

THE BOOK OF REVELATION – NOW WHAT?

Revelation 22:6-21

God doesn't reveal future events to satisfy our curiosity; He reveals future events to change our lives. I am impressed by this fact as I study Revelation 22:6-21; it is a call for the reader to respond in obedience to the prophecies of this book. Failure to heed its warnings will have dire consequences for a Christian. Obedience will bring blessing.

So how should we respond to the book of Revelation?

BE CONFIDENT IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION (22:6)

Revelation 22:6 (ESV)

⁶ *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."*

Many things revealed in Revelation are extraordinary and stretch our imagination. Why would a rational, intelligent person believe these things will actually come to pass?

First, because of past fulfilled prophecy. Many extraordinary prophecies regarding Jesus' first coming were fulfilled. It was prophesied and fulfilled that Messiah would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25). It was prophesied and fulfilled that Messiah would be killed and resurrected from the dead (Isa. 53:8-10; Matt. 28:1-10). On the basis of the literal, physical, historical fulfillment of past prophecies it is reasonable to believe the prophecies of Revelation will be fulfilled.

Second, as verse 6 emphasizes, the prophecies of Revelation are "trustworthy and true". They are reliable and certain. God, Himself, is the source of these prophecies. He is "the God of the spirits of the prophets". "Prophets" is plural indicating the angel is stating a general principle; God sovereignly controls the spirits of all prophets recorded in Scripture including the Apostle John to whom the prophecies of the Book of Revelation were revealed. This same principle is articulated by the Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:20-21.

2 Peter 1:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ *knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.* ²¹ *For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

Because God guides the spirits of the prophets, He is the divine Author behind the human authors. Therefore, we have absolute confidence that what the prophets wrote is trustworthy and true. You can be confident that the prophecies we have studied in the book of Revelation will come to pass.

And the verse says they "must soon take place". This phrase would be better translated:

the things which must take place quickly

What "must take place" refers to the future events of the Tribulation as revealed in chapters 4-19. The primary sense of "quickly" is that once these events start, the events of this book and their judgments will occur rapidly. As we have studied a tremendous number of things take place rapidly in the space of seven years. The seven Seal Judgments, the seven Trumpet Judgments, the Seven Bowl Judgments. The worldwide evangelistic campaign of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists. The ministry of the Two Witnesses. The rise of the one world church. The rise of the one world economy. The rise of Antichrist and the False Prophet. So much more we could list, the point being that a tremendous number of things will indeed take place in quick succession during the seven short years of the Tribulation.

BE CENTERED ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION (22:7)

Revelation 22:7 (ESV)

⁷ *“And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”*

Somewhat abruptly, Jesus breaks in and addresses John saying, “Behold, I am coming soon”. This refers to Jesus’ return for the Church at the Rapture which keeps the Church out of the Tribulation (3:10). The phrase “I am coming” actually translates a single word, a present tense verb, in the Greek text. It is what is called a futuristic or prophetic present. This is used of a future event which is so certain that it is regarded as already in the process of coming to pass.

“Soon” is the adjective *tacus* which means “swift, quick, speedy.” A better translation of what Jesus said to John is “behold, I am coming quickly, suddenly”. When Jesus comes at the Rapture He is coming suddenly, without warning, as a thief who comes without announcement. The same cannot be said about His second coming; we know that seven years from the signing of the treaty between the Antichrist and Israel, Jesus will come. Jesus’ second coming cannot be described as a thief who comes without warning. Because Jesus will come suddenly for us, we should center our lives on the Rapture and on the prophecies of the book of Revelation. The coming of Jesus at the Rapture should be a primary organizing principle of each and every one of our lives. 1 John 2:28 states it like this:

1 John 2:28–29 (ESV)

²⁸ *And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.*

Jesus is saying the same thing in the second half of Revelation 22:7 when He says:

Revelation 22:7 (ESV)

⁷ *“And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”*

“Blessed” is the Greek *makavrioV* which literally means “happy.” It’s not describing the fun and games happiness of the world, but the inner happiness and spiritual contentment which comes from abiding in Christ by knowing and obeying His Word.

The verb “keeps” is *threww* meaning to “guard, watch over, protect, keep in custody, observe, fulfill, and pay attention or give heed to.” According to Jesus, you and I will experience inner happiness and contentment if we “keep in custody, pay attention to”, obey the book of Revelation.

How do we do this?

We keep the book of Revelation first and foremost by studying it, reviewing it and keeping it fresh on our hearts and minds.

Second, we keep the book of Revelation by applying it; by obeying the commands that apply to us. You might be thinking, “The book of Revelation is about future events. What commands are there for me to obey?”

Actually, there are a number of commands that apply directly to us in the letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2-3). Turn with me to Revelation 2:4 and Jesus’ warning to the church at Ephesus.

Revelation 2:4–5 (ESV)

⁴ *But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.* ⁵ *Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.*

What is it that we need to conquer? Dead, ritualistic orthodoxy. We need to conquer the drift into rote, routine Christianity. Going through the motions. Coming to church; serving in a ministry because that’s just what we do and not because we love Jesus and His people. In Rev. 22 Jesus says we’ll be blessed if we heed this warning and put time and energy into cultivating a living, loving relationship with Jesus.

Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

What did Jesus say to the church in Smyrna?

Revelation 2:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ *Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

Be faithful unto death. Living in America we could pretty much blow this off, but it seems times are changing. Persecution has a way of thinning the flock. Persecution forces us to decide who we're really living for. But we can decide who we're living for without persecution; in fact, we must decide that we're going to live for Jesus before persecution hits in order to be faithful through persecution. According to Rev. 22, we will be blessed, that is, we will experience inner happiness and satisfaction by remaining faithful to Jesus even if we go to prison or die.

Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

About what did Jesus warn the churches in Pergamum and Thyatira?

Revelation 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ *But I have a few things against you (Pergamum): you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.*

Revelation 2:20 (ESV)

²⁰ *But I have this against you (Thyatira), that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.*

We are called to sexual purity. Simply stated,

God's design is that physical, sexual contact is to be between a man and a woman committed to one another in the covenant of marriage. Sexual intimacy and intercourse is to follow the formal, intentional, public committal of the couple in marriage. Sexual purity includes sexual faithfulness to one's spouse in both mind and body.

It is a real fight today to conquer sexual immorality. It takes real faith to trust God on this when the world treats sex as a nonmoral issue; sex is simply another avenue of pleasure no different morally than playing golf or doing a crossword puzzle.

Sexual immorality is rife within our church.

Rather than overcoming we're embracing the sexual practices and the rationalizations of the world. Some of us are going to be deeply ashamed at the coming of Jesus.

Like I said before, living a life of sexual purity is a big faith issue: we must believe Jesus when He says to us we will be happier and more satisfied abstaining from sex until marriage when it is so easy to hook up with a variety of men and women more than happy to have casual sex.

Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

The final warning I want to review is that given by Jesus to the church of Laodicea.

Revelation 3:15–17 (ESV)

¹⁵ *“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.*

The warning is against materialism. We are the richest people in the world living in the richest economy of the world. Like sexual immorality, materialism is a very real threat we must overcome. Our wealth is ethically neutral; it becomes a problem when making wealth, managing our wealth or enjoying our wealth in any way limits or eliminates our dependence upon God, our worship of God or our serving God.

We need to fight to maintain a right perspective that our money is a gift from God to supply the needs of our families and to fund the work of making disciples. Again, it's a test of our faith to believe Jesus when He tells us to be rich towards God and to be generous to one another (Luke 12:13-21; 1 Tim. 6:17-19).

Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

CLOSING THOUGHT

Far from being a book to satisfy our curiosity about future events, the book of Revelation is meant to change our lives. We can be confident in its warnings, promises and prophecies because God is the divine author behind John the human author. And we should center our lives on the book of Revelation knowing that our Lord Jesus will come suddenly and we will stand before Him in judgment.