

Invitation to Come to Christ

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back into Revelation 22, and we'll fix our thoughts on verse 17.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him who hears say, Come, and let him who thirsts come.

Whoever desires or whoever wills, let him take the water of life freely. Revelation 22, 17.

And I want us, obviously, to think about this simply as an invitation to come to Christ. And to be sure, it is applicable both to those who have not yet come to him in a way that is a saving encounter, but it's true, too, for those of us who have, we need to go back to him again and again as the source of the spiritual enrichment we need.

I want us just to think, because we're in the last book of the Bible, I want us just to remind ourselves that God himself, the living God, has given us this most amazing revelation of his will for us.

[1 : 27] He has done this in giving us the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and the New Testaments. And in this revelation, he makes known to sinners of mankind, both to the Jews and the Gentiles alike, that they are invited by him to avail themselves of his goodness and his mercy and his grace.

And that, of course, is all bound up in the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. It is through him alone that we experience God's blessing and God's peace and God's spiritual enrichment.

It is him alone, through Jesus the Messiah, we experience everlasting life. We come into that new life, that is everlasting life in all its fullness.

And surely, therefore, it's fitting that the Bible should conclude with this final invitation to sinners to come to Jesus and to know a spiritual slaking of their spiritual thirst in him.

We ought, I think, to take this seriously. We ought to see how strategically it is placed here, towards the end of this closing chapter of what we call the canon of Scripture.

[2 : 59] It's as if the Lord, in his love and his mercy, is bidding us here at the end of the books of the Bible, one last time, as it were, to see the importance of coming to the Lord Jesus Christ and experiencing God's blessing in him.

And whether, as I said already, whether we've responded positively to this before, and we've experienced him, or whether we've yet to experience him, the word is applicable to us.

He is the fountain of life. In him we see God's light shine. In him we come to know God. And we go back to him again and again and again.

We say, like the psalmist, my life strength is the Lord. And we hear him bidding us, the Spirit says it, the bride says it, come, and let him who hears, that is those who believe, say come.

And let him who thirsts, come. So, we want to consider this for a few minutes together. And we want actually to take the last first.

[4 : 20] That is, we want to take, let him take the water of life freely. It's at the end of the verse, and we're going to take it at the beginning of this sermon.

Because it is the blessing referred to, and it makes sense to think about the blessing. And then, about the invitations to come and enjoy that blessing.

And the blessing referred to, therefore, is our first consideration. And clearly, it is set forth in the passage, let him take the water of life.

This is an interesting reference of water of life. It is frequently referred to in the scriptures. Actually, it's always referred to in the plural.

Mayim, Chayim is the Hebrew for it. The waters of life would be the way you would say it. But obviously, that's poor English.

[5 : 30] But it's there to give us a sense of immeasurable fullness. goodness. And it's put like that in the original.

And it's a figure which brings before us the truth that the Lord himself is the source of all true spiritual life. This is what we're dealing with.

We're dealing with what is true, what is real. And we find that God is the source of that true spiritual life to us.

And there are many references in the scriptures. We're just going to pick up a few of them from the Old Testament first of all. To remind ourselves that God spoke in these pictures to convey to people that he is the source of true spiritual life.

And the waters of life or the water of life communicates this idea that he is the source of that spiritual life. There's an interesting passage for example in Ezekiel's prophecy in chapter 47.

[6 : 44] We'll not go into it in depth but we'll just touch on it from verse 1. You have this picture of God's dwelling place and God's temple is there in the original.

but the idea is that where God dwells from there from God's dwelling place out flows waters in fullness.

We were singing in the psalm Psalm 46 there is a river that makes glad the city of God and there again the holy place within the Lord most high has his abode where he dwells.

And the image is that there where God dwells you have this picture of water flowing out and that water makes glad the people of God.

And here in Revelation 22 verse 1 we're told if you go back to it he showed me a pure river of the water of life.

[7 : 59] You can pass these references by and you read them but you don't hear them. And it's important to pick up on the water of life clear as crystal proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb.

You see that ties in with the two references in Ezekiel 47 and Psalm 46. In other words we're showing you the connections that the Spirit of God has put there in order to help us to see that this wonderful turn of phrase, the water of life, has reference to that spiritual blessing that issues in eternal life for us is found in God alone.

Or more specifically the Lord Jesus himself. God has chosen that in his own son or through his own son we have one who communicates this to us, the water of life.

Some of you know, if for no other reason, I mentioned it on Thursday at the prayer meeting, the Jewish festival of tabernacles has just finished.

The practice at the end of it in old times was that they poured out, the priests took water from the pool of Siloam in a golden pitcher and went up to the temple mount and they poured out the water at the altar.

[9 : 43] And Jesus said, you find it in John 7, 37, Jesus said on one occasion, on the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus cried out, if anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink, and out of his inmost being shall flow living waters.

You remember that lovely passage in John's gospel earlier on in the gospel, a passage that we've often listened to as it's been expounded to us, about Jesus meeting the woman of Samaria in John's gospel chapter 4.

And she's being asked to get water for him out of Jacob's well, and he uses the whole imagery water to challenge her about her spiritual needs.

And he says to it, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that gives it, you would have asked, and you would be given living waters.

And generally therefore in scripture you have this image of the spiritual blessing that comes to us through the Lord Jesus the Messiah and it is pictured as living waters or life giving water.

[11 : 25] And the fact of the matter is it is supremely an image of the spirit of God. He is likened to living waters. The Holy Spirit himself is the one who comes like water onto dry parched land.

And he brings life to us. He is the one who initiates spiritual life in the human soul.

He is the one who makes the sinner dead and his trespasses and sins alive. He is the one who brings in spiritual life where before there was no life.

He brings it. And we are therefore to consider how important it is to know the ministry of the Holy Spirit of God in ourselves.

He it is who gives us so refreshing views of Jesus. He enables us to get a grip in our understanding of the things of Jesus so that our hearts are moved.

[12:44] That we find ourselves in love with him and wanting to serve him all our days. And we need to know this. We can't rest till we experience this for ourselves.

And God in his grace can make that happen. We need to know the ministry, the soul refreshing ministry of God's Spirit, here depicted as the waters of life.

Whoever desires, let him take of the water of life freely. It is his work that enables us to grasp and appreciate and rest on the truth as it is in Jesus.

And that's so important to us. We need to know his work in us. And surely it's right for us to understand that the Spirit of God would have us know.

It's not something that should be secret and unknowable, but something if it pulsates with life, if the presence of the Spirit bringing the truth home to us pulsates with life, surely we know it.

[14:04] Arguably we may not know it as much as we could know it, but we would know it. It is the Spirit's work to make the things of Christ real and true and powerful to our experience.

I just want to highlight three things that the presence of the life giving water of the Spirit's presence brings in.

Surely he gives us to know pardon from God. He shows us that God in Christ has opened up for sinners a fountain that washes our sin away, that cleanses us.

We touched a wee bit on this back on Thursday. We experience this experience that the Bible talks about that the sinner is washed.

The sinner is purified because the sinner receives the forgiveness of sins through faith. And the Spirit shows us the way whereby this pardon comes to us.

[15:18] It's pictured in the Old Testament of the bunch of hyssops sprinkling the blood of the animals on the covenant people. But it's pictured far more clearly for us that the blood of Jesus Christ God sent cleanses us from all sin.

The Spirit applies that to the human heart. He enables us to believe that the benefits of Christ's death are ours by faith.

That's profoundly important. And yet it's so simple. But that's the symbol. There must be more to it. It's what the sinner's heart thinks.

No. Because what it's about is Almighty God is at work. The Spirit of God is at work. And that means it's not only mega important, it's mega profound.

He works and he applies the benefits of the death of Christ to us. In an effective way. And we can say I have cleansing, I have pardon, I have the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus.

[16:29] And with that, the Spirit of God, the water of life, sets us apart to God. We call it sanctification, to make holy, to set apart for God.

And of course, according to Scripture, and particularly 1 Peter, the opening verses of that first chapter, we are set apart through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.

In other words, the Spirit applies the benefits of Christ's death to us. And we are set apart, in that sense, sanctified for God.

God, that's a privilege. And we are to simply rest on the truth of it, as the Spirit brings it home to our hearts.

And when he does that for us, he begins a process in us. He improves on us. Some of us feel we haven't made much progress at all.

[17:38] sanctification as the work of God's grace. And the Spirit enables us to die and to sin and to live and to righteousness.

That is a process. There is the initial separating of us from our point of view when we believe the report. And then there is an ongoing, a lifelong process.

And we know that we battle and often fail because sin prevails against us. But the Spirit, the water of life come in, is committed to working on us and progressing us in the way.

This ought to be an encouragement to us. And of course, in his own time, the Lord will bring his people to glory.

He's committed to bringing us to the full enjoyment of his presence. We were singing about it there in the psalm, the rivers of his pleasure.

[18:53] He will bring us to an inflow that we will not experience here in this world. We were thinking on the Thursday of the prayer meeting about these wonderful words in Revelation 7, how they got to heaven, how they were able to get into heaven.

They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And we're told in that wonderful passage that the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them and lead them into fountains of living waters.

Revelation 7, and you see it there, just verse 17 towards the end. He will lead them into fountains of living waters.

There's a yet-to-be side of it. in the eternal heaven of God, post-resurrection experience. They will experience the depth and the riches of spiritual blessing that at this stage we can know a little about, but it's far beyond even what we can imagine at our best.

It's a yet-to-be side. But, you see, we are encouraged to think about this. This is the blessing referred to. And it's an encouragement to be leaving the report here and resting on what God himself says.

[20 : 35] Let him take of the water of life. We'll come to freely in this second point. That brings us, indeed, to the second point.

There is invitation given. And the Spirit and the bride say come. Let's consider, then, first of all, the Spirit of God is referred to first.

The Spirit says come. And he says come to everyone who hears the word. The Spirit says come. the Spirit of God himself, the Spirit who is the real author of the scriptures, he himself says come. Sinner come, whoever you are, wherever you are, come to the fountain of living waters, take of the water of life.

The blessed Spirit who was at work from the very beginning, the Spirit who imparted saving knowledge to those way back at the dawn of human history, this one and that one there, were born of that Spirit.

[21 : 52] He applied the work that Christ would one day complete. that Spirit brought saving knowledge, in all the shadows I agree, but saving knowledge to the people.

And that Spirit has been doing this down through the ages, even bringing Gentiles in to the Israel of God. And we have a Ruth present with us today, at least one.

I know. And Ruth, the original Ruth, the Moabites, she was not an Israelite. She came in by faith to the family of God.

And how did she get in there? Because the Spirit of God one day said to her, through the word, come, and take of the water of life.

And so it went on and on. And one of the great marks of that Pentecost following Jesus' ascension to heaven is that the Spirit of God was poured out.

[23 : 07] Peter said, this is not about men drank, this is about men filled with the Spirit. And it fulfills the prophecy of Joel. I will pour my Spirit out on all flesh.

The Gentiles will receive. That was a problem to the Jewish believers at first, that the Gentiles were coming in to the family of God.

They were believing the report. It was that great theologian and politician too, he was, Abraham Kuyper, who said, thinking about the Pentecostal outpouring.

It was like innumerable channels of water flowing out upon the nations. A mighty demonstration of the power of the Spirit.

And that Spirit says, come, that Spirit who makes the word effective to us, he says it. Come to Jesus, in whom we have that spiritual blessing.

[24 : 15] But notice, secondly, the bride also says, come. That is the people of God, the believing people. The bride is, in the Old Testament, an emblem of the Lord's people, those who follow him.

In the New Testament, Jesus himself talked about himself as the bridegroom. and his people as the bride.

Revelation tells us about the bride, the bride of the bridegroom Christ. The lamb's wife is the people of God.

And the people of God are privileged to say to other people, come, come with us, God. Because they themselves have said something like this to him, draw us, Lord, and we'll run after you.

And they want others, therefore, to come with them. They want others to hear their story. That's what a testimony is about, isn't it?

[25 : 37] telling others about how we came to know the reality and our experience of the water of life, of Jesus, of believing on Jesus, and of knowing the Spirit of God working in us.

we say to them what Moses said to his brethren-law, come with us, and we will do you good, because God has spoken good concerning his people.

And John says also, let him who hears come. This is important to us as well. Ordinarily, in the general run of things, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

And even those who have never heard a human voice still hear when the Spirit of God touches their heart.

They hear inverted commas, the Word of God. It comes to them. But in the run of things generally, we hear, faith comes by hearing. But you and I know that it's not just hearing without ears.

[26 : 57] We hear that without heart, without understanding, and we receive the report we hear, we believe on it. And so those who hear are those who have experienced the report, they believe the report, and they want to tell others the story.

It just goes with the territory. We want others to know the reality of the Spirit of God's ministry in us, a Christ-centered and a Christ-glorifying ministry.

And those who hear are those who hear to the saving of their soul, and they want to declare the wonderful works of the Lord.

Our time's whizzing on, so we must ring this off. But we just remind ourselves again, that if we have heard the report, and believe the report, we want others to know it.

We want family, and friends, and neighbours, and work colleagues, to know that we've heard the voice of of Jesus in the word.

[28 : 16] And we have been brought to experience the power of that word. And we've heard it, and we've received it, and we've rested upon it, and do.

And then he says, let him who thirsts come. I like this because a preacher gets away with something here.

teachers sometimes, when folk are listening to them, they think, oh, he's pushing this a bit far, he's keeping at it, not once and again, but again and again.

Well, here we have it. It's here. The Spirit of God is allowing me to do this. And he says in the fourth place, let him who thirsts come. It's as if he's coming to the end of the Scriptures, the Spirit I mean, and he knows it.

He knows it as only he can know it, and he's not letting it go. That's the preacher's excuse for not letting it go. He's there, he wants it, implores the people, yes, let him who thirst him.

[29 : 26] Oh, this is a blessed thirst that rises up in our soul, a thirst for God, the living God. God. I've once read a story about a Roman Catholic priest who was converted to the Lord Jesus Christ, who abandoned all the external trappings of Roman dogmas, and he was reading in the Psalms, and he read these words, like as the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for you, O God.

And just then, in the twinkling of an eye, he was gripped by something he knew nothing of, the slaking of the thirst in his soul, a thirst for the living God.

And it's a wonderful thing, and a blessed thing, when we know that we are thirsting for the living God, that we want to experience his presence, and when we're like that, we can thank him that we have that thirst, and we can be encouraged to believe he will slake that thirst.

And wonderfully, we read the words, And let him who thirsts come, whoever wills, let him take of the water of life freely.

And we've left that little word freely to the end, because it's crucial in our understanding of what all this blessing is about.

[31 : 22] When we thirst for God, we thank him for the thirst he's put in our hearts. When we want that to be satisfied and slaked, we know that he can do it.

And we know, if he's teaching us by his word and spirit, that that is a gift from him. We take of the water of life freely.

We can't purchase it. We can't bargain with God for it. It is free without money and without price. Yes, free. The word in the original there is Dorean, and it means a gift from God. It's free to us. It's given without money and without price. Now, let's be clear here. That doesn't mean that our givings to the Lord's cause were to stop giving.

[32 : 30] No, no. Our attendance on the means of grace were to stop it. No, no. No, no. We've got to distinguish between what is right and proper for us to do, and to do well, and how we obtain the gift that is talked about here, the waters of life, the ministry of the Holy Spirit applying to us Christ

and his saving benefits.

We've got to distinguish two things here, and what he's saying is, this wonderful experience of God in our souls, of the knowledge that we are pardoned and right with God, is free to whosoever desires to obtain it, without money and without Christ.

We come with empty hands, as the reformers used to say, we come simply trusting to God who is the giver, to give us that gift freely.

There's no contribution at that level we need to make. God. Now I know, as you know, human nature is not too keen on that idea.

We see it in our own experience. Somebody gives you something, and you're trying to find a way to give them something back. We're all at it. There's no use pretending.

[33 : 59] It's part of the perversions of our human nature, or maybe the generous aspect of our human nature. Somebody gives you something, I'll keep that in mind, and I'll give this to me, back.

When we're dealing with God, and when we're dealing with God in terms of the gift of salvation, of the water of life freely, it is just that freely, without money, without price.

We give them nothing back as part of the package. When we receive the blessing, when we enter into the experience of God in our soul, and peace, and pardon, and we're on the road toward heaven, then we give.

We give then, because we love him, and we want to serve him, but we're not paying back the debt. We don't think like that. We can never pay the debt. Freely, you have received.

Freely give. That's the way. And the fact is that even in the Old Testament, people didn't like it that way.

[35 : 16] They weren't willing for it to be that way, and they took exception. So too did the Jerusalemites when our Lord was here in this world. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, it kills the prophets.

And stones those who were sent to you. How often would I have gathered you? As a mother hen gathers her chickens under her wing, but you were not willing.

Not willing for what? Not willing to take the gift freely given. My dear friends, let's not leave here today without taking this word from the Lord.

That's a word that brings something of an estimable value to us freely. Let us receive it gladly. In Jesus' name. Amen.