

The Bible's Final Words

Text: Revelation 22:6-21

Introduction:

1. We now come to the concluding section of the Book of Revelation. It contains a number of very powerful, rousing exhortations and instructions. Some striking resemblances between the prologue the epilogue can also be noted.
2. Brief review of last lesson. In our last message we studied the following:
 - Final Exhortations (Vs. 6-11)
 - Final Declarations (Vs. 12-16)
 - Final Invitations (Vs. 17)
3. Today, we will study the final two points in our outline:
 - Final Admonitions (Vs. 17-19)
 - Final Benedictions (Vs. 20-21)
4. This section contains the most sobering warning in the Bible about tampering with the Word of God and forms a fitting conclusion not only to the Book of Revelation but to the whole canon of Scripture.
5. B.H. Carroll: "I, for one, think that verses 18-19 are not exclusively limited to the book of Revelation. For, if I have correctly interpreted the foregoing passages, showing that this book is bound up with all the other prophecies into one unity, and as in this book Christ's prophetic office is closed henceforth, so then there will never be another revelation, nor need for another, and as this book is the climax revealing paradise regained to meet the paradise lost of Genesis, then the warning applies to all the inseparable library."
6. We will study these final words of the Book of Revelation in 5 sections:

I. FINAL EXHORTATIONS (VS. 6-11)

II. FINAL DECLARATIONS (VS. 12-16)

III. FINAL INVITATIONS (VS. 17)

IV. FINAL ADMONITIONS (VS. 18-19)

This is the most solemn warning in the Bible against tampering with it. In the event of a sinful action by man, in both verses, a corresponding action from God is promised.

There is a solemn warning to those who...

A. Add to the Book (Vs. 18)

Adding to God's completed Revelation is a serious and sinful thing. In this verse, if men add to God's Word, they are warned that the penalty will be God adding to them the judgments described in Revelation.

1. "the words" = notice the emphasis in both verses on the very words of Scripture. God's Revelation was given in actual words, each word being inspired of the Holy Spirit through the human writers God used.

a. Every word is inspired:

- i. 2 Timothy 3:16 "**All scripture is given by inspiration of God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"

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- ii. 2 Peter 1:21 “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake **as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.**” Illustration: The word ‘driven’ in Acts 27:17 is from the same Greek word translated ‘moved’ in this verse.
- iii. 2 Tim. 1:13 “Hold fast the form of **sound words**, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”
- iv. Prov. 30:5 “**Every word of God is pure**: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.”
- b. Every word is preserved:
 - i. **Psalm 12:6-7** “The words of the LORD **are pure words**: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, **purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them** from this generation for ever.”
 - ii. Psalm 100:5 “For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and **his truth endureth to all generations.**”
 - iii. Matt. 4:4 “But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word** that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”
 - iv. Matt. 5:18 “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, **one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law**, till all be fulfilled.” Luke 16:17 “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than **one tittle** of the law to fail.”
 - v. Matt. 24:35 “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my **words shall not pass away.**” (See also Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33)

Some examples of adding to God’s Word:

1. **False Gospels and writings elevated as equal to or superior to the Scriptures.** For example:
 - a. The authors of the Apocryphal books and the Roman Catholic Church that accepted them have added to the Scripture by their spurious gospels, such as the Gospel of Nicodemus, Shepherd of Hermas, Epistle of Barnabas, Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Eve, Gospel of Bartholomew, Gospel of Basilides, Gospel of Hesychius, Gospel of Judas Iscariot, Gospel of Apollos, Gospel of Cerinthus, Gospel of Marcion, Gospel of Philemon, Gospel of the Twelve Apostles, Gospel of the Egyptians and the Gospel of the Nazarenes. (D. Cloud)
 - b. The books and writings of the cults such as the book of Mormon, Mary Baker Eddy’s *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, and the prophecies of Ellen White (SDA founder).
2. **The elevation of tradition as equal to or superior to the truth of God’s Word.** The Roman Catholic Church is a classic example. The Second Vatican Council states, “Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out of the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal... Thus it comes about that the Church does

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not draw her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Hence, both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal feelings of devotion and reverence.” The Bible condemns man-made tradition in the strongest terms. Refer to Mark 7:7-13; Col. 2:8; 20-22 and 2 Thess. 2:15.

3. **The modern, corrupt Bible versions with their dangerous additions, deletions and translation methodology.** Not only are modern translations full of deletions, they are often full of man’s words that have been added. Some translations take great liberties in adding their own words rather than strictly following the inspired words of God. This is due to a shift in translation method to something referred to as “dynamic equivalency”. They argue that the job of the translator is not to strictly follow the exact words in the original Greek and Hebrew but rather to take the thoughts and concepts and communicate them in contemporary language that people understand. This gives the translator far too much liberty to insert their own words and concepts. The living Bible, Good News for Modern Man, Aussie Bible and The Message are all examples of this. The Reformation era Bibles were word for word translations. Consider the testimony of William Tyndale who was martyred for his translation of the Bible, “I call God to record against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, to give a reckoning of our doings, that I never altered one syllable of God’s Word against my conscience, nor would I so alter it this day, if all that is in the earth, whether it be pleasure, honor or riches, might be given me.”
4. **The “new revelations” falsely so called of the Charismatic movement.** We are told by some that we should seek for new and direct revelations from God (e.g. prophecies, tongues speaking, word of knowledge, revelations etc...) Nothing needs to be added to the Scriptures as they are sufficient! See 2. Tim. 3:16-17.
5. **The attempts of modernists and liberal theologians to incorporate humanistic philosophies into the Scriptures.** For example, the attempt to force the theory of evolution between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2.
6. **The elevation of human ideas, opinions and philosophies above the Scriptures.** Every Christian must take care to be submitted to the Scriptures in all things and not dismiss the truth based on their own wisdom. E.g. “I know the Bible says that, but I think this!”
7. The Bible warns elsewhere about adding to the Scriptures:
 - a. Deuteronomy 4:2 “**Ye shall not add unto the word** which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”
 - b. Prov. 30:5-6 “Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. **Add thou not** unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”

B. Subtract from the Book (Vs. 19)

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1. Notice again the emphasis on “the words”. Every Word of God is inspired of God and to remove any word from the Bible is absolute wickedness (refer verses cited above).
2. The modern versions are a classic example of what is warned about in this verse with their deletions of words, phrases and even whole verses.
 - a. David Cloud writes, “The modern critical Greek text removes 2,886 words, including 45 entire and 185 partial verses, that were previously included in the Received Text that held sway from the Protestant Reformation to the 20th century. This is equivalent to removing the entire books of 1 and 2 Peter. A prominent example of this is the removal or serious questioning of the last 12 verses of Mark 16, when it is obvious that their removal leaves Mark’s Gospel in confusion and doubt and is certainly not what the Holy Spirit would pen.”
 - b. The modern versions are based upon a minority of Alexandrian (Egyptian) texts which have been proven to be very corrupt. The two main manuscripts that form the textual base for the modern versions are:
 - i. **Vaticanus (B)** – from the Vatican library. The entire manuscript is mutilated. “...every letter has been run over with a pen, making exact identification of many of the characters impossible” (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus – www.waynejackson.freeserve.co.uk/kjv/v2.htm). This was probably done in the 10th and 11th century. All of the revision and overwriting “makes precise paleographic analysis impossible” (Scott, *Codex Vaticanus*). Dr. David Brown observes: “I question the ‘great witness’ value of any manuscript that has been overwritten, doctored, changed and added to for more than 10 centuries” (*The Great Uncials*). According to John Burgon, “In the Gospels it leaves out 749 entire sentences and 452 clauses, plus 237 other words, all of which are found in hundreds of other Greek manuscripts. The total number of words omitted in B in the Gospels alone is 2, 877 as compared with the majority of manuscripts (Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, p. 75)
 - ii. **Sinaiticus (Aleph)** – Discovered by Constantine Tischendorf at St. Catherin’s Monastery (Greek Orthodox) at Mt. Sinai. He discovered the first part in 1844 and the second in 1859. It also abounds with corruptions. “Codex Sinaiticus abounds with errors of the eye and pen to an extent not indeed unparalleled, but happily rather unusual in documents of first-rate importance. On many occasions 10, 20, 30, 40 words are dropped through very carelessness. Letters and words, even whole sentences, are frequently written twice over, or begun and immediately cancelled; while that gross blunder, whereby a clause is omitted because it happens to end in the same words as the clause preceding occurs

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no less than 115 times in the New Testament (John Burgon, The Revision Revised). David Cloud comments, "It is clear that the scribes who copied the Sinaiticus were not faithful men of God who treated the Scriptures with utmost reverence. The total number of words omitted in Aleph in the Gospels alone is 3,455 compared with the Greek Received Text (Burgon, p. 75)."

iii. Testimony of John Burgon:

"When we study the New Testament by the light of such Codexes as B Aleph D L, we find ourselves in an entirely new region of experience; confronted by phenomena not only unique but even portentous (ominous). The text has undergone apparently an habitual, if not systematic depravation; has been manipulated throughout in a wild way... There are evidences of persistent mutilation, not only of words and clauses, but of entire sentences. The substitution of one expression for another, and the arbitrary transposition of words, are phenomena of such perpetual occurrence, that it becomes evident at last that which lies before us is not so much an ancient copy, as an ancient recension (critical revision) of the Sacred Text... THESE CODEXES ABOUND WITH SO MUCH LICENTIOUSNESS OR CARELESSNESS AS TO SUGGEST THE INFERENCE, THAT THEY ARE IN FACT INDEBTED FOR THEIR PRESERVATION TO THEIR HOPELESS CHARACTER. Thus, it would appear that an evil reputation ensured their neglect in ancient times; and has procured that they should survive to our own, long after multitudes which were much better had perished in the Master's service."

c. Illustrations from the NIV

- i. The omission of the Lord's name. In the New International Version, references to "Lord" are omitted **39 times**, "Jesus", **87 times** and "Christ" **52 times**. How precious is the name of Jesus Christ? There is none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Christ's Name is exalted "above every name" (Phil. 2:9). Devils tremble at the sound of that Great and Mighty Name.
- ii. The casting of doubt upon whole sections of Scripture in the notes – e.g. Mark 16:9-19; John 7:53-8:11 (account of the woman taken in adultery). Remember, judge the notes by the Bible, not the Bible by the notes!
- iii. The omission of whole verses – For example, see Matt. 17:21; 18:11; 23:14; Lk. 9:55-56 (mostly removed), Mark 9:44, 46; 11:26; 15:28; Acts 8:37; Rom. 16:24.

d. Illustration from the Good News Bible – attack on the blood of Christ.

3. The warning is severe and sobering – those who take away from God's Word will be eternally damned.
4. Note: This is not teaching loss of salvation as the Bible is clear on that in other verses but it is teaching that tampering with God's Word is an activity of the unregenerate and carries the penalty of eternal damnation. "It is not that he was saved and loses it, but he was never saved and never will be saved because of his damnable deed." (Cloud)

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V. FINAL BENEDICTIONS (VS. 20-21)

A. Christ's Final Words (Vs. 20a)

B. John's Final Words (Vs. 20b-21)

1. "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." = John's response to Christ's words. This is the heart response of the child of God to the truth of Christ's coming.
2. "the grace" = Revelation begins and ends with grace (Rev. 1:4; 22:21). We could say that it is "bookended" by God's grace.
3. The Bible begins with God (Gen. 1:1) and ends with grace (Rev. 22:21). God is a God of grace and that truth runs like a golden thread in the Scriptures from start to finish. God delights in grace whereas judgment is His strange work (Is. 28:21).

Conclusion:

1. To the lost: Christ could come at any moment. Have you received Him as your personal Saviour from sin?
2. To the saved: Is the truth of Christ's return transforming your life? Are you living in light of His return? Are you looking for His return? Are you being a witness for Christ, calling the lost to come to Christ?