

REVELATION – SERMON 91

THE FINAL WARNING

Revelation 22:18-19

INTRODUCTION

- There is an element in war called *Information Warfare* that involves manipulating information in order to feed the enemy false or corrupted information that will compromise and weaken them
- In a similar way, there is an “information war” being engaged in the spiritual realm, that goes back to the Garden of Eden
- God sends forth from heaven his communications to direct his soldiers on earth in their warfare for the kingdom of God
- The enemy seeks to intercept those communications, to destroy, discredit and distort them, and thereby frustrate the work of God
- The epilogue of Revelation (22:6-21) pronounces numerous blessings on believers (vv.7,12,14,17)
- In verse 17, the Lord Jesus Christ offers an invitation to come to him for salvation and receive the blessings of everlasting life
- But in vv.18-19, as is often the case in Scripture, the promise of blessing to the repentant believer is followed by threatenings of judgment upon the impenitent unbeliever
- Deuteronomy 28 contains a list of blessings and curses upon Israel and the curses outnumber the blessings by a factor of five
- Many people only want to hear the blessings of the Bible, but don’t want to hear the curses

- Yet the true child of God loves *all* of the Bible, both blessings and curses
- The promised blessings should encourage us to obedience; the promised curses should warn us against disobedience
- When David sang in praise of the law of God, he said, “Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.” (Psalm 19:11)
- The faithful preacher *warns* of coming judgment (Acts 24:25)
- Yet people would prefer to hear “smooth things” (Isaiah 30:10), and “after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Timothy 4:3)
- The prophets of old were hated, persecuted and put to death because they faithfully warned the people of God’s judgment
- This is the final warning *in* the word of God, and it is a warning *about* the word of God
- Though some regard these verses to be written by the apostle John, they are better regarded as the direct words of Jesus Christ
- They mark a solemn concluding warning by the Saviour that to reject his words is to forfeit eternal life

I. THE PRE-EMINENCE OF THE WORDS

- A. It is the *words* of Scripture that God wants man to be concerned with
 1. Not vague thoughts, ideas or concepts, but precise *words*
 2. The phrase “It is written” occurs over 60 times in the New Testament

- B. God's words are *inspired* (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21)
- C. God's words are *preserved* (Psalm 12:6-7; Matthew 24:35)
 - 1. To the very jots and tittles (Matthew 5:18)
- D. God's words are *living*
 - 1. The word of God is quick, powerful and sharp (Hebrews 4:12)
 - 2. His words give life to those who receive them (James 1:18)
- E. God's words are *perspicuous*
 - 1. The doctrine of *perspicuity* (clarity) means simply that "the Bible is an open and plain book" (Psalm 119:105,130)
 - 2. "All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them." (Second London Baptist Confession, 1689)
- F. God's words are *magnified* (Psalm 138:2)

II. THE PERVERSION OF THE WORDS

- A. The recipients of the warning
 - 1. This is primarily addressed to those in the churches (1:1,4,11; 22:16)
 - a. While genuine believers would not be guilty of this crime, there have always been false professors among the

churches perverting God's word, and leading others astray

2. But it extends to "every man" in the world who hears God's words

B. The extent of the warning

1. It applies firstly to the words of the book of Revelation
2. As Revelation forms the consummation and completion of the whole of the canon of Scripture, it applies to the whole word of God
3. The Bible is not 66 separate books, but one, whole complete book that stands or falls together
4. Similar warnings are repeated throughout the bible (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6)

C. There are wicked men who *literally* add to, or take away from God's word

1. Gnostic gospels – uninspired works of men pretending to be scripture
2. The Apocrypha – uninspired works containing false doctrine which Romanists added to the canon of Scripture
3. The works of cult leaders that have been elevated to the same level as Scripture
4. Liberal theologians who question the inspiration of all or parts of Scripture
5. Pentecostal / Charismatic visions and prophecies that claim to be by direct inspiration of God, which adds to the revealed word of God, and diminishes its authority

6. Textual Criticism has added to, but mostly taken from the word of God by removing 2,886 words from the Received Text to produce the Critical Text
 7. Modern Bible translators with their paraphrases add to and take away from God's words
- D. In its broadest sense, *any disobedience to the word* is adding to or taking from it
1. The similar warnings given to Israel were defined in terms of a departure from belief in, or obedience to God's law
 - a. "Keep therefore and do them" (Deuteronomy 4:1-6)
 - b. "Observe and hear all these words" (Deuteronomy 12:28-32)
 - c. God specifically warned them in these places that they must not follow the idolatrous ways of the heathen
 2. It is a turning aside from God's revelation, following false teaching, departing true worship for idolatry
 3. Syncretism – incorporating elements of false religion into true religion
 4. Ecumenism – fellowshipping with those who believe and teach false doctrine
 5. Elevating any other authority to go along with the bible
 6. Suggesting that there are errors in the bible, either in its teaching or its transmission
 - a. If *some* of the Bible is untrustworthy, can we trust *any* of it?

7. Claiming the Bible is too hard, too obscure, and impossible to interpret, so nobody can really know what it means
 - a. This is a denial of the doctrine of *perspicuity*
 - b. It is simply another excuse men have created to disobey the clear commands of Scripture
8. Antinomianism – Professing Christians who think that they can live like the world
9. Teaching or following *any* doctrine that is contrary to the word of God

III. THE PERDITION OF THE WICKED

- A. God fits the punishment to the crime
 1. There is an irony in how God describes his punishment
 - a. To those who add, God will add
 - b. To those who take away, God will take away
 2. God always metes the punishment that is perfectly suited to the sin
 - a. The reaping is according to the sowing (Galatians 6:7; Proverbs 14:14)
 - b. “As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee” (Obadiah 15)
- B. They will suffer the plagues of God’s wrath
 1. Just as believers alive at the rapture will be “kept from the hour of temptation”, (3:10), so these unbelievers will be left behind to take the mark of the beast, and suffer the plagues of God’s wrath

2. The plagues include final damnation in the lake of fire, and this is the ultimate judgment upon those who add to or take away from God's word (14:10)
- C. They will lose their part in the book of life and the holy city
1. Note that modern versions change "book of life" to "tree of life"
 2. Some use this verse to teach that a believer's name can be removed from the book of life, thereby losing his salvation
 3. This would contradict scores of clear verses that show that a justified, born again believer can never be lost
 4. Rather, this teaches that a person who perverts the word of God was never saved
 5. Their "part" in the book of life is not *possessive* but *prospective*, that is, they will lose a salvation they *might have had*, and that they *thought* they had, but never actually possessed
 6. Many such people think they are serving God, but in reality they are "workers of iniquity", to whom Christ will say on the day of judgment, "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:21-23)
 7. As God's word is the source of life, spiritually, eternally, those who despise it are denying themselves everlasting life (Acts 13:46)

CONCLUSION

1. No book in history has been attacked like the Bible
2. The Bible opens with man being tested as to what he would do with the word of God, and it ends the same way

3. The same test is being carried out every day across all of humanity
4. Whether we love and obey the word of God, or whether we hate and reject it, reveals our spiritual state
5. True believers keep God's word (John 14:23; 17:6)
6. Unbelievers keep not God's word (Psalm 119:158)
7. Can you say that you believe that every word of your Bible is inspired?
8. What a terrifying day it will be for all those who are guilty of departing from the word, and leading others to depart from it
9. "Oh, how unspeakably awful must be the fate of those who reject this testimony, and reject its message! Better far, never to have been born than thus to refuse the Word of the living God."
(Ironside)
10. God looks with favour upon those who tremble at his word (Ezra 9:4; Isaiah 66:2,5)
11. What you do with the Bible determines your eternity
12. Will you resolve to receive it as God's word, submit to its teachings, obey its commandments, heed its warnings, love its promises, defend its doctrines and follow its directions from this day forth, and for evermore?