

“Behold, I Am Coming Soon”
Revelation 22:7-21

December 27, 2015

SCRIPTURE INTRO:

We’ve spent the Sundays of Advent

looking a few great New Testament passages on Christ’s Second Coming.

It’s been the practice of the church through the centuries

to celebrate of Christ’s first coming to Bethlehem,

by studying and reflecting on his second coming in glory at end of age.

Just as the Old Testament believers were made holy and happy

by looking forward to Christ’s coming,

so we are made holy and happy as we look forward to him.

Finishing up the study today and looking forward to the new year.

INTRO: Our Christmas Eve service this year was wonderful, as usual. It was great to see so many of our college students home.

A lot of people had extended family with them.

It was good to see all of them sitting together in the pews.

There are also lots of Cullman friends, members of other churches in town, for whom our Christmas Eve service has become their regular thing.

What an honor and pleasure it is to see them year after year.

So after the service ended, there was lots of talking, lots of socializing.

People would go from one knot of conversation and get pulled right into another.

But there was one group of people who had no desire whatsoever to stand around and talk—the children.

They'd come to the service. They'd sung the carols.

They got to light a candle—that was fun!

But then it was over and come on, mom and dad, let's get home!

Because the children had one big thing on their mind—Christmas.

Christmas is coming soon.

It's the next big thing that's going to happen and it's so vivid to them that it feels like if they can just get home, it will come sooner.

So they're tugging at their parents. Come on!

The Bible tells us over and over that the next big thing that is going to happen is the return of Jesus Christ.

His coming is mentioned in almost every New Testament book—

And the Bible ends with this magnificent prophecy in which 3 times Jesus declares:

“Behold, I am coming soon.”

“Behold, I am coming soon.”

“Yes, I am coming soon.”

But it's been 2,000 years, and He still has not come.

So how can he say that he is coming soon?

The answer is that faith in Christ annihilates time.

Think about it. You look back 2,000 years to Jesus.

And your faith annihilates those years easily.

By faith the manger and cross just as real for you as if they happened yesterday.

In mind's eye you travel to Bethlehem, or to hill outside Jerusalem, Golgotha.

You look to the cross when need strength and comfort and forgiveness.

You never say—that was so long ago, it doesn't help me now.

You get power every day from his life, death and resurrection.
In the same way faith annihilates the years as you look forward to his return.
What's 2,000 years? It's nothing.

Jesus said, "I am coming soon."

When you latch on to that by faith, the expectation of his coming,
has as much power to change you, as if he were coming tomorrow.

Christians throughout this Gospel Age look by faith at two events—
We look back at his first coming—manger, cross, empty tomb—
And we look forward to second coming—the resurrection and new creation.

When you look by faith to his coming—
when faith annihilates the distance, and you start to hope and believe,
and long for his appearing soon—that expectation changes you.

It starts to dominate your thinking and your imagination—
and it works its way into every part of your life.

That's what this passage is about.

It's about the sort of person you ought to be and will be—
if Jesus' second coming is your great expectation.

There is so much in this passage—
it's not only the conclusion of Revelation—
summary of all the Bible's teaching on Second Coming—
and it's the conclusion of the Bible itself.

This is God's last word before the next great event.

This is like the Christmas Eve service—
we're going to read this, go to bed, wake up—and Jesus will be here.

Passage shows us three things that will be true of people who are looking
with eager expectation for the return of Christ. Also a test. Are these true of you?

An eager expectation of Christ's second coming will cause you to

1. Worship God
2. Pursue holiness
3. Proclaim the Gospel

MP#1 An eager expectation of Christ's Second Coming will cause you to worship God.

John begins the conclusion of the book of Revelation with Jesus' words:

“Behold, I am coming soon.”

Then he includes a peculiar detail.

John reminds us that an angel has been showing him the visions of Revelation.

When these were all completed, John fell down to worship the angel.

Angel would have none of it.

Don't worship me. I am a servant of God just like you—worship God.

Why did John include this odd detail—his temptation to worship an angel?

And what does this have to do with Jesus coming again?

Book of Revelation is about worship.

The big question it asks is: Who are you worshipping?

Are you going to worship Christ or the Beast?

Christ or the False Prophet?

Christ or the Harlot Babylon?

In Revelation the Beast, False Prophet, and the Harlot represent

all the powers and ideologies and pleasures the world offers for worship.

So the angel says at the end as a climax to the book: Worship God!

Intended to remind us of something fundamental as we consider Second Coming—we are worshipping creatures. We are made to worship.

As human beings will seek something greater than ourselves to trust and adore.

We will either worship the true God, or we'll find some other god to worship.

And that is who we will turn to for security and meaning and hope.

After the recent San Bernardino shooting you may recall seeing pictures of the employees from the health center where the shooting took place,

gathered in a circle outside, obviously in great distress, heads bowed, praying.

The New York Daily News ran a cover story with the headline:

“God Isn't Fixing It.”

The story criticized people praying and criticized public officials who had responded on social media by asking people to pray.

Gist of the article was how stupid and unhelpful it is to rely on God.

So what did the New York Daily News say you ought to do instead of pray?

It said citizens ought to support government solutions, gun control and so forth. God isn't fixing it, but the government can!

As a number of Christian commentators pointed out:

The editors of the New York Daily News were criticizing people for turning to God in their distress, but that is exactly what they were doing.

Only their god was the civil government, the power of the state.

And if only Americans would bow down to the government and give the government Lordship over more areas of their lives, and trust the government—then we could be saved and our nation healed and made right.

The problem is that people aren't trusting the government enough!

Yes, it's certainly true. Everybody worships.

Bible says that God has placed eternity in our hearts.

He has created us to worship Him.

Find in him the fulfillment of all of our longings.

“You have made us for Yourself and our hearts are restless to we rest in You.”

But our constant temptation is to worship something else.

Whether it is wealth or success or our comfortable lives.

Even the Apostle John, great Christian that he was—

who walked with Jesus, who had these great visions,

was tempted to bow and worship an angel rather than the Lord.

How much more will we be tempted to worship created things rather than Creator?

That's why it is so important for us to believe Jesus when He says,

“I am coming soon.”

Think for a minute of all that we have learned about Jesus.

When he comes He will be glorious, powerful, terrible to enemies, gracious to own.

He will redeem all creation. Raise our bodies and glorify them.

He will burn away like a refiners fire all that is evil and tainted with sin.

He will usher in new heaven and new earth—a home of righteousness.

An eager expectation of the Second Coming of Christ will crush your idolatry

by giving you someone truly great to worship.

Jesus Christ, God in the Flesh, glorified and coming.

Why worship things that will curse you and let you down? Worship God.

MP#2 An eager expectation of Christ's Second Coming will cause you to pursue holiness.

Every passage we have studied on Second Coming has emphasized the importance of holy living.

Once again, here it is in these final words of Revelation.

Jesus says: "Behold, I am coming soon."

Then the angel tells John that the time is near, then says:

Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong,

Let him who is vile continue to be vile,

Let him who does right continue to do right,

Let him who is holy continue to be holy.

What does that mean?

It means when Jesus comes,

the habitual patterns of a lifetime will reveal your true character.

All people will be divided into two groups:

Those who have grown in grace and those who are hardened in sin.

If you have consistently fought sin and made every effort to live godly life—that will be revealed. You will be seen for who you really are—holy person.

You may say: But I don't feel like a holy person. I see all sorts of sins inside.

I've hurt people. I've deliberately broken God's law many times.

There are sins I've struggled with for years, fallen into again and again.

If you have fought to do right and be holy—then those failures don't matter.

Because your true character—longings and struggles for right will be revealed.

On the other hand, if you have gone your own way.

If you've not fought against sin, and not struggled to do right.

If you've been a hypocrite—saying a Christian, not trying to live like one.

If you've ignored the appeals and warning of the Bible.

If you have not listened to the counsel of godly friends and parents.

If you have basically done what you want to do . . .

Then, your true character will be revealed when Jesus returns.

His assessment will be that you are a vile person and wrong-doer,

hardened in sin and unchanged. Unfit for the kingdom of God.

You may say: But I'm a good person. I've never hurt anybody.

I'm not as bad as some. Nobody's perfect. Everybody's doing it. Not big deal.

All those excuses will simply confirm your true character.
Because all reveal deep love for sin and aversion to holiness.
Grace makes a mark on a person. It changes you.

Many who think that they are saved because they prayed a prayer once,
or professed faith before church, or had an emotional religious experience.
But their lives have not changed. Deep down do not desire holiness, hate sin.
When Jesus returns, he will reveal the true character of every person.

In that context Jesus says:

“My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”
What each person has done, will be brought forth as evidence of character.
Reward of eternal life, or judgment will be fitting with your character.
If you know that on the day Jesus returns, your true character will be revealed,
and you will receive a reward from him for what grace has done in your life—
What does that make you want to do? Should make you want to pursue holiness.

Brides want everything to be perfectly beautiful and radiant on wedding day.
Want everything around them to add to their beauty and perfection.

They want everything imperfect, cheap, ugly removed.
And their mothers do too. This past summer, mother of bride told me not to wear
my lavender colored socks to her daughter’s wedding. A hint of distraction.
It’s all so that at the big moment, when the bride walks down the aisle,
the groom and everybody else will be in awe of her beauty.

Bible takes that desire of brides for beauty and perfection on wedding day—
and turns it into an illustration of how you should pursue holiness
in anticipation of the day of Jesus’ return.

The same passion, the same intensity and single minded pursuit should mark
your pursuit of holiness and fight against sin.

All of us here who know Lord have struggles—struggle to love certain people,
be joyful and patient, and kind. Struggle against sinful habits, attitudes, words.
Where’s the power? Look with expectation to Christ’s coming.

With the same faith you use to look back to the cross, look ahead to return.
On that day, I want to be who I am, be who He expects me to be.
Bring that expectation to bear in your pursuit of holiness.

MP#3 An eager expectation of Christ's Second Coming will cause you to proclaim the Gospel.

Jesus says: Behold, I am coming soon.

And how do those who believe him respond? They say: "Come!"

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come."

The Spirit is the Holy Spirit, who is with us, carrying out work of Christ.

The Bride is the church. God's redeemed people, being made holy.

Both the Holy Spirit and the Bride throughout this Age—

in response to Jesus' promise: I am coming soon, say, "Come."

Question: To whom do the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come"?

To Jesus? Yes. Clearly this is our prayer.

"Amen. Come Lord Jesus."

Wherever there is true, passionate Christianity you find Christians praying for and longing for the return of Christ.

But notice that the Spirit and the Bride say "Come" to someone else.

"Whoever is thirsty, let him come.

And whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."

So not only do the Spirit and the Bride call out to Jesus to come quickly,

They call out to everyone who is thirsty, "Come to Jesus."

Here is water that will satisfy your deepest thirst.

That is the Gospel.

If you know your thirst and know your poverty—

just come and take a free drink from the water of life.

The church calls outwardly through the preaching of Gospel,
through Christians sharing their faith.

The Holy Spirit calls inwardly, drawing to Christ.

So the great message of the church through this Age is "Come."

Come to Christ. Come in repentance and faith, thirst will be quenched.

If Jesus' coming is your expectation, you will not keep your mouth shut.

You will open it and tell people Lord brings into your life

that Jesus can satisfy their deepest needs.
And that all they need to do is come to him and drink.

And your expectation of Jesus' coming will add an urgency—

Because when he comes, there will be more coming.

The door of grace will be shut.

The free food and drink of the Gospel will not be available again.

After the 2011 tornado, when the power was out, we lit our grill and our neighbors did the same, and every body brought all the meat out of their freezers. We had as much steak as we wanted and were inviting everybody in neighborhood to come—Let's eat it while we can. It won't last.

The Gospel is rich food, it's living water. And it's free and we get to give it away.

Enjoy the pleasure of eating and drinking it with those who come.

There are people in your life to whom you need to say: Come.

Come to Christ. Come to the water of life.

Eric Martin is the pastor of Seventh Street Baptist Church. He has a blog.

His last blog post was titled: Meeting Andrea Shaffer:

My Failure to Look Back and Looking Back on My Failure

On [a] weekend trip [home] during my junior year [of college], I had a life-changing encounter that impacted my view of evangelism. I arrived home and quickly ran into the house to get ready to meet up with some friends. As I left, I hurriedly backed my car out of the driveway only to back into another car. Initially, I was not really sure where the car had come from; for there had not been any cars going down my street. When I backed out, I looked to my left and to my right. It was a rather routine action I had done many times before. Yet on this particular day the outcome was different. The other driver was a woman named Andrea Shaffer. She had been backing out of my neighbor's driveway directly across the street from my driveway. She was simply turning around. I had looked every direction except behind me. I failed to look in the rearview mirror. The good news was very little damage had been done to the two vehicles. While we were exchanging information, I felt the Holy Spirit leading me to share the gospel with Mrs. Shaffer. But because of the drizzling rain and my "pressing" appointment with my friends, I disregarded what God was leading me to do. But the story did not end that day in the drizzling rain. A week later, I was at work reading the newspaper in the break room. The front page headline read, "Death Brings Change of Heart; Homeowners Reconsider Sidewalks." The story told of a woman who had been jogging in her neighborhood the day before when she was struck and killed by a speeding car. But what struck me was the victim's picture and name. It was Andrea Shaffer. To this day I still have a copy of The Commercial Appeal dated October 4, 1996. I felt an overwhelming sense of conviction. Did Andrea know the Lord? To this day I do

not know the answer to that pressing question. The missed evangelistic opportunity weighed heavy upon my heart for years. Yet God used it in my life as a teaching moment.

Some good and gracious lessons.

Where do you get the courage and the compassion to speak—

Look with expectation to Christ's coming.

With the same faith you use to look back to the cross, look ahead to return.

Remind yourself that when he comes, no more coming.

Now is the time to say: Whoever is thirsty, let him come.

CONC: Notice how Bible ends. God's last word to us before the next big thing.

Yes, I am coming soon.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

There is a promise: Jesus says, I am coming soon.

There is a plea: God's people say, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

There is a provision: The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people.

How are we to live in obedience to Christ until he comes?

How are we to worship God and not idols

How are we to pursue holiness?

How are we to proclaim Gospel?

By grace! How do we fight sin and pursue holiness? By grace.

How do we stay pure? By grace.

How do we stay faithful? By grace.

Which simply means that we rely completely on Jesus Christ—

all he has done and all he has promised to do.

How do you get his grace?

Through his promises. Through the promises of his coming.

You get his grace by taking promise: "Yes, I am coming soon."

Looking at that so intently, thinking about it so consistently—
that faith annihilates the distance and years.

His coming becomes a vivid expectation in your life.

So that you become like the child whose great expectation is Christmas morning.

The child who can't wait for the next big thing.