



THE LAST MESSAGE FROM JESUS TO HIS FRIENDS (Sermon)

April 14, 2018

Elder Paolo Benini
Sabbath School Personal Ministries Director
Inter-European Division

Text Reference: Revelation 22:16-21

Introduction

Revelation Chapter 22 records the last words in the book of Revelation. At the same time, they are the last words in the Bible and the last words of Jesus to His friends. These last words of the Bible are the ones addressed to us directly by Jesus, “I, Jesus, have sent my angels to testify to you these things” (Revelation 22:16, NKJV).

This is a special message we need to understand—the book of Revelation is a “Revelation of Jesus Christ.” So Jesus is ending His special message to the churches. In addition we know that the entire Bible is a testimony to Jesus. This is what Jesus said about the Old Testament, “You search the Scriptures ... these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39, NKJV). So are the last words of the Bible—a letter from Jesus to His Friends.

I suggest you listen to the last words of the Bible as a special address to us, His beloved friends. So, let us listen to His last message.

Going into the Text

To keep you more attentive, we will read in a special way and begin with the last verse of the Bible and read backwards to Verse 16.

So, let us begin with Verse 21, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen.” I believe that this is a thought put there from John and was a common way to greet people. Many times in the New Testament, a final blessing is offered using these words. Fifteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament end with this thought: “the grace of Jesus be with you all.”

The *grace of Jesus* means the attitude of Jesus toward us, the grace of His saving love for us, for His friends.

This is the way God relates to humans, because God is grace, and through this grace, we have confidence in our salvation. This is the first lesson from the last words of the Bible. This is the last thought of Jesus. It is the synthesis of all the love God has for us. It is the expression of the will of God for us. What a word! What a conclusion.

Now, let’s go back to Verse 20. “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” The second part of Verse 20 is a prayer. “*Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*” This is a prayer. It is interesting to see that the

Bible ends with a prayer. We can read hundreds of prayers and even more passages that are invitations to prayer.

It is relevant that the Bible ends with a prayer, and what a prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus!” We can read this prayer in many ways—Come stay with me, or I need you. To have God with us is our great need. “If God is with us, who will be against us?” First of all, this is an existential prayer, but it’s also more than that. It’s a radical and an eschatological prayer. It is a request to God to come in history, to stop history, to change history. It is the request to introduce us to a new future. With this last prayer, we are asking something from the present and for the eternal solution of the human drama. It is a request to God the Father in the name of Jesus to realize His Kingdom.

Let’s look now at the first part of Verse 20. It is written, *“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’”* Is it not great that the Bible ends with this affirmation? Jesus assures us about this glorious final event--the coming to Earth for a second and final time of our Redeemer and Creator. The Bible ends with the affirmation of the second return of Jesus.

Jesus is telling us He will come soon. He will take us with Him. He is coming to give us eternal life. He is coming to give us the solution to the drama of this world. He is coming for judgment. He is coming to create a new heaven and a new earth. He is coming for a new creation. He is coming, so be ready.

With creation and the cross, we have two interventions of Jesus, but with the Second Coming of Jesus, we have the highest concentration of events.

For many reasons, the Second Coming of Jesus is one of the most fascinating events in history and eternity. The entire plan of salvation will be incomplete without the Second Coming of Jesus. We read in Verse 16 that this is a message from Jesus for the Church, the Church of God, the addressee of this great message—the Second Coming of Jesus. This is one of the great truths of the Bible.

Unfortunately, many don’t know this truth. Unfortunately, the great enemy of God and man has hidden from humans the understanding of the greatest appointment in history.

After this great affirmation of “I come soon, quickly,” is the normal prayer-answer of the church, ***“even so, come Lord Jesus.”***

“Even so...” let me be ready to meet You in all Your Splendour. “Even so...” let Your spirit work in me so that I can meet You as King, as Lord, as God of the Universe. “Even so...” come my Lord and my Friend, Jesus.”

Let us now go back and read Verses 18 and 19.

“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

These two verses at the end of the Bible are among the most direct and hard admonishments of the whole Bible. These two verses are not here by chance. These two verses are related to the universal Second Coming of Jesus. If we want to be ready for the Second Coming of our Friend, we need to be rooted in the Word of God. If we want to go in the right direction in our lives, we need to be in touch with the Bible; we need to be directed by the Bible, the letters of Jesus to His Friends.

If, as a church, we want to be the last (movement of people in history), we must accept the Word of God, without excluding any comma or any accent. We must be obedient to the whole Word of God, from cover to cover.

It is remarkable that the Bible ends with a clear affirmation “of the Bible alone.” The Bible alone is the great hymn of the great event of church reformation in history. Every movement of reformation starts from the Bible and grows with the Bible. This is a great truth because the Bible is powerful. The Bible is the truth. The Bible is the word that enters in every hidden part of our life and cleans it, and purifies it, and sanctifies it.

The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the unique safeguard of the Christian life, of the Christian family, of the Christian church, and of His Friends.

In order to be ready for the Second Coming of Jesus, the Holy Spirit admonishes each of us in these verses, to take the Bible seriously, and to accept the entire Bible in all its authority. What a great truth we have in the last words of the Bible. We have the announcement of the Second Coming of Jesus, and we have the concern of God for the ones that want to be ready to meet the Lord, coming in His glory for His friends!

Let us go back now to the previous verse, Verse 17, “*And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’*”

It is very interesting that in a similar context, in illuminating the greatest event of the future of humanity, we see the Spirit begin to act. This text has a great lesson about mission. It is interesting that in a context of the end times, there is a message about mission. In fact in this text, not only do we have an invitation to mission, but we have several great and profound lessons about the nature of our mission.

Lesson 1: The mission is always of the Holy Spirit, and without the Spirit, there is no mission. Because mission is a complex event, *mission is a proclamation; mission is a call; mission is repentance, and conversion, and sanctification.* Only the Spirit can create this complexity.

Without the action of the Spirit, every human word can be able to convince but can never change the life. Today we have many people that are convinced but fewer that are converted. To render the mission effective, the church needs to perform its commission with the guidance and with the presence of the Spirit.

Lesson 2: Verse 17 says another important thing about mission: “the Spirit and the bride say.” That means that as the Bible is totally the word of God, written totally by human instrument, so it is with mission. Mission doesn’t exist without the Spirit, but the Holy Spirit wants to use the church in order to achieve the mission of God. In *Acts of the Apostles*, page 9, Ellen White writes, “*The Church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men.*”

The church of Christ is the laboratory and the agency for mission. Mission is a gift of God for His church. It's the way the church exercises and strengthens herself.

Lesson 3: This text says even more about mission. In fact this text, written more than nineteen centuries ago, gives us an interesting insight into the principles of mission. If the Spirit is the overseer, the guide, and the empowering agency for conversion, if the church, the local community, and the institutions are the appointed agencies to develop mission plans and strategies, this text tells us that the third "agency" is the believer. Mission is the responsibility of each one of us. As Luther said, "Every member as a priest is a proclaimer and an evangelist, is a soul winner." Today's studies on mission indicate that 85 percent of mission results are the result of person-to-person communication. From friend to friend!

So as the Holy Spirit inspires, the church plans, organizes, and trains for mission. The believer is the witness, the instrument, the mouth used by the Holy Spirit to invite others to Jesus. In fact these verses teach us even more about mission, because it enters into the content of mission which comes from Jesus.

The rest of Verse 17 says, "And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." If from one side there is the invitation to come to Jesus, then on the other side, the one that listens to the invitation to drink must be thirsty. And, here again, the water of the Holy Spirit creates the feeling of need. The thirst of living water, the hunger for the bread of life, all can be found in Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Friend.

Conclusion

These last words of the Bible are a concentration of the entire content of the Bible which includes divinity, humanity, mission, dynamics, history, and eternity. Everyone who hears the invitation to come can then become the one that offers the invitation. Come, come now to Jesus! Invite **your** friends to become friends of Jesus.