

Revelation

*Part Sixty-Three
Come Lord Jesus
(Revelation 22:18-21)*

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
pastorpaul@branchofhope.org
www.branchofhope.org
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For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen (Revelation 22:18-21).

Introduction

It is entirely possible that God saved my soul when I was seven. For some reason that I cannot recall, on my own, I wandered into an Assembly of God Church on Third Street in Hermosa Beach (we lived on Fourth). I attended that church (really a Sunday School class) for a year and still have the Bible they gave me when I turned eight. I recall the elderly teacher and her flannel board. I can't help but think she'd be so encouraged to know I had become a pastor. Never underestimate your influence!

When I turned nine, we moved to Redondo. Even though it was only about two miles, when you're nine, it might as well have been moving to the moon. I quit going to church. My understanding, and living out, of the Christian faith was less than elementary. Yet it was still naggingly apparent that God was real, and that Jesus was the way.

One night I was giving my friend's girlfriend a ride home from some event. Years clearly had passed since my going to church. For some reason I had that Bible they had given me in my car. I remember my friend's girlfriend was smart and thoughtful. We entered a discussion about Christianity. She had questions and I was seeking to be an advocate for the faith I knew almost nothing about.

She picked up the Bible and began flipping through the pages. “Is this yours?” she asked. “Yes,” I said proudly. “This book has never been read,” she responded. She was correct. There was not a single dog-eared page in the entire (at least eight-year-old) book. Some repenting needed to happen.

This was the late sixties and early seventies. The Jesus movement was afoot. A movie, *The Jesus Revolution*, was recently made about this era. I was surrounded by aggressive evangelism. And it wasn’t just the Bible-totin’ hippies. I remember being courted by Roman Catholics, Baptists, Presbyterian, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses (no Methodists, really). I was a hot lead. I was interested in religion. And there was no shortage of proselytizers trying to close the deal.

As I was seeking to determine whose religious dance-card I might take the floor with, I noticed they all had one thing in common (this was before America had become more internationally ecumenical, so Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Jews had not yet begun to make their move. Although the Hare Krishnas were pretty aggressive, but only at airports and maybe Venice). What all the religions had in common, and this was more-or-less true even with the non-Christian religions, was a general respect for the message of Scripture.

And by Scripture, I’m talking about the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible. The best-selling book of all time. Even by worldly standards, the most reliable ancient document in human history. Even by mere literary/historical standards a startling consistent, accurate, and monumentally influential piece of literature. There is nothing like it. Even the detractors can’t ignore it. Our confession beautifully speaks to this phenomenon when it speaks to the reverent esteem the Scriptures deserve. It speaks of...

...the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts¹, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man’s salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire

¹ A compilation of sixty-six books by forty different authors (most of whom didn’t know each other) from kings to tax collectors to shepherds, over a 1500 year period with near uncanny consistency in terms of facts and message is borderline miraculous.

perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God...²

All this to say, I wanted to pick the religion that seemed most consistent with the Bible that it claimed as its foundation.

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book (Revelation 22:18, 19).

A Book

God seems very concerned about the accuracy and legitimacy of His message to us. From time to time someone will reach out to me and say something like, "I heard you said such-and-such" or "Someone told me you wanted me to so-and-so." But I didn't say "such-and-such" or want to "so-and-so." I get a little put-off by being misrepresented. More times than not, those little misunderstandings are not soul-threatening. God's message to mankind, on the other hand, has eternal consequences.

Years ago, I gave an illustration calling upon the art in a church I visited in Italy. It had angels in the upper corners behind the pulpit looking towards it with a book and quill in hand, as if to record every word that came from the pulpit. Somebody then sent me this quotation from nineteenth century pastor, Matthew Simpson on the importance of pastoral ministry.

His throne is the pulpit; he stands in Christ's stead; his message is the word of God; around him are immortal souls; the Savior, unseen, is beside him; the Holy Spirit broods over the congregation; angels gaze upon the scene, and heaven and hell await the issue. What associations, and what vast responsibility!

² WCF, 1. 5.

God has chosen to preserve His message to us in a book. And even though the specific “**this book**” of this passage is referring to the book of Revelation, the message of not departing from His written word is a predominant theme in Scripture.

You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you (Deuteronomy 4:2).

Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it (Deuteronomy 12:32).

Every word of God *is* pure; He *is* a shield to those who put their trust in Him. ⁶ Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar (Proverbs 30:5, 6).

And how often did Jesus ask...

...have you not read” (Matthew 12:3; 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:31. See also Mark 2:25, 26; 12:10, 26; Luke 6:3; 10:26)?

Jesus was emphatic about the value of Scripture, and the impotence of those who have minimized its value.

Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matthew 22:29).

The problem Jesus highlighted two thousand years ago is the same problem, one way or another, that lingers to this day.

For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men (Mark 7:8).

Jehoiakim’s Penknife

Of course, the passage under our current consideration is not addressing the “**laying aside**” of Scripture, as much as the remodeling of Scripture. Add a little here and remove a little there. We need to take the Scriptures to the health club and get it in shape for modern interaction. As best-selling “Christian” author Rob Bell said when asked by Oprah about his support for same-sex marriage.

The church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2,000 years ago as their best defense.

The thirty-sixth chapter of Jeremiah records a story where the prophet, who had been banned, dictated a message to a Scribe (Baruch) calling for the people of Israel to repent. The goal of the letter was a matter of redemption...

...so that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin (Jeremiah 36:3).

But when the letter reached the king (Jehoiakim), he took out his penknife and began, piece by piece, cutting the letter up and throwing it into the fire. Jehoiakim’s penknife comes in many forms.

There have been times in history when the Scriptures were simply kept from the people. Martin Luther (along with the printing press) took a lot of heat for seeking to solve that little problem when he translated the Bible into common German.

Then there are those who promote reading the Bible in such an odd way that it becomes like Play-Doh in the hands of a child. Some would say it becomes the word of God when it leaps off the page and reaches the human eye/heart. Others view the whole volume as one big metaphor. Others create systems (Dispensationalism and Two-Kingdom theology, with its emphasis on natural law, come to mind) that requires you crow-bar every verse into your theological puzzle, even if the piece really doesn’t fit.

Then there is the very dangerous practice of Rome and the charismatics who believe that special revelation continues to this day. There is no escaping the conclusion that they are seeking to “**add[s] to these things.**” To disavow a closed canon is to open the door to cults,

heretics and guilt-manipulators. **“God alone is Lord of the conscience” (WCF, 20, 2).** And that conscience is dictated by His word alone.

Add the very common practice as of late to ridicule the Bible in terms of its historical veracity or supposed promotion of immorality (slavery comes to mind).

Whether the Bible is restricted, perverted or ridiculed, the truth is, it contains God’s wisdom. As Paul wrote:

Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written (Romans 3:4).

As Jesus taught:

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away (Matthew 24:35 see also 2 Timothy 3:16).

It is worth noting that all the Jehoiakim burned, was rewritten, and more (Jeremiah 36:32).

Revelation concludes with a solemn warning. God determines the course of history and eternity. He has revealed that course in His word and if we seek to pervert or mislead others, we will find ourselves on the wrong side of both.

He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! ²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen (Revelation 22:20, 21).

Come, Lord Jesus

All that John was writing about was soon to begin. The original readers of Revelation were given warning about the difficulties they would soon encounter. We’re not always given such divine, special revelation. Whether Jesus will come upon a people/nation in judgment, call us to Himself in the appointed ending of our individual lives, or come bodily at the end of history, we don’t know.

But we are to ever live faithfully. We should anticipate and even enjoy whatever coming that might be. But what this petition should not be,

and I am afraid this has become a primary sentiment, is a request to escape. To appeal to Christ to bring history to an end because our lives are difficult and His commission has many challenges, militates against the entire book of Revelation and its call to persevere and overcome.

And all of Scripture closes with a word, a benediction, which should be the theme of every church and every Christian: **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”**

Questions for Study

1. What do all forms of Christianity (if not all religions in general) have in common when it comes to understanding their faith? What should that compel us to do (pages 2-4)?
2. How does the Bible speak of and to the sufficiency of Scripture? What warnings do we regularly see when it comes to how we interact with the Bible (pages 4, 5)?
3. Discuss Jehoiakim’s penknife and how we see examples of that to this very day (pages 5-7).
4. What are the various ways we can understand “Come Lord Jesus?” How should we not understand this (page 7)?