

The book of Revelation has always held fascination for Christians and even many people with only a passing interest in scripture. It shows us great and terrible visions of future calamities to befall sinful men. Even the word “apocalyptic” (Greek for revelation) has come to mean spectacular portrayal of global disasters, such as in movies.

Highly figurative and at times difficult to understand, Revelation has invited wide ranging speculative interpretations by thousands of Bible commentators.

Many who study Revelation attempt to discern its approach in current events. Famous men from Renaissance popes to Napoleon have been identified as the antichrist. Dates have been confidently put forth for the day of the Lord. All have been wrong. We would expect those errors, as scripture tells us that no man knows the date. And we believe that no definite event is required before the rapture can come.

We can make mistakes too. But because we are told always to expect His imminent coming, it is not improper to consider whether the world is tending toward a state which demands God’s immediate judgment and where political circumstances might be paving the way to what we see during the tribulation. In this light, we might observe these signs that the time is coming nearer:

- The restoration of the nation of Israel (admittedly as a secular state and not yet as prophesied in the Old Testament).
- A lessening of morality as a basis for private and public actions.
- Decline in the numbers of lukewarm professing Christians, leaving a stark division between staunch believers and staunch unbelievers.
- Development of weapons and technologies that make more plausible the global communications and cataclysmic battles described in Revelation.

Much more could be added to this list. But should the momentous events of Revelation hold our primary interest? William Kelly noted, “The events signified by the prophetic visions of Revelation never enable one to understand the book itself.” They serve as warnings to unbelievers and confirmation to Israel.

What then are we as Christians to take from this book? How are we blessed both by reading and hearing it as promised in 1:3?

First, we get a glimpse of the eternal happiness in heaven enjoyed by all who place their trust in Lord Jesus. Few are the moments on earth when we do not experience some sadness, fear, shame, disappointment, anxiety, guilt, or regret. A day without them would be remarkable. An eternity free of them is heaven.

Revelation also gives us the fully developed picture of the Lord’s relationship with His bride, the church. In the early chapters we see His efforts to correct the church and “*present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle, that she might be holy and without blemish*” (Eph. 5:27). Then we see the church after it is taken up in the rapture and kept in the presence of the Lord during the tribulation. After that, the church reigns with her Lord during the millennium. Finally, she is splendidly arrayed as a bride for her husband as the new Jerusalem.

But the greatest treasure we should take away from a study of the book of Revelation is a deep yearning for the Lord’s return. We have seen how God’s justice will be established, evil recompensed, and Satan vanquished. And we have been given a breathtaking glimpse of eternal communion with our Lord in glory. May we groan along with all creation for that day (Rom. 8). May we always have on our lips the fervent prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

Notes on Chapter 22:6-21

Verse 22:5 is the last verse of the “story” of Revelation at the point where time yields to timelessness. But the book itself does not end. The remainder of Chapter 22 serves as a type of epilogue in which the apostle no longer views unimaginable scenes from a distance, but returns to the present to receive instruction and admonition regarding the revelations he has witnessed.

22:7 What does it mean to keep the words of prophecy in this book? Most likely, it means to search out the moral lessons of the book and keep the vision of the Lord’s coming before us to inform our daily actions.

22:8-9 One could not have seen and heard what John did without an irrepressible impulse to worship. But he chose the wrong person. (Note that Jesus did accept worship in Matt. 14; demonstrating that He knew Himself to be God).

22:10 God has no secret plan for mankind. The fate of those who accept Him and those who reject Him is clearly described in an unsealed book.

22:11 When the day of the Lord commences, no change in moral condition will be possible. The hearts of sinners will be hopelessly hardened.

22:14 Entrance to heaven is not for those who have never sinned, but those whose sins have been washed clean by the blood of Jesus.

22:15 Dogs are generally considered unclean in Middle Eastern culture, and the word is used pejoratively of male prostitutes (Deut. 23:18), unclean Gentiles (Matt. 15:26), and Judaizers (Phil. 3:2).

22:16 Like the Alpha and Omega as the first and last letters of the alphabet, Jesus is both the root of David’s heart for God and his human descendant. This divine reversal of ordinary time

sequences is reminiscent of His declaration in John 8:58: “*Before Abraham was, I am.*”

The morning star shines in the darkness but heralds the daybreak.

22:17 The Holy Spirit conveys gifts for the building up of the church, and here reinforces the cry of the church for the Lord Jesus’ return.

22:18-19 Any flagrant tampering with God’s word brings the severest penalty.

22:20 This should be the constant desire of every Christian: Come, Lord Jesus!

22:21 The book, and the Bible, end with John’s gentle benediction upon his “little children.”