

Advent - 'Come Lord Jesus!'

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[0 : 00] Revelation chapter 22. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city.

Also on either side of the river, the tree of life, with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads, and 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 for ever and ever. And he said to me, these words are trustworthy and true, and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.

And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things.

[1 : 24] And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me. But 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 he 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.

Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me to repay everyone for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

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. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

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.

[2 : 47] 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 this book, 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. Good morning. I'm Jake. Part of the church family here, but also a ministry trainee. If you don't know what that is, you could ask me later and I'll try and explain.

On the back of your service sheet, you'll find a handout, an outline of where we're going. If you'd like to follow along as we look at Revelation chapter 22. Let's pray.

[3 : 58] Our Father, please help us as we look at your word together.

Teach us. Help us to understand. Help us to grapple with what you say. Open our eyes. Help us to see. And Father, we pray, please, that you would change us and help us to live more and more for your glory, especially as we approach Christmas.

Amen. Amen. Well, Christmas is coming. It's nearly here. Advent calendars full of chocolate, if you're allowed.

Lizzie doesn't let me have one. End of term plays. Christmas holidays. Trees up. Lights on. Putting present lists together. Friends, family.

Too much food. All the mince pies you can eat. And all that wonderfully average Christmas music. Then Christmas morning comes and it's all stockings open.

[5 : 09] Seeing everyone at church. Yummy Christmas lunch with pigs in blankets and sprouts and more food than you can eat in a week, let alone one meal. Then it's presents open.

The Queen's speech. The Christmas walk. The Christmas film. The family game. Before eventually heading to bed at some time. And then it's Boxing Day and...

Oh. Is that it? Was... Was that it? At the pile of presents we maybe didn't even need stares at us.

And the pile of rubbish is even bigger. And who's going to take the bins out? And who's going to do the washing up? And... Back to normality. Whatever that is. Don't get me wrong.

I love Christmas. But... Is that not often our experience on Boxing Day morning? And I wonder if it's sometimes something of the Christian experience too.

[6 : 09] Jesus. Yes. A saviour. How I need him. A sins forgiven. What relief. Eternal life. What a joy. Praise the Lord.

And then affliction comes. And persecution comes. And we're knocked back by sin and suffering and...

Is this it? Is this it? And how will we keep going then? Living for Jesus when that feeling comes.

When it all feels too much. When we feel like giving up. When sin is too hard to fight. And when persecution comes. When it's easier really to drift. And take our foot off the pedal.

How will we keep going? Well we'll keep going as we heed the call of Advent. And of Revelation 22. And the whole book even.

[7 : 06] Of Revelation. See popular opinion dictates that Advent is all about Jesus' coming down to earth as a baby. But actually it's about looking ahead to his return.

So Advent and Revelation chapter 22 invite us to lift our eyes to the horizon. And see in the distance. Jesus is coming.

The book of Revelation is given to John in a vision of God. To encourage him and Christians to keep going. Whatever the cost. However big the opposition. If you were around over the summer.

You might remember that we looked at chapters 2 and 3. And Jesus' seven letters to the seven churches. The consistent refrain. Of those letters as Jesus spoke.

Was keep going. Press on. Overcome the pain and the trials. With me. And through the rest of the book of Revelation.

[8 : 09] John gets a glimpse of the battle that wages between Satan and God. And at times it looks like Satan is going to win. But in reality. He is totally flattened.

Locked up. And restrained. In chapter 12 of Revelation. Christ defeats Satan. And in chapter 17. He completes his triumph over evil. Then through chapters 19 and 20 and 21.

We get a glorious glimpse. Of the new world Jesus is bringing in. And we see a vision of the severity. Of God's judgment. On evil and wickedness.

And then we land here. In chapter 22. The last pages of the Bible. Wrapping up God's word. With a final call. A reminder from Jesus. To Christians everywhere.

I'm coming soon. Have a look at verse 7. And behold. I'm coming soon.

[9 : 06] And it's there in verse 12. Over the page. Behold. I'm coming soon. And in verse 20.

Surely. I'm coming soon.

Just around the corner. Just on the horizon. Jesus is coming. Now God is active. And at work. In our world.

Healing. Restoring. Answering prayers. Calling people to himself. But on the grand scale. The big picture. If we were to take a step back. And see. The next thing. On God's plan of salvation.

Is Jesus' return. No one knows when. He'll come like a thief in the night. And until he comes.

We're experiencing God's patience. As he gives people time to trust Jesus. Jesus is coming.

[10 : 04] Which is great comfort. To weary persecuted Christians. Like whispering to a hurt toddler. Desperate for mummy. It's okay.

She's coming. I can see. She's just there. She's coming. She's coming. And so through all of life. In ups and downs. And especially when facing suffering and persecution.

If we're to keep going. We need to hear Jesus' words. Verse 20. Surely. I am coming soon. And at Christmas.

Rather than be distracted by details. And focus solely on friends and family. Each day we remember. The baby of Christmas. He grew up. He died on the cross.

He rose from the tomb. He ascended to heaven. And he will return. Soon. And he isn't coming aimlessly.

[11:02] On his return. We need to know what he brings. Have a look at verse 12 with me. Behold. I am coming soon.

Bringing my recompense with me. To repay everyone for what he has done. I'm the alpha and the omega. The first and the last. The beginning and the end. 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. Outside are the dogs. And sorcerers. And the sexually immoral.

And murderers. And idolaters. And everyone who loves and practices falsehood. When he returns. He will bring with him his recompense.

Which means he will bring with him what is due to people. Based on what they have done. To some he will bring reward. Entry into God's city by the gates.

[12:03] To some he will bring punishment. They'll be left outside. Barred from entry. I notice verse 13. I am the alpha and the omega.

The first and the last. The beginning and the end. Jesus is uniquely qualified. To be the judge. He's coming to bring judgment. And to bring salvation.

And though it will happen simultaneously. We're going to have a look at each in turn. Jesus is coming. Soon. In judgment. You might have noticed the similarities.

In our two readings. Genesis 2 and Revelation 22. The garden. The river. The tree. The fruit. The general goodness. And beauty. If we'd had a third reading.

Though we'd have read through Genesis 3 as well. As Adam and Eve mount rebellion against God's rule. And seek to crown themselves. They eat from the tree of good and evil.

[13:03] And they and the world are plunged into judgment. And God pronounces curses on the serpent. On Adam. On Eve. And on the world. And he banishes them from the garden.

Where they have no access to God. No right to the tree of life. And no right to the river of life. From then on.

Our world. Has been marked by curse and death. And separation from God. And we see the symptoms of such a fall. As we look around and see.

Our struggle to. Striving to outdo each other. Our striving to grab power. And our selfishness. We all follow in Adam and Eve's footsteps.

Seeking to be in charge. And by our nature. We're all outsiders to God. Apart from him. And away from his presence.

[14:03] As we read chapter 22 verse 15. We may not worry that we are in danger. As we consider sorcery. Or murder.

But we could all be found guilty of sexual immorality. Or guilty of idolatry. Putting other things before God. And so the bleak reality is.

As Jesus comes to judge. Left to our own devices. We are verse 15. Outside of God's city. And we're headed for hell.

A place Revelation 21 verse 8. Describes as a lake burning with fire. And sulfur. It's not pleasant to talk about. It's horrid to consider.

We squirm at the idea of judgment. Don't we? But we all do desire that justice be done. We do want evil and wickedness to be punished.

[15:04] Rightly. And fairly. We just don't want it to include us. But God is too holy. And too right.

And too good to simply sweep under the carpet. Even the slightest evil. It will be punished. And it will include us. So here in Revelation 22.

And all through the Bible. God lovingly warns. About the future we're heading for. Like a huge danger road sign. Encouraging us to turn back.

And in verse 10. God is making sure that everyone has access to the truth. Do not seal up the words of this prophecy. He doesn't want anyone to miss the signs.

So the Bible and the book of Revelation. Are to be shared widely and everywhere. So that people know. The time is near. And then the time will come.

[16:04] When Jesus will return. And God will. Verse 11. Let the evil doer still do evil. And the filthy still be filthy. And the righteous still do right. And the holy still be holy.

Jesus is coming soon to judge. And eternal futures. Will be fixed. In place. It's a stark reality. Judgment.

But praise the Lord. There's more to say. Much more. Jesus is coming soon in judgment. And in salvation. And what glorious salvation it will be.

Who for? For the religious. The well behaved. Those who earn it. No. Simply verse 14. Blessed are those. Who wash their robes.

And that doesn't mean. The people who have. Cleaned themselves up. Revelation chapter 7. Verse 14. Makes clear. Those that enter salvation. Are those who wash their robes. In the blood of the lamb.

[17:07] Jesus is. The lamb of God. Who takes away the sin of the world. And so. As he dies on the cross. Shedding his blood. He takes the punishment. For our evil. And wickedness.

On himself. In our place. As our substitute. God doesn't. Just tell us. Our sin and rebellion. Doesn't matter. And let us in. No.

He himself. Comes to save. In the person of Jesus Christ. That's why. The incarnation. Is the wonder of Christmas. And the cross. Is the joy. Of Easter.

And it means. That everyone. Who trusts Jesus. Is washed clean. And will enter. The new creation. When Jesus comes. Soon. So it's true.

Verse 14. Blessed. Are those. Who wash their robes. But if we're too quick. Reading chapter 22. We'll miss the significance.

[18:04] Of the promises. In verse 14. Have another look. 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. These are actually. Staggeringly. Beautiful words. And I hope. We'll see something. Of how wonderful they are.

As we have a look. At verses 1 to 5. Back over the page. On 1, 2, 5, 1. See John's. God-given vision. Picks up on lots of. Garden of Eden images.

We saw them in Genesis 2. They were lost. In Genesis 3. But now. Here in verses 1 to 5. The promise. Of a whole new world.

A restored. Creation. An utterly vibrant world. Full of life. And light. And God's. Presence. Verse 1.

[19:03] Chapter 22. Verse 1. Then the angel. Showed me. The river. Of the water of life. Bright as crystal.

Flowing from the throne of God. And of the Lamb. Through the middle of the streets. Of the city. In the middle of this. New creation. A pure. Life-giving river.

Flowing straight from God's. Throne. Giving life to everything. And verse 2. Second half of verse 2. Verse 2. Also.

On either side of the river. The tree of life. With its 12 kinds of fruit. Yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree.

Were for the healing of the nations. The tree. Last seen in Genesis 3. The tree. Where we. That we do not have access to. The tree. On your handout. Genesis 3.

[19:56] Verse 24. That God drove. Men away from. And guarded. With flaming sword. So they couldn't reach it. That tree. Is here.

And God's people. Will eat of it. Endlessly. Just picture the abundance. And life. As this amazing tree. Bears all kinds of.

Incredible. Vibrant fruit. Every month. All year round. And even the leaves. The tree. Bring healing. To nations. Verse 3.

Is incredible. Have a look. Because from Genesis 3. Onwards. Everything is cursed. From childbirth. To farming. To snakes. Throughout the world. And every generation. Conception. Birth. And life. Are marked. By death. Decay. And destruction. But look. At verse 3. In this new world. No longer.

[20:57] Will there be. Anything. Accursed. The most. Vicious. Painful. Relational. Moment. You've ever seen. Or experienced.

No more of those. No more war. Or conflict. No more. Coffins. Flown back. From war. Torn. Countries. Every. Trace.

Of evil. And sin. And suffering. Gone. Just imagine it. No more tears. No more cancer. No more corruption.

Or abuse. No more loneliness. No more dementia. No more mental health issues. A world renewed. Out of bondage. Into freedom. Out of decay. Into glory. Why? Because the throne of God. And of the lamb.

[21 : 52] Will be in it. And where God is. Those things cannot exist. And instead of our. Misdirected affections. For the Lord. All of his people.

Will worship him perfectly. Finally. And then notice verse 4. They. Will. See.

His face. And his name. Will be on their foreheads. Adam and Eve. Were banished. From God's presence. Moses.

The great man of God. Could not look upon. God's face. Without perishing. Even majestic angels.

In Isaiah. Had to hide their eyes. From him. And yet here.

In this new world. We'll see God's face. It's an intimate thing. Isn't it?

[22 : 53] To look upon somebody's face. We find it quite awkward. Sometimes. And then we turn away. But we will look on our maker's face.

With great joy. We'll see him face to face. And as a mark of our belonging. His name will be on our foreheads.

Forgive the futility of this example. But in Toy Story. Andy. The main character. He writes his name on the shoe. On the sole of the shoe. Of all of his toys.

As a sign. A symbol. These. They belong to me. I love them. I want them. They're mine. And here.

The Lord. That we see face to face. The Lord of the entire universe. Marks us with his name. To say. You belong. And verse five.

[23 : 56] Night will be no more. They'll need no light. Of lamp or sun. For the Lord God will be their light. And they will reign forever. And ever. That darkness in the Bible.

Is often a sign of God's judgment. Or absence. But in that great future city. Where we'll dwell with God. There'll be no need for lamps.

There'll be no darkness. For anyone to hide in. No nooks and crannies. Crannies of scare. There. We'll see. Because he will light everything.

With his radiance. And goodness. And the end of verse five. We will reign. Forever. And ever.

Ruling this new creation.

With delegated authority. Not puppets of worship. But rulers. Under God. God. Of this new creation. This is Eden.

[24 : 57] Re-established. And some. So indeed. Verse 14. Over the page. Blessed. Are those.

Who wash their robes. So that they may have the right. To the tree of life. And enter the city by the gates. Is. I wonder if our view of heaven.

And the new creation. Is a bit small. And weak. We joke about. Angels. And. Clouds. And we know it won't be like that. But we. Struggle to imagine.

Do you see here. The beauty. And goodness. Of life with God. Seeing his face. Forever. It's so much bigger. And better. And more wonderful.

Than we could ever imagine. Perhaps the prospect. Of Jesus soon return. Doesn't. Keep us going. Because we simply struggle. To think about it at all.

[25 : 58] In lovely Dulwich. Maybe we're too content here. With what we have. Maybe C.S. Lewis. Was right when he said.

Slightly paraphrased. We are. Like ignorant children. Who want to go on. Making mud pies. In a slum. Because we just.

Can't imagine. What is meant. By the offer. Of a holiday. At the sea. We're far too. Easily pleased. I see.

John's vision. Of the future. In chapter 20. And 21. Which I'd. Encourage us all. To go away. And read. And his vision. Here in verses. One to five. Of this. New future. Is designed. To wet our appetite.

Designed. To get our. Pulses racing a little. Designed. To wake us up. And keep us going. Longing for Jesus return. If we're those. Who have washed our robes. This is our future.

[26 : 53] We're blessed. And we're to long. For that day. When Jesus returns. All the time. Saying with John. In verse 20. Come.

Lord Jesus. But as we wait. We're to hold out. Jesus promise. Of salvation. To others. Inviting others.

To come. That's what we see. In verse 17. The Holy Spirit. And the bride. That's the church. And everyone. Who hears. And responds. Are to say. To whoever.

Will listen. Come. Come to Jesus. And eat from the tree. Come to Jesus. And drink of the river. Of life. Come. It might be.

You're here. This morning. And you've never. Come to Jesus. Come today. Let the stark. Reality of judgment. Prompt you. Let the goodness. And wonder. Of salvation.

[27 : 47] Draw you. If you're thirsty. For life. In all its fullness. With God. Come to Jesus. Verse 18.

And 19. Explain. There's nothing more. To say. Warns. Against adding. Or taking anything away.

This book. Is complete.

It's all here. John's delivered. His vision. The present. Has been explained. In earlier chapters. The promises. Of the future. Are set out. Salvation. And judgment. Are made clear.

And Jesus says. Verse 20. I'm coming soon. So how will we. Keep living for Jesus. When it all feels too much. When persecution. Comes our way.

Or suffering. Is hard to bear. There. We lift our eyes. To the stunning future. Promised. And we listen.

[28 : 42] As Jesus calls. I'm coming soon. And together. Whether we whimper. Or we shout for joy. We say with longing. Amen.

Come. Lord Jesus. Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our Father.

As we head into Christmas. As we get swamped. By cards. And presents. And deluged. With mince pies. And pigs in blankets. As we spend time. With family and friends.

We pray. Please. That you would distract us. From all of those things. With the prospect. Of Jesus soon return. To judge. And save. Help us.

We pray. To hold on to him. To long for his return. And to keep going. Until he comes. In his name we pray. And for your glory Father.

[29 : 41] Amen. Amen. Thank you.