

Revelation

*Part Sixty-One
Take A Side
(Revelation 22:6-11)*

With Study Questions

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(Revelation 22:6-11)

Then he said to me, "These words *are* faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. ⁷ "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." ⁸ Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

⁹ Then he said to me, "See *that you do not do that*. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." ¹⁰ And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. ¹¹ He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:6-11).

Introduction

It is easy to be plagued by a lack of certainty. Not knowing what's in store can cause sleepless nights, deep anxiety and foolish decisions. Life does not hold the types of guarantees most of us would like. If we knew beginning, the road and the end, we might be less inclined to lean on Christ. And, of course, intimacy with Christ should be the primary target for a Christian. Perhaps this is why we are to pray for our daily bread rather than enough bread for a month or a year.

On the other hand, there are things God would have us rely upon. There are things He would have us know; to be certain of. The same author, John, communicated that God wants us to know that we are His.

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

Then he said to me, "These words *are* faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place (Revelation 22:6).

The Certainty of His Word

God would not have us entirely unsure of things. He would have us know that His "**words and faithful and true.**" It may be a corny lyric, but it is profoundly true that *I may not know what tomorrow holds, but I do know who holds tomorrow.*

And in a very intimate way, we are told that the same one who holds tomorrow, holds the hand of those who are His.

For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you' (Isaiah 41:13).

This does not mean that the hike will not have its rocks and holes. Sometimes the path our Lord leads us down can produce scraped knees.

The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. ²⁴ Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds *him with His hand* (Psalm 37:23, 24).

It is when we feel ourselves falling that we feel His hand tighten and, by His grace, our hands tighten on His as well.

This will be the case for John's readers (primarily the seven churches. Revelation 1:11). God has given them His word, and that which John has been writing about will "**shortly take place.**" This is the precise phrase used in the opening of the letter (Revelation 1:1).

Though Revelation includes the course of human history, from the first to the second comings of Christ (as indicated by the thousand years in chapter twenty), it primarily concerns itself with the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New Covenant. Jesus will come in judgment on those who have sought to destroy His bride.

For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom (Matthew 16:27, 28).

Something was about to begin!

“Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book” (Revelation 22:7).

Keep the Word

Some will say that Christ coming quickly means that once he starts to come, it will be quick. They cross-reference Acts 12:7 where the angel strikes Peter and tells him to **“get up quickly.”** Respectfully, I don’t think that works. Does anyone think that Peter sat there for a long time, then got up quickly when he finally decided to rise?

No, this is not a reference to how fast Jesus is, but to how soon He is coming, as indicated by the prior verse (as well as Revelation 1:1, 3). The original readers of Revelation are here reminded of what they were told at the beginning: **“Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”** How does one do this? The recurring theme is to persevere in the faith. To overcome (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7).

The Bible is not a novel. It is not to be read as mere entertainment.¹

Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things (Revelation 22:8).

Erroneous Worship

It may seem obvious that we shouldn’t worship anyone but God alone (Matthew 4:10). But the worship of someone or something that is not God can be a subtle trip. **“Worship”** in this verse is *proskynesai*, simply

¹ This seems to be the case in a well-known, popular eschatology book entitled: Front Row Seats, As we approach the year 2000, you have front row seats to the explosive Climax of History!

means to bow. The same word is used in Revelation 3:9 to describe the behavior toward those who Jesus loved. A bow may be harmless. Like one drink.

All to say that worship may begin as something less than worship, then escalate. The series of events communicated by this angel compelled John worship the messenger rather than the One who was the source of the message. Let us remember to keep everyone in their proper place. I find it disturbing when I hear that a church crumbled because of the moral failure of its pastor. Truly, that pastor would have a lot to answer for. But if the church crumbled, it is due to misplaced honor. Perhaps that why God would have ordained the failure in the first place.

The angel wasn't having it.

Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God" (Revelation 22:9).

Worship God

There may be a hierarchy in the church. There may be leaders, teachers, elders, deacons and more. But there is only one God. And if all of their efforts are not leading us to "**worship God**" then their efforts are not of God. Let us remember, no matter our post or position in ministry, we are beggars telling other beggars where to get a piece of bread.

Another indicator that the time was near comes in the following verse and its reference to that book of which John just spoke.

And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand (Revelation 22:10).

Do Not Seal

In Daniel 12:4, Daniel is told to "**shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end.**" This is because the prophecies of which Daniel spoke were not going to happen for another (about) four centuries. It is strenuous exegesis to suggest that John is told not to "**seal the words of this prophecy**" if those events were twenty centuries in the future. Don't

put these words on a shelf for those living in the 21st century. They are needed now.

Our passage ends with some curious imperatives.

He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still” (Revelation 22:11).

Take a Side

There is no great difficulty in calling the righteous or holy to stay the course. As stated, it seems to be the theme of the entire book. But what about the unjust (literally, the unrighteous *adikon*) continuing in his unrighteousness or the filthy (morally perverted *rhyparos*) continuing in his immorality?

There are a variety of answers given to this little conundrum. I won't go over all the potential interpretations, just the one I think carries the most weight.

As we have learned earlier in Revelation, there is a danger in the tepid, middle ground of faith and life.

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot (Revelation 3:15).

This is no new theme. This theme of 'if you're going to do wrong, do it.' In Jeremiah 44:25 we read of God telling the idolaters who were performing "vows" and making "offerings" to the queen of heaven to **"confirm your vows and perform your works" (Jeremiah 44:25).**

Similar language is used in Ezekiel.

As for you, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord God: Go serve every one of you his idols, now and hereafter, if you will not listen to me (Ezekiel 20:39)

Even Jesus, in His words to Judas.

Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly" (John 13:27).

The people reading this weren't definitively on one side or the other yet. Sometimes you have to choose a side. Or, more specifically, come to realize the side you've already chosen.

I recall doing a wedding for an atheist friend. As we were going over the order of the ceremony, he asked me when I was going to do the prayer. I told him I had been praying for him, but there would be no prayer in the ceremony. He was quite put off. I told him, "You have chosen not to receive Christ into your life. You've made it clear He is not invited."

We recently heard a sermon on friendship. Christ is no subtle friend. He is not to be listed among your acquaintances. He may be a friend, but He is much more than that. He is the Savior and the Master. He will be our Savior, or He will be our Judge.

Questions for Study

1. Why would God, at times, leave us in uncertainty (pages 2, 3)?
2. Are there things God wants us certain about (pages 2, 3)?
3. What was about to happen (pages 3, 4)?
4. What does it mean to “keep the words” (page 4)?
5. Can you think of examples where we might be tempted to worship the wrong thing or person (pages 4, 5)?
6. Why was John told not to “seal the words of the prophecy” (page 5)?
7. Why, do you suppose, the unjust and filthy are told to continue on their current path (pages 5, 6)?