you and I so often have.

There are certain things about the word of God that we are quite happy with, that we like. That we think, oh if everybody obeyed the six commandments of man's duty unto man, what a wonderful place the world would be.

[41 : 45] True, but that's not reality. But there are other things in the word of God that we want to take away from our daily walk of life.

We've taken it out of our schools, we're taking it out of the statutes of our law in certain things. And again, I don't have time to go into details of many of these things.

Is it little wonder that our society has broken down in the way that it has because we no longer pay any attention to the principles of the word of God?

Is it little wonder perhaps in your own life that things go wrong because you do not live by the principles of the word of God?

Is it any wonder that your prayers are perhaps not answered? When all you do is take God out of the closet when you have an emergency and you put him back in until he's needed again?

[42 : 58] The spirit and the bride say come, but we pray that in a day of his mercy that there will still be time for people to reflect on these things because your eternal destiny is burned up in it and every single day there are more and more taken into eternity especially when they least expect it.

All you have to do is think of the shooting in Parkland in Florida in the last day or two. none of those people expected to be in eternity so quickly and the same could happen to any one of us.

Tomorrow is not promised and the spirit and the bride say come let us pray.