“COME!”

Revelation 22:6–21

Key Verse: 22:17

“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.”

Have you ever felt like you were not welcomed somewhere? When I was a little boy, one hot summer my neighbors got a big, above-the-ground swimming pool. They were the only family in our whole neighborhood who had one. A friend was invited to their pool, but I was not. They didn’t like their son to associate with me because my mom was sick. I think I was 5 or 6 years old. I was so hurt. In our democratic society we try to have a policy of welcoming all people, regardless of race, religion, social class, etc. We even pride ourselves on welcoming people from all over the world and assimilating them. But there are still many places where certain people are not welcome.

In Revelation, we’ve learned that certain people’s names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, and certain other people’s names are not. Certain people are blessed, and others are not. Some are allowed into heaven, and others are not. But in today’s passage, the main climax is the invitation in verse 17. In the midst of all the repeated distinctions between good and bad people, there’s a united effort of the Holy Spirit, the church, and God’s servants, inviting all people of the world, “Come!” Come to what? Come to the new heavens and new earth, the Holy City, the new Jerusalem. How can anybody come there? It says all we have to do is acknowledge that we’re thirsty, and then take the free gift of the water of life. God doesn’t want us to be writing people off and judging them, but telling them all, “Come!” May God speak to us through his living words today.

**First**, trustworthy and true words. All throughout today’s passage it’s repeated how important the words of Revelation are (6,7,9,10,18,19). These words are not meant to be “sealed up” or hidden, but read aloud, heard and taken to heart (1:3). We’re solemnly warned not to add to or take away from these words (18,19). Twice we’re encouraged to “keep” these words. Two more times in Revelation we’re encouraged to keep God’s commands and remain faithful to Jesus (12:17b; 14:12). But what does it mean to “keep” these words? It means to always remember them, obey them, and never sway from them (7,9).

Most of all, these words are called “trustworthy and true.” When John saw the new heavens and new earth, and the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, he heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” The voice was quoting from the prophecy of Isaiah 25:8, and now these prophetic words were being fulfilled. The voice from the throne concluded: “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true” (21:1–5).

John’s visions recorded in Revelation may seem too far-fetched, or too good to be true. But they are trustworthy and true words. Four times in today’s 15 verses they are called words of “prophecy” (7,10,18,19). “Prophecy” means predictions of things that are really going to happen (1:1). All the glorious promises and all the severe warnings in Revelation are trustworthy and true. As we finish our study of this book, we shouldn’t quickly forget all we learned. We shouldn’t view this book as human words, but as it actually is, the word of God (1Th2:13). Actually, we should tremble at his words (Isa66:2,5). We should believe and treasure his words as trustworthy and true. Read verse 7. This is the living Jesus, the Lamb on the throne, speaking to us personally. May God help us to keep the words of prophecy written in Revelation.

**Second**, Jesus is coming soon. Read verse 6. It says the things predicted in Revelation “must soon take place.” In verse 7 Jesus himself says, for the first time, “Look, I am coming soon!” He says it a second time in verse 12, “Look, I am coming soon!” He says it a third time in verse 20, “Yes, I am coming soon.” By repeating it three times he really wants us to believe it. But what does it mean? Revelation was written nearly 2,000 years ago, and obviously Jesus hasn’t come yet. So in what sense is it “soon”? Twice in Revelation it says that Jesus will come “like a thief” (3:3; 16:15). No one knows about the day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father (Mt24:36). So we shouldn’t assume, based on the prophecies of Revelation, that now we’ve got it all figured out when Jesus is coming. On the other hand, it may seem like he’s taking too long to come back. So the Apostle Peter told us: “Above all, you must understand that in the last days, scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation…But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” (2Pe3:3,4,8). Jesus words that he’s coming soon are still trustworthy and true. He told us: “So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him” (Mt24:44). His coming soon is both a warning and a comfort. We should live every day as if Jesus is watching. Each day we should be dressed ready for service and keep our lamps burning (Lk12:35), with the hope to see him burning brightly in our hearts. Because he’s coming soon, we should live in the midst of all the darkness of this world with patient endurance (3:10; 13:10b; 14:12). Like John, we should be longing for Jesus to come again (20).

**Third**, worship. Read verses 8,9. Actually, John made this same mistake earlier (19:10). Even though he was one of Jesus’ original disciples and had the reputation as a most spiritual man, John is honestly admitting his error. He’s probably also speaking to a problem among Christians at that time of worshipping angels (Col2:18; Heb1:4–14; 2:5–9,16). John might have started worshipping the angel because the visions the angel showed him were so overwhelming. Our human tendency is to get spellbound by impressive things or people. Our hearts can so easily get stolen until, though we don’t realize it, we’re actually worshipping these things or people. It could be possessions, our children, a job, a great position—even ourselves. No one or nothing in this world deserves our worship except God alone. Revelation emphasizes that even the greatest in heaven fall down and worship God and the Lamb (4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). All people on earth are urged to worship the Creator God alone (14:7). People are easily deceived to worship demons, idols, the dragon or the beast (9:20; 13:4,8,12; 14:9,11; 16:2).

To really worship, we need to know the one we’re worshipping. Who should we worship? Read verse 13. This expression is also repeated in Revelation (1:8,17; 21:6). It’s actually taken from Isaiah’s prophecy describing God (41:4; 44:6; 48:12). It’s a powerful proclamation in Revelation that Jesus is actually God himself. No one else is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Begging and the End, except Jesus. All the other things and people of this world don’t even come close to how great he is. They’re all limited, and they all wear out. Because Jesus is the the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb13:8), he alone is worthy of our worship. And there’s more about the one we should worship. Read verse 16. What does it mean that Jesus is the Root and the Offspring of David? Earlier in Revelation, John was weeping when no one was worthy to open the seals. Then he heard a most encouraging voice: “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed” (5:5). David was famous for triumphing over all God’s enemies. It was just a foreshadowing of what Jesus would do. Jesus is the one who triumphs and defeats all God’s enemies forever. We can admire David as God’s servant, but we can worship Jesus without any reservation. It also says Jesus is the bright Morning Star. As the morning star gives hope that a new day is dawning, so Jesus is our bright Morning Star, who gives us hope of the new heaven and new earth. With Jesus our bright Morning Star, we can have God’s light in our hearts in this dark world. Satan masquerades as an angel of light, but he leaves us dark. Jesus alone is the bright Morning Star.

**Fourth**, blessed are those who wash their robes. Read verse 12. Jesus promises he’s coming again as the Judge. It’s another fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa 40:11; 62:11). Revelation repeatedly tells us Jesus judges each of us according to our deeds (2:2,19,23; 3:1,2,8,15; 14:13). We shouldn’t be too sensitive to others’ judging us; we need to be most sensitive to live before Jesus, who knows all our deeds. But even if we try our best to be holy, we don’t even come close to his standard. Malachi 3:2a says, “But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears?” Jesus coming as our Judge should make us aware that we’re nothing but unworthy, helpless sinners. So what should we do? Read verse 14. Washing our robes is the only way to be righteous. But what does it mean? Earlier in Revelation, the “white” clothes means having righteous acts, and these white clothes are actually “given” to us (19:8). As the prophecy of Isaiah says, all our righteous acts are like filthy rags (Isa64:6). We need to wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14). The verb “wash” is present-tense. It means each day we need to be coming to Jesus, confessing our sins, and accepting his blood to cleanse us and purify us from all unrighteousness (1Jn1:7,9). We should never get too proud to be doing this.

Those who wash their robes are called “blessed.” What’s their blessing? Read verse 14 again. When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost the right to eat from the tree of life. But when we depend only on the blood of Jesus, we’ll have the right to eat from that tree and live forever in the paradise of God. To “go through the gates into the city” is a powerful image. It’s the image of victory. Revelation challenges us nine times that as followers of Jesus we need to be victorious (2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12, 21; 15:2; 21:7). How can we be? How can sinners like us ever be worthy of going through the gates into the Holy City? Only when we wash our robes in the blood of the Lamb. Only the blood of Jesus gives us victory over the power of sin in and around us. Because of his blood shed for us, we’re spotless, blameless and at peace with him (2Pe3:14). Through faith in his blood, we’re justified freely by his grace (Ro3:24,25a). Through faith in his blood, we have the victory that overcomes the whole world (1Jn5:4). Going through the gates into the Holy City will be the greatest victory, the greatest honor and glory, the greatest vindication.

**Fifth**, “Come!” Read verse 17. Here, there are three who say “Come!”: the Holy Spirit; the “bride,” which means the church; and, “the one who hears,” meaning anyone who accepts the word of God. This one word, “Come!” summarizes the heart of God. It’s another quotation from the prophecy of Isaiah: “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost” (Isa55:1). God really wants to invite human beings who are thirsty to come to his heavenly kingdom where there’s eternal satisfaction for our souls. In Jesus’ parable of the wedding banquet, the servants say: “Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet” (Mt22:4). God wants this wedding to be filled with guests (Mt22:10). God is longing for people from every nation, tribe, people and language to share in his amazing grace (Rev7:9). Revelation shouldn’t leave us being obsessed with our own salvation and righteousness; we need to find our mission to call all people to “Come!” Our church should be a place that welcomes all kinds of people, good and bad, to come to Jesus. We should never be legalistic with people; we should know God’s heart and welcome them all, saying, “Come!”

The last part of verse 17 says we can take “the free gift of the water of life.” As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, this river of the water of life is flowing from the throne of God and from the Lamb, down the middle of the great street of the Holy City (22:1,2). Earlier God said, “To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life” (21:6). During his earthly ministry our Lord Jesus himself said the same thing: “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” He was talking about the Holy Spirit (Jn7:37–39). The water of life, the Holy Spirit within us, pours out God’s love into our hearts (Ro5:5). This water of life, the love of God, is the only thing that satisfies our souls. God wants us to have this water, and to invite people to come to Jesus so that they can have this water quench their thirsty souls.

Read verse 17 again. Today we thought mainly about God’s heart to invite thirsty people to his kingdom. May God help us come to Jesus and wash ourselves in his blood. May he help us to be his servants and reach out to all those who are thirsty to come to Jesus and drink freely the water of life.