

“What Time Is It?”

Revelation 22:12-21

- 12** “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.
- 13** I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.
- 14** “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.
- 15** Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.
- 16** “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”
- 17** The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.
- 18** I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll.
- 19** And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.
- 20** He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.
- 21** The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.

Introduction

“Are we there yet?” What child (or adult for that matter) hasn’t asked the question when on a long drive or trip with the family? Christians in most times and places have eagerly awaited and yearned for their arrival in heaven to be with Jesus. Yet in our day, most people are obsessed with momentary or instant gratification. Rarely do we intentionally prepare for and travel patiently toward the ultimate arrival.

With the last of six sermons from the book of Revelation, we come to the last ten verses in the Bible: Revelation 22, verses 12-21. Each verse expresses a truth held throughout the Bible regarding the bothersome or joyful tension between God’s judgment and his mercy upon our arrival. The revelation vision by the risen Lord Jesus given to the apostle John is filled with over 250 references to the Old Testament. Throughout the entire Bible, God’s word offers the amazing-grace invitation to acknowledge Almighty God as Almighty God or the warning of ignoring or rejecting God and the devastating judgment of forever condemnation.

NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt, Sr. was known as “The Intimidator.” In 2001, he was in third place on the final lap of the Daytona 500 (the last lap and final turn of racing 500 miles at high speed). His car was bumped from behind and sent into the wall at 180 miles per hour. Shortly after, Halifax Medical Center revealed that Earnhardt had died of blunt trauma to the head and chest.



Fifteen years later, many still think that if Earnhardt had been wearing the HANS (Head and Neck Safety Device) he would have survived the crash. This device was available. But Earnhardt, like many other drivers, chose not to use it. That neglect may have cost him his life.



The Bible tells us that every individual is on a collision course with God’s judgment. In his mercy and grace, the Lord of life has provided a safety device designed to keep people from suffering eternal death and separation from him. But like Dale Earnhardt and the other drivers in the race that day, each of us must decide whether to accept or neglect or refuse him.

I. Able and Right to Judge Us

So, who is this god who not only has the right to judge us but is able to do it? Twice at the beginning and twice at the end of Revelation we hear it. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” It’s the idea of completeness. The Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) has everything within himself and needs nothing from any other source. God holds all of time and eternity in himself. And he has authority. Since the Lord is the beginning: he received his power from no one. He is everything in the middle: he shares his power with no one. And he is the end: he never handed over his power to anyone.

Jesus says, “I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” There he goes again (this Jesus) with his audacious “I am” sayings. “I am the light of the world; I am the bright Morning Star... I am the way and the truth and the life; I am the Root, the Offspring of

David, the promised Messiah Savior.”

And behold, he is coming soon! His reward is with him, and he will give to each person “according to what they have done.” The essential question is, “What have you done with Jesus?” (An aside: Let God deal with those who have never heard of Jesus Christ). What have *you* done with Jesus?

In Romans 13, the apostle Paul advises the church, “Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light...Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 13:11-14). Here in verse 14 it says “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.” It is in receiving the perfect sacrifice and forgiveness of Christ that we can “wash our robes” and put on Christ.

“Outside the city are those who practice magic arts (committed to the occult), those who practice (make a life of) sexually immorality, all those outside of Christ who are murderers, idolaters, all those who love and practice falsehood.”

In the end there will be two kinds of people: those whose sin is forgiven by grace through faith in Jesus; and those who choose to risk it on their own. Not if, but when you and I crash, will we have God’s protective gear on or will we race with reckless abandon?

II. Able and Right to Come

In her little book *Heaven: My Father’s House*, Billy Graham’s daughter tells about people who want to visit her father’s home in the beautiful hills of North Carolina. Up the long drive, they come to the gate. They knock on the gate and say, “Billy Graham, let us in. We’ve read your books, we’ve watched you on TV, we’ve written to you, and we want to come to your house.” And my father says, “Depart from me, I don’t know you. You’re not a member of my family, and you’ve not made any arrangements to come.”

But when I drive up that same driveway and knock on the gate, I say, “Daddy, this is Anne, and I’ve come home.” The gate is thrown right open, and I go inside, because I’m the father’s child.

Because heaven is the Lord’s place, he has the right to decide who comes in and who stays out. He says he will welcome anyone inside his home, but they have to be born again into his family through faith in Jesus Christ.

That gives us a wonderful hope that when the time comes — whether death comes

suddenly as a thief in the night in an untimely death or as an angel of mercy after a long illness — we can be assured that at the end of the journey, we'll step right into our Father's arms. We'll be welcomed there because we are our Father's children.

“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.”

Throughout the whole Bible, God's gracious invitation to “Come” is extended. Isaiah 55 rings out to all people: “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost... Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.”

Psalms 95 calls out, “Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker... Today, if only you would hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” Jesus often said, “Come with me; come follow me, come with me... Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ Not only does God say “Come,” but the bride, the church, the people of God also call out, offering the invitation, “Come.” Every Christian is to be a missionary, a witness, an evangelist, a preacher/teacher. Those who have been found by Christ are called to find others for Christ.

Tell others that Jesus says, “Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty... All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away” (John 6:35-37).

Conclusion

It is certainly symbolic, and it is surely fitting that the last word in the Bible is GRACE: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people.” Amen? Amen.

“Are we there yet?” Let us pray with and for one another.