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Sermon Notes

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Christ's Final Words

Revelation 22:12-21

We come to the final verses in the Bible... Christ's final words to his beloved Bride, and God's final words to the human race.

Next week, we will be zeroing in on one verse:

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

We will spend the entire sermon on evangelism... the supernatural partnership between the Spirit and the Bride—the church of Christ—in calling on lost people to come to the water of life.

The week after that, I will preach a single sermon on the entire Book of Revelation—all twenty-two chapters.

But this morning, we are going to walk verse by verse through Revelation 22:12-21

I. Christ's Control of History is Absolute (vs. 12-13)

A. History Is Vital

1. History is the telling of what has happened in the past... an unfolding of events in space and time
2. Many people want to make religion pure idea, metaphysics, as though in some ways it does not connect at all to real life
3. But history is absolutely vital to our Christian faith
4. The Bible begins with a historical assertion

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

5. Then the history of God's dealings with the human race unfolds from there, especially the history of the Jewish nation... most of the Old Testament is centered on the relating of that history
6. History is VITAL to our salvation

1 Corinthians 15:17 if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

7. It really DOES matter whether or not Christ actually died on the cross and physically rose from the dead

B. History Is Linear

1. Eastern religions—Buddhism, Shintoism, Taoism—all followed the more ancient religion of Hinduism in a belief that history is CYCLICAL
2. This is gained from looking at nature—sunrise, sunset; seasons—spring, summer, fall, winter... round and round it goes
3. You almost hear it in these verses from Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes 1:4-9 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. ⁵ The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. ⁶ The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. ⁷ All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. ⁸ All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing. ⁹ What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.

4. Hinduism and all other cyclical views of have to deal with the seemingly linear experience of HUMAN LIFE... a human is born as an infant, grows through toddlerhood, to youth, to adulthood, to middle age, to old age to death... so they took what they had observed in nature, in the endless cycle of seasons, and applied them to humanity with the doctrine of REINCARNATION... of endless rebirth and retries at life; life then becomes a constant attempt to escape KARMA—this endless cycle of rebirth, life, and death—by enlightenment
5. But this statement by Christ shows how plainly LINEAR is the biblical worldview... and especially how CHRIST-CENTERED all of human history is

Revelation 22:12-13 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

C. History Has a Purpose... It's Moving to a Destination; and CHRIST IS that Destination

1. Jesus says "I am coming SOON"... meaning that history is brief compared to eternity

James Joyce, *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*: You have often seen the sand on the seashore. How fine are its tiny grains! And how many of those tiny little grains go to make up the small handful which a child grasps in its play. Now imagine a mountain of that sand, a million miles high, reaching from the earth to the farthest heavens, and a million miles broad, extending to remotest space, and a million miles in thickness; and imagine such an enormous mass of countless particles of sand multiplied as often as there are leaves in the forest, drops of water in the mighty ocean, feathers on birds, scales on fish, hairs on animals, atoms in the vast expanse of the air: and imagine that at the end of every million years a little bird came to that mountain and carried away in its beak a tiny grain of that sand. How many millions upon millions of centuries would pass before that bird had carried away even a square foot of that mountain, how many eons upon eons of ages before it had carried away all? Yet at the end of that immense stretch of time not even one instant of eternity could be said to have ended. At the end of all those billions and trillions of years eternity would have scarcely begun. [

2. The Second Coming of Jesus, and all the wrath and judgment on his enemies, together with the rewarding of his servants will be the FINAL ACT of the drama of redemptive history
3. History is LINEAR like a series of letters—first alpha, then beta, then gamma... all the way to omega—the final day
4. Christ IS history—he IS the Alpha day—the day God created the universe through him

John 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

5. Christ IS the central day (in the middle), when he died for our sins
6. Christ WILL BE the omega day, when his Second Coming ends this present age

D. Were It Not for Christ, History Would Never Have Happened

1. As soon as Adam sinned, there would have been no point in continuing if God had not eventually planned to send Christ to redeem the world

2. Even if most of the people never come to Christ, every moment they enjoyed on planet earth has been blood bought... Christ's atonement and resurrection really is the point of all history and enabled history to continue
3. Christ coming in his glory is the consummation of the age... the crowning moment of history

II. Christ's Cleansing is Essential (vs. 14-15)

Revelation 22:14-15 "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.

A. The Washing of the Robes Represents Salvation through Christ

1. Sin pollutes us, defiles us, makes us unfit for God's presence
2. The soiling of the garment is a symbol of a sinful lifestyle

Jude 23 ... hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh

3. Because of the holiness of God, without the cleansing work of Christ, we would be rejected

Habakkuk 1:13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.

4. The washing of polluted robes represents the cleansing work of the blood of Christ
 - a. The multitude redeemed from every tribe, nation, people, and language is said to be cleansed:

Revelation 7:14 These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

- b. It also relates to the preparation of the Bride of Christ

Ephesians 5:25-27 Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

- B. The "Right" to Eat from the Tree... the "Right" to go through the Gates of the City
 1. The Greek word relates to authority, the legal right to act in a certain way
 2. Our sin has merited expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and no right to eat from the tree

Genesis 3:22-24 He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." ²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life

3. The cleansing of our souls by faith in the blood of Christ has won us the right to enter the city and to eat from the tree of life... the right of access

Romans 5:1-2 since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

4. It is now our RIGHT to enter and to eat

John 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

5. As children of God, the city of God is our HOME CITY... and we have the right to go right through the gates to be with our heavenly father

6. The angels at the gates will grant us access any time

C. Not Only Initial Faith, But the Work of Sanctification

1. Our faith in Christ QUALIFIES us for heaven

Colossians 1:12-14 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

2. BUT our justification is then confirmed by our life of ongoing holiness... of overcoming temptation and sin

Revelation 2:7 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

D. Outside: The UNCLEAR...

Revelation 22:15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

1. This is the third time those excluded are listed in detail

Revelation 21:8 the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

Revelation 21:27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

2. The wicked are excluded from the joy of fellowship with God in the New Jerusalem
3. "Dogs" were not the pleasant domestic animals many of us love and cherish almost as members of the family
4. Rather think of wild dogs or junkyard dogs... ravenous beasts
5. Sometimes the term was used of male prostitutes... or perhaps anyone who is of repulsive moral makeup
6. The last term: those who ***love and practice falsehood*** refers to those who followed Satan's false kingdom

III. Christ's Identity is Mysterious (vs. 16)

Revelation 22:16 "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."

A. Jesus Identifies Himself as the Speaker

1. Often the authors of scripture put statements like this in their writings

Revelation 1:9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Revelation 22:8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things.

1 Corinthians 16:21 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand.

2 Thessalonians 3:17 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.

Galatians 5:2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.

2. Jesus is emphasizing his own role in this communication... this letter is really HIS word to the churches

Revelation 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John

3. Jesus dispatched his angel to communicate to the CHURCHES
 - a. Christ wants all the churches to know this message, to take to heart its message

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

- b. So the letters to the seven churches were from Christ to each local church through the Spirit

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

4. As every Christian and every local church hears Jesus speaking directly to us about these amazing messages, we will be blessed and warned

B. Jesus' Mysterious Self-Identification

Vs. 16 I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.

1. This is a clear allusion to the prophecy in Isaiah

Isaiah 11:1-3 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. ² The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-- ³ and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

Isaiah 11:10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

2. Jesus claims to be BOTH the ROOT (origination) of David and also his OFFSPRING...
3. This is only possible because of who Jesus is... he is BOTH David's CREATOR and his DESCENDENT

Matthew 22:42-45 "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" "The son of David," they replied. ⁴³ He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'? For he says, ⁴⁴ "'The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'" ⁴⁵ If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?"

The only way Jesus could be BOTH the origin of David and his descendent is through the mystery of the INCARNATION... Jesus is both fully God and fully human

Luke 1:30-32 the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David

C. The Bright Morning Star

1. The bright morning star is a star that appears in the night sky just before dawn
2. Frequently it is a planet like Venus
3. It is the harbinger of the imminent rising of the sun

Randy Alcorn: I think it relates to HOPE and his immanent second coming. When Venus rises, it means the sun will follow very soon (in a morning, usually within an hour or two, sometimes just a matter of minutes). Christ's coming ... will mean God's light is about to shine forever on the universe, making all wrongs right, wiping away all tears, and fulfilling Revelation 21, with the creation of the new heavens and new earth, etc. On a long dark night, the appearance of the morning star means daybreak is imminent. In the long dark night of suffering on earth, Jesus being seen as the morning star means the eternal morning is about to dawn. Hence, Christ as the morning star is a picture of great promise and hope.

4. This also reminds us of Balaam's prediction of Christ

Numbers 24:17 "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.

5. Christ is the radiant display of the glory of God, the brightest light in the heavenlies

IV. Christ's Invitation Is Wide and Free (vs. 17)

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

- A. We will do an entire sermon on this next week!!
- B. Today... let's suffice to say that this is a powerful invitation to all people to come to Christ and drink from him

C. It makes me think of three passages in particular... we'll unpack them more next week

John 7:37-39 *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit*

Isaiah 55:1-3 *"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. ² Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. ³ Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.*

Matthew 11:28-30 *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

D. The Spirit and the Bride say COME

1. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit... who alone can draw sinners effectively to faith in Christ
2. The Bride is the Church... believers... who are given the responsibility to share the gospel in this lost and dying world
3. We are here in this world to be instruments of the Holy Spirit in proclaiming the gospel
4. Christ's invitation is WIDE and FREE to ANYONE who is thirsty to find life in Christ

V. Christ's Word is Complete (vs. 13, 16, 18-19)

Revelation 22:13 *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*

Revelation 22:16 *"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches.*

Revelation 22:18-19 *I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. ¹⁹ And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*

A. These Verses are the Last Verses in the Bible

B. Jesus says he is the Alpha and the Omega... the first letter and the last letter

1. To some degree, the purpose of the entire Bible is to bring sinners to a saving faith in Christ

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 20:31 these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Revelation 19:10 the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy

2. Jesus SENT HIS ANGEL to carry this Book of Revelation to John, and through him to THE CHURCHES...

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

3. God the Father SENT HIS SPIRIT to guarantee the words all the authors of scripture wrote down would be perfect... every letter would be exactly what God wanted it to be

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness

2 Timothy 3:15 the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

C. Do Not ADD to or TAKE AWAY from this Word

Revelation 22:18-19 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. ¹⁹ And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

1. Jesus is very clear about the perfection of the word... it is exactly as he wants it to be

Matthew 5:18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Psalm 12:6 And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.

2. It cannot be improved upon, either by us adding to it, or editing it
3. This is an ancient warning

Deuteronomy 4:2 Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.

Deuteronomy 12:32 See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.

Proverbs 30:5-6 "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. ⁶ Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.

4. Satan is ALWAYS trying to get people to question the word of God...
5. The Pharisees ADDED to the Laws of God by putting extra burdens on people that God had not commanded
 - a. God said "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain"... the Pharisees said "You shall not speak his name at all"
 - b. God said "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy"... the Pharisees added multiple layers of human commandments to the Sabbath regulations so that they were effectively religious tyrants on Sabbath regulations... when Jesus healed a paralyzed man on the Sabbath, they arrested that man for carrying his mat home
 - c. Legalistic regulations always get added by many cults... like commandments not to marry at all—like the Roman Catholic priests who were forbidden to marry; the Shakers forbade their men and women from even touching each other at all... marriage was strictly outlawed
 - d. Other cults have ADDED to the word of God by introducing new scriptures... like Muhammad and the Koran; and Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon; and Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science wrote *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*
 - e. Other religious leaders TAKE AWAY from the word of God by advocating loose interpretations and a loose, immoral lifestyle

Jude 4 They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

Matthew 5:19 *Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

6. So in verses 18-19, Jesus warns not to add to the words of the Book of Revelation... and by extension to the entire Bible... if anyone does, God will ADD TO HIM the plagues of this books; neither should anyone take away any aspects of this word, for God will take away his right to eat from the tree of life and his right to enter the city
7. Our task is to take every word of God and weigh it properly and allow its truth to press into our hearts

Matthew 4:4 *'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*

God has given us this amazing book... I mean not just the Book of Revelation, but the entire Bible, of which this section is the very end

It is a LIFETIME WORK for us to drink in ALL THE WORDS God has entrusted to us in the Bible, allow them to shape our minds and instruct us and change the way we live

VI. Christ's Grace is Effective (vs. 20-21)

Revelation 22:20 *He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*

A. For the Last Time, Christ Warns Us He is Coming SOON

1. We are to be consistently vigilant, watching for his coming
2. We are to be like the servants in the house that the Master has put in charge to care for his household... we must be very active in doing what he has told us to do until he finally returns
3. We are to be like the five wise virgins, who have oil for our lamps so they will keep burning until we see the Bridegroom come
4. Our lives are very brief

James 4:14 *What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.*

Isaiah 40:6-8 *"All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.
⁷ The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows*

on them. Surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."

5. We watch for the Lord

Psalm 130:6 My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.

6. John adds his words MARANATHA!!! Come, Lord Jesus!!!

B. As We Wait and Work, We Must Trust the Effective Grace of Christ to Sustain Us

Revelation 22:21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

C. God's Grace is What will Protect Us and Keep us in Christ Till the End

1. Everyone of Paul's letters ends with these same kinds of words

2. As we finish the book, the grace of God that he's ministered to us by it will GO WITH US

VII. Applications

A. Next week, we will spend the entire sermon on evangelism... but I can't finish this sermon without inviting you who are thirsty to come to Christ to drink...

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

This is the most beautiful invitation I could ever give you – to receive the free gift of FULL FORGIVENESS of SINS by faith in Christ – you have to sense that need, to feel that you are guilty before God because of the sins in your life. You have broken God's holy laws – you have lived selfishly, living for sensual lusts, living for money, not loving others, not caring about them at all

The Good News of the gospel is that God sent his Son...

NOW, CHRISTIANS:

B. The Book of Revelation is the Final Chapter in an Unfolding Story

1. Do you see your life as part of that story?

2. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega... the A to Z of that story

3. It has a purpose a direction... do you see your life that way?

4. Do you wake up every morning and give yourselves fully to God, saying “I want this day to count for eternity.”??
5. Satan wants to feed you the lie that your lives don’t matter or that you can live for your own small purposes
6. But God has crafted you into his marvelous tapestry of grace

C. Are You Continually Aware of the Imminent Return of Christ?

1. He says again and again, “I am coming soon”
2. Do you say with John, “Amen, Come Lord Jesus?”
3. Do you have a sense of urgency that the time is short?

D. Purify Yourselves as He Is Pure

1. The text speaks of washing your robes so that you may have the right to enter the New Jerusalem
2. This speaks of the purification from sins that faith in Christ alone can provide
3. BUT it also speaks of the need to purify your body and soul and lifestyle from the things that are contaminating you

2 Corinthians 7:1 let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

Are you engaged in any willful sins? Are you consciously violating your conscience and defiling your bodies with things you will be ashamed of on judgment day?

The Lord is commanding us all to purify ourselves now by repentance and self-discipline so that we will be fit for heaven

4. Do not be deceived by sin

Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

E. Revere the Scriptures... and Do not ADD TO them or TAKE AWAY from them

Matthew 5:18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.