

FPFWC Christian Development



The Great Hope of the Saints

August 2022

Summer Quarter

August 27, 2022

Lesson #4 – A Welcoming Invitation

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Revelation 22:10-21

Key Verse - I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.—Revelation 22:18–19

ICE BREAKER –

1. *Why is it important to believe that no one is beyond repentance as long as he or she is alive?*
2. *How can you find motivation to continue being a faithful witness even when (or especially when) nonbelievers refuse to repent?*
3. *What does it mean that “the time is near” and that Christ is “coming soon”?*

LESSON BACKGROUND

In effect, the entire Bible serves as the context to today’s lesson. The Old Testament teaches in many places that God will send a deliverer for His people. First-century Jews thought that such a person would be a political and military rescuer. God’s anointed leader, they believed, would be empowered to defeat their nation’s enemies, bringing peace and independence in the process (compare Acts 1:6; etc.). Jerusalem and its temple would be freed from Gentile influence, and pure worship of the Lord could then take place.

But two things happened to challenge this thinking. First, the Messiah that God sent did not come to be a leader of armies (see John 6:15). He came, rather, to save people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). His mission ultimately was for all humanity, for all are sinners. His death was a sacrifice for sins, intended to be effective for all people for all time. He was the sacrificial Lamb who took away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Second, the Jerusalem temple was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70 during the horrific War of the Jews. This was something that no Jew of the time expected. Jewish faith, based as it was on the sacrifices of the temple, went into a downward spiral. Expectations of a military messiah to defeat the Romans were crushed.

Some, perhaps most, Christians of the same century found their own hopes being challenged when Jesus’ return did not materialize as they thought it should (compare 2 Peter 3:3–4). But Jesus himself promised that He would indeed

return. His return will be “with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30). His return will usher in the final judgment of both the living and the dead (Acts 10:42; 2 Thessalonians 1:5–10). Christians and some Jews both look for the Messiah to come, but their expectations are very different.

LESSON COMMENTARY

22:10–12. John was to share what he had seen with others so that they could heed God’s commandments (v. 10). There was no time to waste. When Jesus returns, eternal destinies will be finalized. The words of v. 11 are ironic. Of course, it is always best for sinful people to repent. But if not, the verse implies, so be it. **Reward** (v. 12) of one kind or another will be given at that time (see 20:11–15).

22:13–15. The Son of God’s final reference to His eternality introduced another encouragement to persevere. **Those who wash their robes** (v. 14) refers to first-century believers who would demonstrate saving faith by resisting the idolatry around them. They would experience the blessings of the tree of life (22:2) in the new Jerusalem. John again mentions those excluded from eternal life (21:8, 27). **Dogs** (v. 15) denotes those who refuse to repent and turn to Christ in faith. **Sorcerers** and liars are also targets of John elsewhere (1Jn 2:22–23; 5:21). They would miss the pleasures of the city from above.

22:16–17. The book nears its conclusion with various directives. The first sentence of v. 17 indicates the longing of the Holy Spirit and the Church as a whole for the return of Christ. The second invites agreement from the seven churches. The verse’s final two sentences offer salvation to anyone in the seven churches who may not yet have trusted in Christ when it was read. Jesus identifies Himself as the source of the message that the angels had mediated. Reference to Him as **the root and the descendant of David** (v. 16; see Is 11:2) marks Him both as an Israelite and the successor to His forefather’s throne. **Bright morning star** identifies Jesus as the one who would introduce the new day, that is the rule of Messiah. Verse 17 echoes the messianic thrust of Is 55:1–7. In both, the recipients are invited to drink freely of life-giving water and be in a lasting relationship with God through a connection with David. The openness of the invitation is emphasized by the threefold use of **come**. It was issued by the **Spirit** and the **bride**, that is, the Holy Spirit and the Church. There was to be no hesitation. All who wished to accept the offer were welcome. No payment would be required. Jesus offered everyone hearing the message of the book an opportunity to make sure of his salvation. Perhaps some among the seven churches were not yet believers. What motivation these verses provide for modern followers of Christ! They should look forward to the return of Christ and hold forth the gospel to whoever will listen. Salvation is a free gift of God’s grace. The wrath of God is coming against all who rebel against Him. Those who drink of the water of life will reign with masses of the redeemed in the millennial kingdom and, finally, in all eternity (5:8–9; 22:5).

22:18–19. John warned the recipients of the book not to add to what God had said. While such a warning could well pertain to Scripture as a whole, here it refers more narrowly to the book of Revelation. Some scholars take this to mean that the

text of the book itself should not be tampered with in any fashion. Others see a somewhat different warning. If the present text is parallel to Dt 4:2 and 29:19–21, then the prohibition is against false prophecy that contradicted what John has said (Beale, *Revelation*, 1150–1151). This makes good sense in the context of the seven churches that were assaulted with idolatrous religious thought. Two severe penalties were attached to disobedience in this matter. First, the very **plagues** of the book itself would be sent against any violator (v. 18). False prophets would not be delivered from the great tribulation, but would instead be left to experience its full fury. Second, such persons would miss the blessings of salvation associated with the **tree of life** (v. 19; see 22:2). Each of the major so-called Christian cults has abused the text of the Bible, twisting its meaning to support their false doctrines. Their founders have also written works that their followers consider to be on par with Scripture. These false prophets and their disciples will experience eternal damnation. Believers should not associate with them in any way.

22:20–21. The letter ends on a positive note. The One whom the seven churches longed for would come and vindicate them (v. 20). The **amen** (v. 21) is a hearty invitation from John. Believers wait for the coming of Jesus, who will put an end to all of their troubles and bring them to their eternal home. The final words are a characteristic Christian benediction expressing the hope that the churches would continue to experience the favor of Jesus Christ in their lives until His blessed return.

LESSON NUGGET – *“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’”* The offer is open to everyone! God hasn’t closed the door on anyone. It is “whoever desire.” God created you with that ability to choose. You can determine your future by exercising your free will to come to Him. It can’t be easier than that! God has left it up to you. You will have no excuse for rejecting His offer of salvation. Whoever desires. Take the water of life freely! Come to Jesus.

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*