

Revelation: The End Is Clear
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This has been a full week with a lot of headlines over the past seven days that will impact our world for years and years to come. When you think about the major news stories of the past seven days - some good and some bad - those stories, whether they registered with us or not will still be talked about for years to come. Whether we're talking about some kind of tax reform or missiles being launched from North Korea, there has been a lot of news this week. Now apparently, if the sound of a bell ringing all night long in Athens is enough, there has been some pretty big news out of the Bulldog Nation. There was a big win. If you get two more, we'll have a big time win.

Today, I want to talk to you about the most important news of all. The most important news of all- more important than anything that has made the headlines this week. Let's open our Bibles to Revelation chapter 22. We began saying that back in August, and today we open our Bibles on this last Sunday in the last book of God's word in the last chapter looking at the last verses hearing the last written words of Jesus. Last words are meant to be lasting words. Today, we have in these last words of Jesus the most important news of all. Before we look at Revelation 22, I need to straighten out some news. There is some news that was started in Russ Tanner's home. That name makes a lot of us smile. Russ, you just make us smile. But a few weeks ago, Russ Tanner's daughter asked the question: "If Pastor Carlos is preaching through Revelation, the last book of the Bible, when he finishes does that mean church is over?" It makes sense, doesn't it? I mean, if we get to the end, what else is there to do?

In all seriousness, what we do doesn't determine when it's over. What God does determines when it's all over, and the most important news of all is here in Revelation chapter 22. And it is this: Jesus is coming soon. Jesus is coming soon. Let's look together in Revelation chapter 22. I want to begin reading in verse six.

"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.'"

"And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

"I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, but he said to

me, 'You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.'

"And he said to me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.'"

"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

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

"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"

"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."

Three times in these last verses of Revelation, Jesus declares the most important news of all. Three times He says, "I am coming soon." In verse 7: "And behold, I am coming soon." Verse 12: "Behold, I am coming soon." And then in verse 20: "He who testifies to these things says surely I am coming soon." When you hear that news that Jesus is coming soon, you may say today that it seems odd that you would say "soon." The word "soon" there means "suddenly, quickly." "Soon" has a sense of eminence to it. Every writer of the New Testament wrote with this sense that suddenly at any moment, Jesus would return. We look and we think that it's been almost 2,000 years, so how could it be soon?

It reminds you of what the apostle Peter wrote in 2nd Peter chapter 3 just a few pages back. Listen to these verses from 2nd Peter 3:8. It says, "But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But

the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.’

When we look at this announcement from Jesus, His last words are, “Behold, I am coming soon.” We fixate on the word “soon” and we ask, “When is that? Has it already passed?” We find that Peter's writings give us this perspective of time with God. When we read, we see that God's perspective on time is so different than our perspective on time. And when you're dealing with a finite God who is Alpha and Omega who knows everything and has seen everything and been a part of everything from beginning to end, for Him, a day like thousand years. So His “soon” is very different than our “soon.”

But we also see that His perspective about timing has a purpose. In His perspective on timing, what might seem like a long, long time for us is actually a demonstration of the compassion and a demonstration of the patience of God. And as we wait and wait and wait on the return of Jesus Christ, God waits on sending His son with this purpose. And the purpose is that maybe you or maybe somebody that you know will have time to come to Jesus as Lord and Savior. The hope of God and his desire is that no one would perish. As we work through the book of Revelation and we see the Great Tribulation, we see judgment on sin and the wrath of God unsealed and read, the wrath of God trumpeted, the wrath of God poured out, and we see that almost on every page with every one of those announcements of God's judgment and wrath was this plea and this gospel invitation. That's what we have here in this waiting on the return of the Lord. God is waiting and waiting and waiting so that you would come to Jesus Christ and miss the judgment of God and miss the wrath of God.

The most important news of all is that Jesus is coming soon, and for just a few minutes, I want to show you why this is the most important news. Then I want to answer for a few minutes what are we to do until that news is fulfilled. First of all, why is this news so important? You maybe could come up with a dozen reasons, but I want to give you four and I want to really concentrate on one. The first reason that Jesus coming soon is so important is because at that time hurts will be healed. All hurts will be healed. When you know Jesus Christ and He comes one day, all your hurts will be healed. Verse 3 says: “The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

This is a picture of the return of Christ. It is a picture of a time where there will be peace on earth. We talk about it from God's word as a time where the lion and the lamb will lay down together. We talk about this picture here that there's coming a time where the hurt and divide and the separation and the tension between nations will be healed. When? At the return of Christ. Personally, all your hurts will be healed. If you're looking forward

today, if you're longing today for the return of Christ, here is fuel for that longing. When Jesus Christ comes back one day for you, when He comes again, all your personal hurts will be healed. Some of those hurts are very private that nobody else knows about, or maybe only a couple of people or only maybe a group of people. We looked at it last week- in heaven, it says that there will be no more pain, there will be no more tears, there will be no more mourning, there will be no more dying, there will be no more death. All your hurts will be healed when Jesus comes again.

Secondly, this news is so important because the redeemed will be rewarded. The redeemed will be rewarded. He says in verse 12: "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense" -or reward- "with me." This is not about salvation, this is about reward. "The redeemed-" that is a term that describes those who've placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The redeemed- He's bought us, and He's purchased us with a price. But Scripture teaches again and again that one day, when Christ returns, we will stand before this bema seat of judgment before God and we will be rewarded for the things that we have done. What a glorious day.

The third reason that is the most important news that Jesus is coming soon is because souls will be satisfied. Over these last few chapters of Revelation, we've seen the unsatisfied soul described as one that is thirsty. Thirst in our life is real. The thirst in our souls is real as well. When we take that thirst in our soul that longs for something else, that desire for satisfaction, something that would drive us to a place of feeling at home of being content, the world tempts us to satisfy that thirst with wrong things. God offers to us the one right thing for our soul to be satisfied. He said to the woman at the well, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again." That's the picture that's given in these last couple of chapters of Revelation. It's a picture of those who are thirsty who are to come to Jesus and have their thirst satisfied. The Bible speaks in this chapter of the tree of life and the water of life. Both of those are given to us as pictures to symbolize that our souls will be ultimately satisfied in the fullness of Christ and the presence of Christ. What a day.

The fourth reason for us to see the coming of Jesus soon as the most important news and the one I want to concentrate on for just a few moments is this: our opportunities will be over. Opportunities will be over. Something is going to end at the return of Christ, and what ends, what stops at the return of Jesus Christ is in my view the most dominant reason that this news is the most important news. Opportunities will be over. What opportunities? Opportunities to change will be over. "Behold, I am coming soon." He's coming suddenly and quickly. The Bible speaks of the return of Christ as one who comes like

a thief. It speaks of the return of Christ as one who comes as in a twinkling of the eye. Don't be lulled into thinking that when you hear the trumpet sound that you'll be automatically able to make a change. Listen, there is coming a day where you will not be able to change. There is coming a day where people will not be able to be saved from their sin. The Bible speaks here in Revelation 22 and says that He "has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

When Jesus comes again, as much as that stirs our heart, be reminded that many of our opportunities to change, to prepare, and to get ready will be over. Just like the days of old with Noah, there was a day when the door to the ark closed and all of those on the outside of the ark perished. I say to you today, that what has happened in this 10:15 hour with some of you seated in the sanctuary right now and many of you seated here in the Life Building right now, and many of you who will listen to this message in some media format down the road - in hearing this message, what God is doing is that He is demonstrating His patience with you. Because it's His desire that you would not perish. It is His desire that you would come to Him for salvation. It is God's desire- He loves you so much that He has given to you another opportunity on this first Sunday of December 2017 for you to come to Jesus for your salvation to settle your eternity.

I'm pleading with you. I'm urging you. Come to Jesus. Don't put it off. If there is a hint of doubt in your life, call out to Him to give you assurance. If there is awareness in your life right now that you're not ready for the return of Christ, because He is not your Lord and Savior, call out to Him to save you right now. The Bible says in Hebrews that "Today is the day of salvation. Do not harden your hearts." The Bible teaches in Hebrews that every time we say no, it's like a sledgehammer just beating the soil. It just hardens our heart and hardens our heart and hardens our heart. When Jesus comes back again, the opportunity to be saved will be over.

Now believers, you know today that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, and you look forward to His return. You long for His return. What opportunities for us are over? Mark Cahill wrote a book many years ago called *One Thing You Can't Do In Heaven*. The premise is that there is one thing that you and I will not be able to do in heaven. Do you what it is? The one thing that we will not be able to do in heaven is to lead somebody else to Jesus. God has left us here as missionaries on this earth. God has left you here as a missionary in Watkinsville, in Athens, in Madison County, in Morgan County, in Jackson County, Clarke County, Oconee County. God is calling some of you to go to other states and other nations of the world. He sends us out with this mission and with this commission- "Go ye therefore into all the world making disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I've

commanded." In Acts 1:8, He was speaking to the disciples before He ascended to heaven and said, "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth." Here He says in Revelation 22: "Behold, I am coming soon... The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price."

God has left us with this written invitation to give to people around us. And the time is drawing near, the Bible says, where Jesus is going to come again and the opportunity for you to lead that neighbor, for you to lead that family member, for you to lead that coworker, or even that stranger to Jesus is going to close! And the opportunity will be over. If we really believe this book, and if we really believe the individual book of Revelation, we will do everything we can to take advantage of the time we have now to tell the world about Jesus. Listen, we will know that Revelation has been supernaturally used by God in our church when we become super motivated to share God's invitation to life with a lost world. Friends, you can come away from Revelation and celebrate and say, "Hallelujah! I finally understand the seven years of tribulation. I am a futurist premillennialist post tribulationist got myself all mixed up Christian going to heaven!" I've seen the light come on in a lot of our eyes, but the real light comes on in our eyes for the purpose of Revelation when you and I are moved by the Spirit of God to take this news that Jesus is coming again and share it with the world that's not excited about that. God, help us.

Spirit of God, help us. We've talked about making wholehearted followers of Jesus Christ, and we've framed it, we've printed it, we've polished it, and we've said, "We are gathering as many people as we can to encourage and equip as many people as we can in order to send as many people as we can in order to reach as many people as we can." Why do we say that? Because Jesus Christ is coming again. Jesus Christ is coming soon, and there is coming a day where the lost will be lost and the saved will be saved. The lost will be cast into a lake of fire, and the saved will spend eternity in heaven. I'm pleading with you as a church to join with me in bringing as many people as we can to heaven with us! We have good news! And the most important news is that Jesus is coming again.

Now what do we do? Jesus is coming again. That's in John 14. Those are the words of Jesus. He told the disciples. He said, "Don't let your hearts be troubled. I'm going to prepare a place for you. In my father's house are many mansions. If I go there I will come again to take you to be with me." That's Jesus saying, "I am coming again." In Revelation 22, Jesus says, "Behold I am coming soon. Behold I am coming soon. Surely I am coming soon." There is a difference. Though both spoken by Jesus, there is a difference between Jesus is coming

again and Jesus is coming soon. Do you know what the difference is? "Jesus is coming again" is information to know. "Jesus is coming soon" is inspiration to act.

When we read in Revelation, the book of Revelation is not an announcement to the lost world that Jesus is coming soon. The book of Revelation was written to the churches. Revelation 2-3 say, "Write this message to the churches." It was letters written to real churches in real places in real time for all churches for all time to apply. And when you come to the last chapter of Revelation and the last words of Jesus, it says here: "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am coming soon." It is inspiration to act. It is God saying that yes it's important that Jesus is coming again, but there's something to do in light of that.

There are three actions that are needed as we think about the return of Christ. When He comes, He needs to find us worshipping God. Secondly, He needs to find us waiting on Jesus and third, walking in the Spirit. Those three actions- Jesus is coming soon. Why is that so important? Because the opportunities to see people saved are coming to a close. What are we to do? We are to be busy worshipping God, waiting on Jesus, and walking in the Spirit.

First, worshipping God. That means that we need to put Him at the center of our life. It means that we need to put Him at the first of our day. It means we need to do what Matthew 6:33 says and "seek first the kingdom of God." It means that we need to obey the greatest commandment "to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength." When we speak of being wholehearted, we're talking about pursuing Christ first in all things. Worshipping God is loving God above all else. We can do that privately and personally, but we do it in a very visible way corporately and publicly. Do you know what happens when we gather together like this? Do you know what one of the purposes of that is? It is for us to come together weekly and to center our lives again with God right in the very center. We go into this world, and we are beaten and we're pulled and challenged and tempted. This attack comes for us to go with the world's ways. When we walk back in here corporately, what we're saying is that whatever's been vying for the throne and whatever's been trying to get in the place of God, we remind ourselves that we are here for Him. Joy to the world, the Lord has come. All my hope is in You. So again and again and again when we gather, it is the purpose for us to put God on the throne, get Him in the center of our life, and get Him in the first of our life.

I'll say more about waiting on Jesus in a second, but next is walking in the spirit. I love verse 17 where it says, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'" Do you know what's pictured there? Unity. Unity between the church and the Holy Spirit. Do you want to see God move powerfully? Do you want to you see God do something that will last for eternity?

Do you want to see something that's bigger than yourself? Walk in step with the Spirit. Listen to the Spirit and say, "Spirit, whatever You say, that's what we want to say," and "Spirit, whatever You want to do, that's what we want to do as a church." Here you have the Spirit and the bride saying in unity together, "'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price."

How do we walk in the Spirit? It's daily dying. We're baptized once in the Holy Spirit, but we're filled daily with the Holy Spirit. To walk in the Spirit means to be led by the Spirit and be controlled by the Spirit of God. How does that happen? It's a practical thing of just every day reminding yourself and saying to God in prayer, "Lord, I die to myself. I've been crucified with Christ. Holy Spirit, You live in me. You're calling the shots today. I want to do what you want to do. I want to say what you want to say. I want to live in submission to Your authority. I want to walk in step with the spirit. I want to say no to the flesh and yes to the Spirit." It is a morning prayer, a midday prayer, an evening prayer and a moment by moment prayer- "Father, let me walk in the Spirit."

In closing, let me say a bit to you about waiting on Jesus. Until Jesus comes, we are to be worshiping God, waiting on Jesus, and walking in the Spirit. This waiting on Jesus is active. Waiting on Jesus has a sense of waiting and watching. It is getting ready for Jesus. So I want to close by giving you these four prayers to pray. Here's how you wait on Jesus. Number one. Pray this: "Father, help me to clean up. As I get ready for your return, Father help me to clean up." The New Testament was written with this sense of eminence that Jesus was going to come again. The writers of God's word would say again and again and again to not think you can just live any kind of way. You want to be ready for His return. He's coming like a thief in the night. Why would He tell us that? He tells us that so we can be ready and so that we can be prepared. Being ready and prepared is just daily seeing less and less of sin control our life and more and more of the Spirit controlling our life.

Paul said to Timothy, "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." Today, for you to clean up and be ready for the return of Christ, ask the Spirit of God to search your heart and try you and see if there's any unclean thing in your soul. As He shows you in your speech, in your purity, in your conduct, and in your faith, there may be things there that are sin. You wouldn't want Jesus to walk in on you saying that, you wouldn't want Jesus to walk in on you doing that, and you wouldn't want Jesus to walk in on you believing that. Lay it before Him and ask Him to clean you up. Secondly, look up. You pray this, "Father, help me to look up." Do you know what I'm saying to you? I'm saying to be encouraged hold your head up as a believer. Jesus uses this word two times, "*Behold* I am coming soon." It's kept in the ESV because it's such a

hard word to to interpret or to translate in English. The word "behold" is a word that's like saying in an English phrase, "Hey, can I have your attention? I need you to look right here and be excited about something that's going to happen!" Or we can just say, "Behold!" Jesus is saying, "Behold! I am coming soon! Don't you know that in the end I win?"

Over these next few weeks of December between now and the first week of January, do you know what you're going to be doing over every time you see somebody? You're going to say, "Go Dawgs!" You're going to write a letter this week, and where you usually say, "Sincerely," you're going to say, "Go Dawgs!" You usually say "Merry Christmas," and this year it is, "Go Dawgs! Merry Christmas!" And then if something really happens in January big time, I'm going to have to listen to it the whole year! Every time you see me, "Go Dawgs!" Why is that? Because you feel like winners! You feel like champions! Your team came out on top! Jesus is declaring something much more important! As followers of Jesus Christ, say to the world, "Go Jesus! Go Jesus! Go Jesus!" He is coming soon! There's never been a day where Christians ought to be more encouraged than today, because in a world of chaos and confusion you and I know that the end is clear. We win. Look up.

Third, I would say to you, grow up. If we're going to be ready for the coming of Jesus, we need to grow up. We need to grow up in our serving. Stop talking about it and serve. If God's going to call us servants in eternity, it would be a good idea for us to start doing that here. There are so many ways! Whether it's children's ministry or in the youth department or helping on this property or working in a ministry in the community, serve Jesus. Grow up in choosing. Ask God to help you not make unwise decisions today and tomorrow and the week ahead. Grow up in your giving. Last year, our church took a huge step and we gave more than \$200,000 in our Acts 1:8 offering. I'm saying to you let's grow up in our giving. Let's exceed that goal again this year. Jesus is coming again, and the opportunities are closing for us to tell the world about Him. Let's grow up in our giving.

And the last thing we need to pray is, "Father, help me speak up. Father, before You come back, help me to speak up and tell the world about You." Just pray it and let Him work it out. He'll show you.

Father, we bow before You, and we look forward to the day when You will say to Jesus, "It's time. Go get Your church. Go get your bride." Let us be ready. Amen.