

“LAST WORDS FROM LAST BOOK.”

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Scripture Texts: Revelation 22:18-21

Introduction.

Tonight we will conclude the Book of Revelation. Then a month from now I will do a Revelation Wrap Up, reflections on our journey through this whole book.

As we come to the last words of Revelation I thought last words might be an interesting little introduction. So I googled famous last words and read a couple of hundred and was completely underwhelmed, very few worth quoting.

Karl Marx may have been a bit too cynical, “Last words are for fools who haven't said enough.”

I think when people are dying they aren't trying to be profound or witty or say something memorable. About the best you could hope to say is “I love you” and “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.”

As endings go this one in Revelation is not entirely unique. Twice in Moses' last book he makes a similar warning.

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

Deuteronomy 12:32 Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.

The book of Joshua begins and ends with similar warnings:

Joshua 1:8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Joshua 23:6 Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left.

Proverbs has similar words near the end.

Proverbs 30:5-6 Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

6 Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.

Revelation begins with a blessing on all hear and obey the words of this book and ends with a curse on all who disobey the words of this book.

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

Revelation 22:18-21 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

The Book, vss. 18-19.

The Book of Revelation is a summation of the whole Bible, a fulfillment and consummation of the whole Bible. Everything in the Bible points to and leads to this.

We dare not add or subtract in any way. This is exactly as God intends it to be said. It is perfect as God is perfect. Man cannot improve it. No person is authorized to add to it or take away from it or change or alter it in any way. To add or take away is to put one's self in the place of God, a sinful arrogance.

If we add we are saying this book is not sufficient, that we need more, that God's Word is not enough.

If we take away we are saying that parts of the Bible are superfluous, unnecessary, that we can get by without them, without knowing it or obeying it.

Both of these positions are the sin of presumption and arrogance of the highest order.

This warning and curse make clear to us the seriousness with which we should take God's Word and these final words.

God will do to us what we do to Him or His Word. If we dishonor His Word, He will dishonor us. If we reject Him, He will reject us. If we honor and exalt Him, He will honor and exalt us.

Those who add to the book will have plagues add to them.

Those who take away from the book will have their access to life taken away.

What do you make of the severity of the punishment? Does it seem harsh? Why do you think God says this?

First, the clarity of the warning tells us to expect no more divine revelation. There is no more Scripture to be added. After this there was no more inspired word from God to man.

Second, the severity of the warning, eternal punishment, tells us that God places supreme importance on what He has given us and put in the Bible.

Third, given the supreme importance of this to God we can be confident that what we have is what God intended us to have. Nothing is missing, nothing is lost, nothing has been put in that shouldn't be here.

There were a lot more letters and books written that claimed to be from God, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Apocalypse of Paul, the Apocalypse of Thomas, the Gospel of Peter, and of Philip, and of Mathias, and the Gospel According to Mary, and the Acts of Andrew, and many more.

But the Holy Spirit preserved and protected the Bible as it is and gave discernment to the church to judge what should not be added.

This is the God-breathed Word of God, no more, no less. This is all that is necessary for eternal life and God has personally seen to its preservation and protection. God was as much a part of the preservation and protection of His Word as He was a part of creation and the calling of the people of Israel and the life, death and resurrection of Christ, the leading and inspiring of the Apostles, the growth and spread of the church on earth.

Fourth, God's Word is holy, it is sacred, it is ***inviolable***. It is like any other holy thing in how it ought to be treated and respected and honored and keep pure.

The holy things in the OT around the temple were handled carefully.

Remember Uzzah and the Ark of the Covenant. The people were careless in how they were transporting the Ark. When it started to tip and Uzzah reached out to steady it he died immediately for touching what God had said was never to be touched.

God had given very clear rules for how to carry and transport the Ark.

Numbers 4:15, 17-20 ... the sons of Kohath shall come to carry these, but *they must not touch the holy things, lest they die*. These are the things of the tent of meeting that the sons of Kohath are to carry.

17 The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 18 “Let not the tribe of the clans of the Kohathites be destroyed from among the Levites, 19 but deal thus with them, that they may live and not die when they come near to the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint them each to his task and to his burden, 20 but *they shall not go in to look on the holy things even for a moment, lest they die.*”

Numbers 7:9 But to the sons of Kohath he gave none [no carts or wagons], because they were charged with the service of the holy things that had to be carried on the shoulder.

Do not touch, do not look, do not put on a cart or wagon “lest you die.” The Ark was holy, it was deadly to touch, but it was also a source of great blessing. Yahweh’s true intent is to bless and not destroy His people. But obedience is crucial.

How do people add to or take away from this book and from the Bible? By altering the message in any way to suit one’s own ends or agenda.

To Revelation people add endless layers of interpretation and speculations, making it say now what it never could have meant then.

It’s ironic the one book with the clearest warning is the one book that has been distorted and perverted for personal fame and financial gain.

I tremble to consider where I have been in error. I tried to make clear when there were various possible interpretations and when I wasn’t sure. But I don’t doubt I have missed the mark along the way. May God have mercy on me and guard all our hearts and minds by His Holy Spirit.

Liberal denominations are adding and taking away, cutting out parts, or saying it doesn't mean that anymore, or calling good evil and evil good.

Cults like Mormonism and Jehovah Witnesses add and take away.

Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Herbert W. Armstrong, T.D. Jakes, Benny Hinn, Joel Olsteen, Rob Bell, Open Theists and Prosperity Gospel preachers, anyone who compromises with truth or tolerates sin may be guilty of adding and or taking away. Some claim to be Christian but they distort truth, they are wolves in sheep's clothing.

But let's not lose perspective here. The Bible is holy and it is also the source of countless blessings and benefits, the source of great peace and joy and hope and help. It is life giving.

We saw this earlier in this chapter with the Tree of Life (Rev. 22:2).

Psalm 1:1-3 Blessed is the man who ...

2 ... delight[s] is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water

that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

Matthew 7:24 Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

The Testimony or The Promise, vs. 20.

Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

This is the final word of Jesus. Jesus is the faithful witness putting His seal of testimony on all John has seen and written. This is the stamp of authenticity. Everything in the shadow of the law and in the light of the Gospel stands. The testimony is true, all these things are true.

With this the canon of Scripture is closed, it is finished, the Word of God and the witness regarding Jesus Christ. All that remains is for Jesus to come and gather His sheep, His Bride, the ransomed saints and bring them home to a final and glorious rest.

To this promise John adds his, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

Come is in a tense that means, be coming. It means not just the final coming but the whole course of human events leading up to that coming. Everything Jesus is doing now in history is leading up to and preparing for that coming.

This very moment Jesus is actively working all things toward His coming. The things that have to happen first before He comes are actually being done.

Jesus is coming and His coming is evident through the events on earth that are symbolized by seven lampstands, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls of wrath, a dragon and a feast with a Lamb.

The Benediction, vs. 21.

Now the end, the final benediction.

What do we need between now and when Jesus comes?

Revelation 22:21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

This is what we need most of all. This is what we need to hold fast and remain faithful and stay true to the end. This is what we need to keep the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. This is what we need to resist the dragon, the beast and the harlot. This is what we need to refuse the mark of the beast. This is what we need to discern the false teachers, the Nicolaitans, the teachings of the synagogue of Satan and the wicked temptations of Jezebel.

This is what we need, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. By His grace through faith we will persevere to the end and be raised to glory to reign with Him forever.

Jesus is the giver of grace. Apart from Him there is no grace. How fitting is it that the last word of the Bible be grace.

Implications and applications.

Does it seem like maybe Jesus isn't coming back. After all it hasn't just been decades or centuries or even a millennium, but two millennia. Does it seem like His promise has failed?

How did it seem on that Good Friday? The Messiah nailed to a Roman cross. Crucified, dead and buried. Done, finished, failed. Hopeless. Those two days must have seemed like two millennia to the disciples.

Does it look like Jesus is dead and gone, that He will not triumph after all? Does it look like the wicked are winning the day?

God is the God of resurrections, God is the God of dramatic reversals. God is the God of when all seems lost. His second coming will be as surprising and glorious as His rising.

Don't think it's a long ways a way, don't think it's not a big deal. Don't play games with hell and death. Take care of business, get your house and soul in order. Live ready, too much is at stake, everything is at stake.

We have seen a vision of the future. The end will not be an event, the end will be a person, the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

Revelation 22:7 “And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

Maranatha! Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Amen!

