

SERMON ON Re 22:17

“And the Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely;” [Re 22:17](#).

I believe it is agreed by all our brethren that this book gives us a history of the church from the time these revelations were made to the apostle John to the end of time, when the church shall, through Christ her King, triumph over all her enemies, and enter her glorified state, when she will no more need the light of the sun, moon, or stars, or any temporal light; for God and the Lamb will be the light of that place. There all tears shall be wiped from her eyes, and all cause of sorrow be done away forever. And there shall be no more curse. Purified from all sin, as a chaste virgin, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, no charge can be brought against her. In this city, the eternal home of the saints, shall be the throne of God and the Lamb; and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face; not through a glass, darkly, or with a veil between; and his name shall be in their foreheads. There is no part of the human body more exposed to the sight of others than the forehead, nor more completely hid from our own sight. This is a happy arrangement, which keeps the saints humble, and esteeming others better than themselves. We can see the name of our God written in the foreheads of our brethren; we love them as the dear children of our God, in whom we see the loving, humble, quiet spirit of our Master dwelling. If I could see the same evidences in myself that I am a Christian that I see in them I would never doubt or fear any more. But O! when I look into myself, I can see nothing but sin, corruption, and unworthiness; so that I fear I am not a saint at all; but if I am, I know I am the very least of all. The difference between the true child of God and the Pharisee is, that the Pharisee can always see his mark; it is the work of his own hands, and it is always clear and plain before his eyes, so that he has no doubts or fears, but feels that he has done his part, and holds God under obligations to him. But it is not so with the child of God; he never wrote that name in his forehead, and when he looks at himself and the imperfections and sinfulness of his own heart, he fears that blessed name has never been written upon him. He knows that he has felt a change; that he loves the things he once hated, and hates the things he once loved. He knows that whereas he was once blind he now sees, and he abhors his sinful, corrupt self as a poor, corrupt, filthy worm that can never cleanse itself from its slime and filth. He knows that he has felt a great change wrought in his feelings, his views of himself, and his views of God and his dear children; but he fears that this change is not the work of God, but that he is a poor, deceived creature. But, dear one, the

name is in thy forehead; your brethren can see it, and they love you, and open their arms to receive you into their Christian fellowship. And you can read the lovely name in their foreheads, and love them, and embrace them, and at the same time wonder that they can love one so vile as you feel yourself to be. If this is true, what comfort it should be to you and me to have the fellowship of God's children, and their witness that the name of God is in our foreheads. The judgment of God's people should be of great worth and comfort to us, for they can see in our countenance what we can not see, and in our life and conversation what we can not see; for we feel that sin is mixed with all we do, and that "in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

When the bright day shall come that the saints shall enter into the city of God above, all fears, doubts, and darkness shall have passed away forever. They will no more need a candle, neither the light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever. We have many candle-dippers in this world, who are busy inventing lights by which they expect to evangelize the world and regenerate the hearts of men; but all their human lights and efforts can never give life to one sinner dead in sin. The sun, with all the lights that God has given to this world to drive darkness from its face, can never give life to the dead, or reveal to them any of the beauties of nature. That light gives life to the dead, contradicts both human philosophy and divine revelation. The glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, with all the light, comfort, and instruction it brings to the called, the regenerated, and renewed mind, is a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks. It is hid from the mind, blinded by the God of this world, so that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Light may nourish the plant that has life in it, but it can never give life to that which is dead. In God is life; and when he shines in the heart, then is life there; for God is there, and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is given. These sayings are faithful and true; God is their anchor; from him, and by his authority they are published in the ears of the saints, or in the churches, that they may have hope in the dark and gloomy scenes through which they have to pass in this world. The church is the bride, the Lamb's wife; and these faithful and true sayings, these precious promises and encouraging words are spoken to her by her Husband, who is faithful and true, the same yesterday, today, and forever, whose love is as immutable and unchangeable as himself.

His word is faithful and true; heaven and earth may pass away, but his word will stand as firm as his eternal throne. To destroy the bride, you have to

dethrone her Husband, take his life, and put out forever the light that will shine in the glory-world. The promises of the God of truth and faithfulness, who can not lie, has been the comfort, resting-place, and strength of the saints under the old dispensation; and they are their comfort, resting-place, and strength under the new dispensation, or gospel. If the beast and the false prophet shall arise, and shall combine with all the powers of earth and hell; if they shall hunt you in the caves and dens of the earth; if the streets and cities are made to run with your blood, they shall not prevail; but when their cup of iniquity is full, like a millstone, they shall be cast into the sea, and shall sink to rise no more forever. O, what words of comfort herein contained, and what strong encouragements are given to the church, the bride, the dear saints, to “keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book,” and never forget them. When the flood-gates of error are let loose upon you, sweeping away its tens of thousands, and the sword of persecution is glittering over your heads, ready to pierce you to the heart, fear not; keep in memory the sayings and prophecy of this book; for it is therein written that God shall give them light, and they shall reign with him forever and ever. The prophecies and sayings of this book are not to be sealed up; they are to be kept open, and to be read by the saints, and in the churches, for their comfort and encouragement, as they are passing through the severe trials and persecutions here foretold, and know that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth and will fulfill all the promises of this, book, and give victory and eternal rest to his saints, his faithful ones, who keep its sayings.

For the time is at hand, it is sure to come, when the voice of the Bridegroom shall be heard: “Behold, I come quickly;” at a time when the world is not looking for him; too soon for the wicked and ungodly. The ungodly world will try to reason that all things will eternally remain as they now are; that matter is eternal, and can never be destroyed; but the end of time will be proclaimed, when an unthinking world is not looking for it; as a thief in the night it shall come upon them. The Universalist foolishly argues that his second coming is already passed; that it took place at the destruction of Jerusalem, which was in 72 after Christ; and this book was written in 96 or 97, at least twenty-four or twenty-five years after the destruction of Jerusalem. His coming to Universalists will be a surprise, and a destruction of the whole system upon which they have built their hopes of salvation. When he shall appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, to take vengeance upon the wicked, and all things that know not God, nor obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, it will be too soon for them; they will not be looking for him, or desiring his coming. Their frightened souls, filled with alarm, and a desire to

hide from his presence, will cry for the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them. How many in this house, if this were the hour of his coming, would feel it to be too soon, and say, I am not prepared to meet him?

Ungodly sinner, awful as the thought may be, and as much as you may try to put it out of your mind, or look at it as being far in the future, that day is coming when you will have to stand before your Judge; your condition will then be unalterable; you will remain eternally a wicked blasphemer, and the smoke of your torment will rise Up forever and ever. This awful truth is recorded in this book that is not to be sealed, but is to be read in all the churches, and proclaimed by all the faithful servants of our Lord, saying, "Woe to the wicked, it shall go ill with him; the reward of his hands shall be given him." There can be no mistake; for he says, "Behold, I come quickly: my reward is with me, to give every man as his works shall be." The thing is fixed; there will be no book of accounts to run over, and debts and credits to be canceled; the works of the wicked have been wicked works, and the reward shall be according to them. The justice of God will be fully vindicated in giving to the wicked according as his works shall be.

Christ says, "I was sick, and in prison, and hungry, and naked, and ye neither visited me, nor administered to me." Now they have no one to administer comfort to them. "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." God's justice and mercy will sweetly embrace each other, and gloriously harmonize in the salvation of the saints, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, the head and husband of the church. And when he shall come to receive his bride to himself, he will say, "I was sick, and in prison, and hungry, and naked, and ye visited me, and ministered to me. He will now comfort and minister unto them." "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you, these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning-star." It is Jesus who has promised to come again without sin unto salvation, that has sent his angel to testify these things in the churches, that the promise of his coming may be kept fresh in their minds, that they may live looking for him, and keep their lamps trimmed and burning, and be at all times ready to meet the Bridegroom. He that sent his angel to testify these things in the churches is the root and the offspring of David, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the rod that was to come forth out of the stem of Jesse. In this his divinity and humanity are associated. He is the son of David, and the promise made to David is fulfilled, and the truth was proclaimed in the temple of God when the children cried, saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David." And he was David's

Lord and Creator, God manifest in the flesh; the same that was crucified, buried, and rose again, who was with the disciples for the space of forty days, and ascended out of their sight in a bright cloud, and gave promise to his disciples, by the two men in white apparel that stood by them, saying, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." He now sends his servant to testify these things in the churches, saying, "Behold, I come quickly." "And the Spirit and the bride say, come." The Spirit was given to abide with and dwell in the saints, and be their comforter and instructor, until he come; and the Spirit joins with the bride in saying, Come, Lord Jesus. It seems that the object in having these things testified in the churches was, that they should be kept in mind, and the saints put upon their watch, and constantly prepared for the coming of their Lord.

The church is called the bride, the Lamb's wife, his beloved-the purchase of his blood. "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." She is called "the king's daughter, all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold: she shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work." In these rich and costly garments she is adorned as a bride ready to receive the bridegroom. This rich and costly apparel is granted to her; it is the gift of the Bridegroom, and in it she is a glorious bride, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. When a marriage is about to take place there is nothing that the bride desires more than to be clothed in such a way that she will look beautiful in the eyes of the bridegroom. Hours and days will be spent in adorning her person, and beautifying herself to receive him she loves. The truly and affectionate wife will on all occasions try to make herself look lovely in the eyes of her husband; to please him, and bind his heart to her will be the study and labor of her days. If he is gone on a journey, she will feel gloomy and sad in his absence; no one can fill his place; she will look with strong desire for his return, and adorn herself in her most lovely attire, to meet and welcome him home.

Dear brethren and sisters, you are the bride of Christ, and without his presence you are sad; none can fill his place. He is the chiefest among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely. Have on your wedding garments, watch, and be ready; for unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. He will come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, to wipe all tears from your eyes, to turn your sorrows into unending joy, and present you to his Father in the beautiful garments with which he has adorned you, the robes of spotless white, made white in his own precious blood. Has his promise inspired your soul with this

precious hope? and is your heart filled with love to him, so that you feel that he is all you have or desire in heaven or earth? Then you will be looking for him with greater desire than ever woman looked for her husband, and when his coming is announced, with a feeling of joy that can never be expressed, you will say, "COME."

It is through great tribulation we are to enter the kingdom of heaven. In this world we have a rough and thorny road to travel; we are beset with foes without and within; we have our gloomy days and dark nights. We often feel that we are alone; there is none like us; and if we try to call up some of the bright moments we have had, when we hoped we felt the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we were the children of God, it was to us like the manna that had spoiled; we could draw no comfort from it, but feared it was a delusion, a vain imagination. With what strong desire we would then pray for another token of good, an evidence from our Savior that we were the objects of his love. O Come, and decide this doubt for me! my misery I can never express while I remain in this wretched suspense. Am I deceived? am I yet without hope and God in the world? In this dark moment let the still, small voice whisper in thy soul, "I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; I love thee, and will never forsake thee; thou art mine, I have redeemed thee, and thy sins and thy iniquities will I remember no more." O sweet visit this! the soul is filled with melody and joy. Christians, do you not desire and pray for these visits, these love feasts, along the dreary road you have to travel? Is it not your constant desire and earnest prayer, that our Lord would visit Zion with refreshing seasons? I know it is. But what will it be when Zion's wars and afflictions are all over, and she is called away from the land of sorrow by the voice of the Beloved, saying, "Behold, I am coming; and my reward is with me?" The bride will mount upon wings of love to meet him. O, it is the voice of my Beloved! "COME, LORD JESUS."

"And let him that heareth say, Come." There are many, I find them wherever I go, that love the Savior, and love his people, and have a little hope within them that he loves them, and has freely forgiven them their sins; but they are secret disciples who have never publicly owned Christ, nor become identified with the church. They feel so unworthy that they fear they would be a reproach to the church, and to the cause that is dearer to them than life. They hear others tell of the work of grace in their souls, and because they cannot tell of as bright manifestations, and as clear evidences of the pardon of sin as they hear others tell, they try to cast off their little hope, and are waiting to get a brighter and better one. I feel confident that I am talking to some of these secret disciples today. You love the saints; you want to be where they are, and

hear them talk; but you do not want them to talk to you, or think that you feel interested in the matter. When they talk of their sorrows and gloomy seasons, their doubts and fears, you can witness with them, and feel that they tell your feelings better than you can tell them yourself. But that bright and clear evidence of the pardon of sin, and that ecstasy of joy that you hear some speak of, you have never felt. That you have felt times of calm and rest to your weary soul, you can not deny; but that overflowing joy, when the soul was filled with inexpressible ecstasy and joy you have not felt, and therefore fear that you are no Christian. Sometimes when that little, glimmering hope has been strengthened, you have felt that if you were now with the saints, you would tell them what you have felt; and if they thought you worthy, you would live with them, and walk in the ordinances of the Lord's house. But these glimmering lights with you are like a shooting star, they last but a moment, and then you are in the dark, and feel that you have no business among good people. The ordinances of the Lord's house now look beautiful to you, and when you see others going down into the water, and being buried with Christ in baptism, it looks so lovely that you stand on the shore and weep, and feel in your heart, "O, that I was fit to go down too. When the saints meet to commemorate the sufferings and death of my Lord, I can sit and look upon the solemn scene, and weep because I am not fit to sit with them and commemorate him, in whom centers all the hope I have of salvation from sin, and of life and heavenly bliss."

Ah, my friend! you love the Savior; you have been born of God; you are a child of his, and an heir of heaven. In disobedience you bring the chastening rod upon yourself; you are living beneath your privilege, and must walk in the dark while you remain in disobedience. As a secret disciple, you can not enjoy the comforts and blessings of the Lord's house, and the society and communion of saints; but your hope of salvation is in Christ; take him away and your all is gone; you sink into eternal despair. O that little hope that anchors in him is worth more than a thousand worlds to you! Your prayer today, and all the time is, "Come, Lord Jesus, come and melt this hard and frozen heart of mine. O let me see thy smiling face, and with thy presence light up this dark dungeon where I dwell." Dear one, you love the Savior; and although you are a secret disciple, and never had a visible standing in the church, her Husband is your Beloved, your Savior, your All; and when his coming is announced, your voice will be heard mingling with the voice of the Spirit and the bride, saying, "COME."

But there is another character to be addressed, for it is said, "**And let him that is athirst come.**" Blessed be God, that it was said, "**Seal not the sayings of the**

prophecy of this book.” Let its promises and comforts be published in the churches, to the poor, thirsty souls; tell them that the water for which they thirst Christ must give; and he freely gives without money and without price. Your sense of your guilt and unworthiness is no reason why you should stay away from this fountain of water; it is opened to the house of David for sin and uncleanness; it is the water you need, and Jesus invites the thirsty to come to him and drink. It is your privilege to come just as you are, with all your guilt and shame; you will never get any better. “If you tarry till you are better, you will never come at all.” There is nothing that men have been called to endure that is more distressing than thirst, raging, consuming thirst. And there is no suffering that the quickened sinner has ever felt that is equal to what was felt in his poor soul when thirsting for righteousness.

I see the tears stealing down the cheeks of some of the dear young people to whom I am talking. O, dear one, are you a thirsty soul? are you ready to faint, and fall in despair? This blessed book says, “**Let him come.**” This water of life is for you. “**And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.**” Has your stubborn, negative will, that would not come to Christ, been subdued by sovereign grace? Has God wrought within you a will, desire, and thirst for the water of life? Take it freely; it belongs to you. I need not invite you, or persuade you; the knowledge you have of your own condition, the thirst that is burning within you, and like a fire consuming you, is stronger than any persuasive words I could use. But from this blessed book I can read the word, and speak it to your despairing heart: “**LET HIM THAT IS ATHIRST TAKE OF THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY.**”

O, dear saints, one and all, join with me in giving glory, and honor, and praise to our God, that the sayings and prophecy of this book are not sealed up; but shall be published in the churches, and are the true sayings of him that will come quickly. “**EVEN so, COME, LORD JESUS.**”