

Return of Christ #1: The fact of Christ's Return.

Sunday 21st Nov 2021. Rev 22:6-21

Having recently finished a series on the first chapters of the bible, we turn this morning to the last chapter of the Bible, and particularly to **v20** which sums up our sermon today.

Let me read it again, but please join with the response (underlined). v20

LET'S PRAY: for us to long for his coming.

So today we are starting a topical series on the return of Jesus. It's a theme that runs all the way through the Bible.

- ♥ Next week we will look at the **Timing** of Jesus' return.
- ♥ The following week we will look at the **purpose** of Jesus' return.
- ♥ The final week (if the Lord Jesus hasn't returned by then!) we will look at the **implications** of Jesus Return.

But this morning, I want to focus on the **fact** of Jesus' return, and we couldn't get a clearer passage, than this one, where Jesus *himself* declares three times loud and clear to his servant John, in the final passage of the Bible, that he is coming back. V7, v12, v20.

When Jesus came the first time it was as a baby, in a cow shed- only witnessed by a few people. He came in weakness and poverty, and very few recognised him.

But the Bible declares repeatedly that there is a day coming very soon, we don't know when, when Jesus will return in power, visible to all, to conclude history, to judge the world, to raise the dead, and to save his people for a renewed universe. **The fact of Jesus return.**

But before we launch in, it's worth saying that many people find this concept difficult. It just sounds so far fetched that history will end, and Jesus will return.

And many find this book difficult. It's due partly to the alarming nature of the language (the Beast, the millennium, the bowls of wrath) and partly the complexity and controversy of the interpretation.

But actually, Revelation is a wonderful book with a simple message **Jesus wins!** I commend the little booklet by John Richardson which gives a good introduction to reading it.

You may come with all sorts of questions about this theme and about this book (and please ask them)! I think part of the key to not ending up with cranky interpretations or getting bogged lost in the detail is to focus on the main character of this book: the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's what we were going to do this morning. So let's look at 3 things about the one who is coming back....

1) THE ONE WHO IS COMING SOON IS THE DIVINE

JUDGE v12,13.

So who is he? Well v12. First he is the Divine Judge.

“my reward is with me” or repayment or wages with him. He will pay back to each of us what we deserve for our deeds. Our deeds always show what we believe. Those who have ignored him, and mistreated him, will be punished. Those who have turned to him for forgiveness, and lived in loyalty to him will be vindicated and rewarded.

Every Muslim every member of parliament,
every Afghan every Austrian,
every midwife every murderer,
every Hindu every housewife,
every businessman every bankrobber,
every policeman every popstar,
every terrorist, every teenager....

EVERY ONE OF US will have an analysis made of our deeds, giving clear evidence of how we have treated him, and Jesus, personally will be the judge. More on this in a fortnight, but do we see how big Jesus is?

▲ I was given a toy figure of Jesus for Christmas one year. I know it was only a joke, but it very rapidly ended up in the bin. What offended me most, was not the plastic beard, and the wheels underneath his robes, to give him a gliding motion. But what really offended me was the blurb on the back of the packet. It said this....

“some say he was a prophet, others say he did incredible things, but everyone agrees that Jesus was a remarkable man”.

I’m sorry, Jesus was not just a remarkable man. He IS the JUDGE of heaven and earth. 100% man, but 100% God!

Look at v13. He is the Alpha and Omega- picking up words in Isaiah that speak of God- the first and the last. He was there at the beginning (saw in John 1, Hebrews 1 and Colossians 1- all things were made by him and for him) and he will have the last word. Do you believe that?

Doesn’t this cut some ice in our as we reach out with the good news this Christmas (and knock on doors in Stukeley Meadows)? Jesus is not just an opinion, one figure among many in history’s hall of fame. He is the creator, and the judge, who personally will separate the sheep from the goats. Everyone owes their beginning and end to him.

We dare not undervalue him. We dare not treat him as simply a remarkable man. Revelation 1:7, “he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of him”.

Doesn’t this challenge our petty priorities? Being happy, being healthy, being nice, being liked, being successful, having the latest kitchen or clothes or tech. There are bigger fish to fry- Jesus is coming back to review our lives. We better make sure they are in order.

I wonder if we can now say v20b with a bit more gusto? Come Lord Jesus. But possibly, the fact that he is coming back as divine judge makes us unsettled or even terrified. Well perhaps the second point will help.

So 2) THE ONE WHO IS COMING SOON IS THE GRACIOUS SAVIOUR.

And we see this in v14 and 15. As life goes on, it is as though a robe is being woven that is personalised for each one of us. On it are all the things we have done. There are the good points woven into it- happy days with family and friends, achievements, special occasions. But the robe is also dirty. It is caked in sin, it is horribly stained by things we have done.

Actions that we are ashamed of in the past. Ongoing attitudes and weaknesses that we can't seem to shake. Hours, months, years of our lives devoted to promoting ourselves, rather than God. And we are filthy. We've seen it in Genesis: our problem is not covid, cancer or climate change, it's our human corruption.

But v14 tells us that the one who is coming soon as universal judge, is also the gracious saviour, and that through him we can be washed whiter than snow. Look at to 7:13,14, on the screen and on page 1238.

There is a way in which anyone can their robe washed whiter than snow. Where all the stains can be removed without a trace.

And the cleansing substance is not water, or a powerful detergent. It is blood. Blood, as a cleansing agent? Sounds contradictory. But this is a vision not a video. And of course this blood was shed by none other than Jesus Christ, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, he was opening up a mighty fountain, where the sins of the worst sinner can be washed away.

If we come to him, if we turn to him, we can be washed whiter than snow. We can be ready to meet our maker, not full of shame, but absolutely clean, and therefore, (back to ch 22) v14, able to eat from the tree of life (which in Genesis 2 and 3 was the tree of eternal life by which someone can live forever), but which tragically we were banished from because of our sin. And so we can enter into chapter 21's city- the City of God- the bride, the Holy City- the place of God's dwelling.

The one who is coming back as judge is now gracious saviour- look at the tense in v14. Blessed are those who wash (present tense) their robes. Have we used the time now (before it is too late) to do that? Have we come to Christ for cleansing? Have we turned to him away from sin?

If we haven't, we will be on the outside v15- with "the dogs, the sorcerers.....". The implication being that if we do not repent of our sins now, we will be as shut out of Heaven, as the people in Noah's day were shut out of the ark.

And he is coming back **soon**! It could be next month, next monday, next minute! So there's an urgency about it.

The one coming is the **universal judge**, but also **Gracious saviour**.

What guilt are you carrying around? What from the past hangs over you and gives you cause to fear that in the present God grudgingly tolerates you, and in the future he might abandon you?

He loves you. As we will see tonight in Zeph 3:17, he rejoices over you with singing. He has provided a way back into the garden where we find the tree of life. Except now it's a city, because it is populated by a crowd that no-one can count.

Putting point 1 and 2 together, the judge is a saviour. It's a bit like a policeman who as judgement figure must issue a fine, because because you were in the wrong, but as saviour figure instantly he gives you the money to clear your debt. Divine Judge, Gracious Saviour.

If we have come to terms with that, if we have applied to this saviour for cleansing, then we will be able to say the the response in v20 a little more loudly now. "Come Lord Jesus".

Don't we long for the day that we meet with HIM. Jesus- the saviour?
What an awesome Divine Judge, gracious saviour.

But there's more to come, and if we are at present only *whispering* "Come Lord Jesus", I hope that this final point will make us long for it and **shout** for it with all of our being.

You see the one who is coming is not just the universal Judge, and the gracious saviour, he is the conquering King.

3) THE ONE WHO IS COMING IS THE CONQUERING KING v16

v16 These titles have their origins in the OT.

Those who know their OT know that God promised a **descendent to David** who would rule forever (2 Samuel 7). Not just a descendent of Eve, a serpent crusher, but a descendent of David, a King. Isaiah 11 speaks of a root of Jesse (that's David's family) a Spirit anointed Judge who will rule the nations in righteousness and bring about eternal peace and a new creation where even the wolf will lie down with the lamb.

Later in the verse, he is described as the **Morning Star**- the star that heralds the dawn of a new age. An age of peace, of salvation, of righteousness. This star may be the star prophesied by Balaam in Numbers 24, again a conquering King who will crush the enemies of God.

So this figure is the Messiah- the Psalm 2 king of Kings that we have been waiting for since the beginning of time who will come and destroy all the forces that stand in opposition to God.

Now this is breathtaking.

Jesus is going to usher in a new age where all that flows out of our rebellion against God will be dealt with. All the enemies of the people of God will be finished.

Let me name 3 of them in Revelation (they all begin with S).

SATAN

Jesus the conquering King will defeat the devil- the enemy of God, who will be thrown into the Lake of Sulphur. (20:10)

SIN

He is bringing a new world, where nothing sinful will enter(22:3)

SUFFERING

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more for the former things have passed away (21:4) Some of the people John were writing to, were suffering persecution at the hands of antichristian authorities, and John says that Jesus is the Root and Offspring of David, the Bright morning star. He's the Conquering King!

This is awesome. Let me ask you a question.

What has been dogging you this week?

What has been getting you down?

I wouldn't be surprised if it was something related to one of those 3 enemies. Satan, Sin, Suffering.

Some here will be battling with depression.

Some are fighting sin, and it feels just like a losing battle.

Some are just exhausted by the trials of life.

Some have lost their jobs, and don't know how they will ever get their finances sorted.

Jesus is bringing in a new world where there Satan cannot touch you.

Where the battle against sin is won.

When there is no more sickness, or suffering or pain.

Doesn't that make you want to join in with v17.

This is the phrase that the church must cry....

"Come Lord Jesus".

And particularly for those who are struggling with their **relationships**. Perhaps particularly their closest relationships.

You see "Come Lord Jesus" is the cry of the **bride**. Did you see that (v17)? In our day it's the bridegroom that waits for the bride. There's that tension. Everyone is looking at their watches. 2pm. 2.05, 2.10,2.15. I've been to a wedding when we waited 40 mins! What a relief when she came through. But looking at Jesus's parables it seems in those days was the bride who was waiting for the bridegroom.

And we the church are waiting for the Heavenly Bridegroom.

Even the Holy Spirit in v17 is joining in. Come.

Can you taste the excitement, the anticipation, the longing. The church (men and women), the Bride- waiting waiting for her new husband to arrive- ready to start their new life together in perfect relationship.

Maybe you are single and that's not easy. Every wedding you go to feels like it is never yours. Maybe your marriage is difficult, or it ended some years ago through death or unfaithfulness or divorce. Maybe every relationship you get into is a car crash.

Well THE bridegroom you long for is coming. He is just around the corner. After the sermon we're going to sing. "And the Bride will run to her lover's arms...".

Isn't it a breathtaking scene? I love the moment in a wedding when she appears. And Jesus is just about to appear to sort out the mess, and to bring the friendship, intimacy and love that every human relationship is pointing forwards to.

Christian brothers and sisters, I hope you can say not just with your lips but with your heart, COME LORD JESUS.

And it's not just for those who at the moment are signed up members of Jesus' people. There is an invitation there at the end of v17 too. For the non-Christian. Does this portrait that is painted make you thirsty? Come. Come and drink.

You don't have to pay a penny.

The most thirst quenching water of life is ready for you. You only need to receive it from Jesus. Drink without price. Don't go to the salt water of this world which will only make you more desperate.

The fact of Jesus Return. We don't know when it will be.

- If we turn to him now for washing we will be ready for him.
- If we do not, and we carry on in sin, we will be shut outside.
- But he comes to bring about a new world without Sin, suffering, satan. What a great world it will be.

v20. I hope we can join in loudly as we say these **words** together.

"He who testifies to these things says, "Yes I am coming soon".

AMEN Come Lord Jesus.

Let's pray.