

Revelation's Epilogue



18 in a series

Introduction

There have been many movies and musicals about Victor Hugo's famous nineteenth century book "**Les Miserables**". In this story, Jean Valjean – the main character - is released from prison and is taken in by a kind priest. Even though Jean Valjean is well cared for with food and clothing by the priest he decides to steal some of the priest's possessions. Very soon Valjean is arrested by the police and they take him back to the priest for confirmation of the prisoner's crimes.

Here the story takes an incredible twist. Contrary to everyone's expectations, the priest tells the police that the possessions from his home were a gift to Jean Valjean. In fact, the priest not only lets Jean Valjean keep the silverware he's stolen but the priest also gives him two very expensive candlesticks. The candlesticks are an unexpected gift that changes the heart of Jean Valjean and leads him to an honest life lived with purpose.

In this story we see the difference between justice, leniency and grace. In this example from "Les Miserable" justice would have meant Valjean returned to prison for his most recent crime. "Leniency" would mean that Valjean was punished for his crime but the consequences were lighter than he deserved. But "grace" is where we are guilty of our actions but we are offered an undeserved gift instead of our punishment – in the example of Jean Valjean he is given expensive candlesticks instead of prison.

In the same way Jesus offers us His grace. He knows we are sinners but still offers us forgiveness even though we are unworthy of it. We are offered His favour even though it is unmerited.

At the end of the book of Revelation we see Jesus not only rescue those who have faith in Him but He also gives them the New Jerusalem; as well as eternal life with a loving Saviour. In Christ we are offered the unexpected gift of **grace** which makes us love Him so much more that we change our hearts and choose to live the abundant life of a committed disciple of Jesus.

Overview for Session #18

1. **The Promise of Christ's Return (Rev. 22:7-9)**
2. **Back to the Beginning (Rev. 22:12-13)**
3. **The Promises of Revelation (Rev. 22:18-20)**
4. **The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 22:21)**

1. The Promise of Christ's Return (Rev. 22:7-9)

Revelation 22:7-9 ⁷ *“Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”* ⁸ *Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.* ⁹ *Then he said to me, “See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. **Worship God.**”*

That opening sentence captures one's attention: *“Behold I am coming quickly”*. That phrase is used three times in this chapter. Sceptics look at this this promise of Jesus and scoff because it's been 2,000 years since Christ's first appearance on this Earth. By their definition of “soon”, it appears that the promise hasn't been kept. The purpose of these promises in Revelation is to remind every generation of God's people to live in constant expectancy of Christ's imminent coming. After all, when we die, it's as if Christ has come personally for each one of us because the next event we will experience is the resurrection which occurs at the same time of His coming.

Question 1: How might you explain the apparent delay of Jesus' Second Coming?

When Jesus was asked by His Disciples in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 24; *“What is the sign of your coming?”* Jesus responded with a number of indicators that will be present on this Earth just prior to His Second Coming. Then Jesus concludes *“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Matthew 24:42)*. It would seem Jesus wants His followers to live their lives with a sense of urgency regarding His Second Coming

We are then reminded in Revelation there is a “blessing” for those who are obedient to the messages in Revelation (verse 7). This blessing is repeated seven times in Revelation.

Question 2: What blessings have you received by studying this book of Revelation?

i. Worship

One of the key blessings of Revelation is that the “worship of God” is a central message.

We have seen from previous studies that our Creator is worshipped because He is “worthy”. He is worthy because of His character of love and His commitment to His creation in what He has done to make our salvation possible.

We have also seen in Revelation that the first four of the Ten Commandments are so prominent because in them we have the: Who, How, Why, and When of worshipping our Creator God.

Question 3: Why do you think God is worthy of our worship? _____

ii. The Three Angels’ Messages

The central chapters of Revelation have the Three Angel’s Messages in Revelation 14:6-13. These three messages are God’s responses to the unholy trinity. The first message is a call to accept God and His grace and to worship Him only as our Creator: Revelation 14:6-7. The second message is a warning against worshipping a counterfeit gospel symbolized in Babylon: Revelation 14:8. The third message is a call to make a decision about which side to be on in the final showdown. The choice is between worshipping God or the devil: Revelation 14:9-11.

As pointed out previously, the imagery for the Three Angel’s Messages is the Seventh-day Sabbath: Revelation 14:7, 11-13. The Seventh-day Sabbath is the day that marks God’s people as truly obedient to His commandments. Obedience is an identifying mark of God’s true remnant people: Revelation 12:17.

Question 4: Why is obedience so important to God? _____

2. Back to the Beginning (Rev. 22:12-13)

Revelation 22:12-13 ¹²“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”

Revelation is a book that needs to be read continuously. Here we see Jesus as the Alpha and the Omega; the Beginning and the End. A number of statements in this Epilogue chapter (Revelation 22) have also been made in the beginning of the book.

For example:

1. Jesus says: *"I am the Alpha and the Omega – the Beginning and the end."* (Compare Revelation 1:8 with 22:13)
2. The message of Revelation comes from God through an angel to John (Compare Revelation 1:1 with Revelation 22:6)
3. The return of Christ is promised (Compare Revelation 1:4,7,8 with Revelation 22:7,10-12)
4. *"Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."* (Compare Revelation 1:3 with Revelation 22:7)
5. We're told to worship only the Creator (Compare Revelation 1:17 with Revelation 22:8-9)
6. We're told *"The time is near"* (Compare Revelation 1:3 with Revelation 22:10)

These statements point us back to the beginning of Revelation. This book appears to be a loop - telling us to start over again and re-read the messages. We are not meant to rest. Continually in our thinking we need to be aware that Jesus is coming soon to make all things perfect again. The reality, however, is at this present time we are still living in a fallen world rather than the "New Jerusalem". The message of Revelation is while we wait for the promised Second Coming of our Saviour we are to have a clear understanding of the message of Revelation - and always keeping it before us until the wonderful day of His return arrives.

Question 5: What is the significance of Jesus being the "Beginning and the End"? _____



3. The Promises of Revelation (Rev. 22:18-20)

Revelation warns us not to add or take away from the words of Revelation.

Revelation 22:18-19 *18 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.*

This warning reflects Deuteronomy 4:2 where Moses tells Israel regarding the Ten Commandments –

2 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.

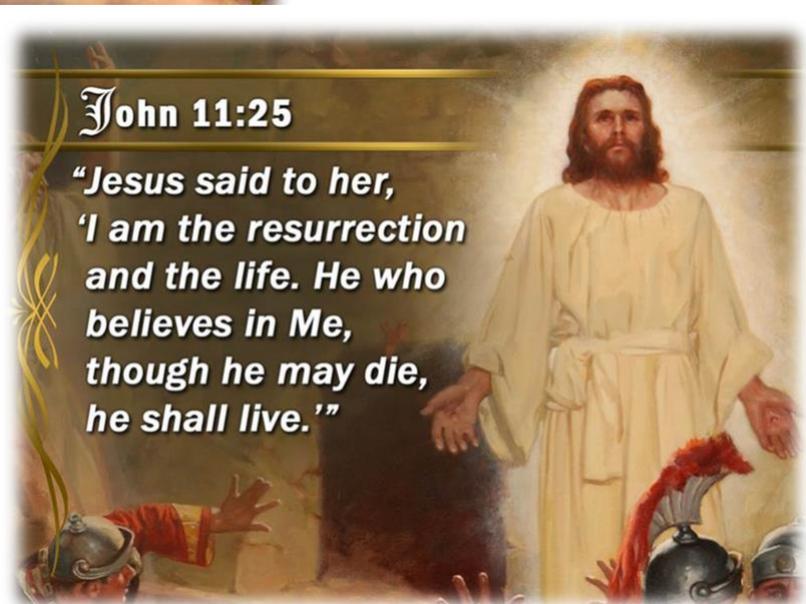
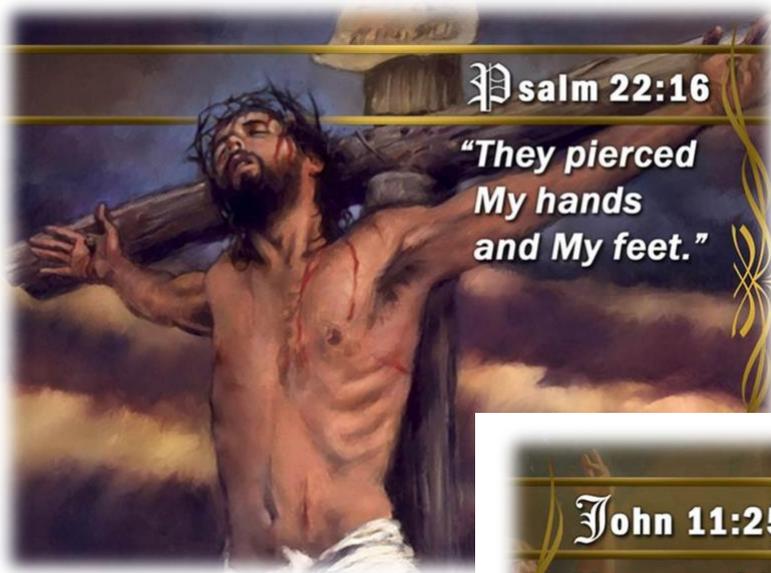
Christ’s warnings here in Revelation aren’t necessary about the specific words of Revelation - as if some concept of “verbal inspiration” is at stake. Rather, it’s about misrepresenting the message found in the book by forcing our own personal ideas and views upon the text in order to suit our own individual agendas.

This sobering warning is then followed by one last reminder of the most wonderful of Revelation’s promises: The Second Coming of Jesus Christ: *“He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”* **(Revelation 22:20)**

As we reflect on the various promises of Revelation we discover God has faithfully delivered each one by the time we come to the end of the book. Let us look at some of these promises given to the Seven Churches to those who “overcome” (in chapters 2 & 3). We see God not only makes promises but He also delivers:

PROMISE	GIVEN TO		FULFILLED
1. Able to Eat from the Tree of Life.	Ephesus.	Rev. 2:7.	Rev. 22:2.
2. Not Hurt by the Second Death.	Smyrna.	Rev. 2:11.	Rev. 20:6.
3. Name Written on Stone.	Pergamum.	Rev 2:17.	Rev. 21:14.
4. Have the Authority to Judge.	Thyatira.	Rev. 2:26.	Rev. 20:4.
5. Name Written in Book of Life.	Sardis.	Rev.3:5.	Rev. 20:12,15.
6. God’s Name Written on them.	Philadelphia.	Rev. 3:5.	Rev. 22:4.
7. Sit with Jesus on His Throne.	Laodicea.	Rev3:21.	Rev. 20:4.

Question 6: How do you feel about these promises also applying to you personally?



4. The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 22:21)

We now come to the last text in the book of Revelation.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." (Revelation 22:21)

We rely on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation and the Book of Revelation proclaims this wonderful truth. What is grace? It is God's favour upon us even though we don't deserve it. We can rightly call it 'unmerited favour'. We acknowledge that we have all sinned in our life which makes us unworthy, but God will graciously forgive us for our sins if only we come to Him in humility and ask Him for forgiveness. We are promised that He will abundantly pardon if only we confess

our sins, surrender our lives to Him and seek His guidance. He will then direct our paths and lead us on the road of salvation and then finally into His everlasting kingdom.

Question 7: How would you explain the meaning of grace? _____

Here are two encouraging Bible texts regarding the grace of Christ and also a quote from a book titled '**Steps to Christ**':

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

"He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned". (Ellen White, from the book "Steps to Christ", page 6).

As we conclude our studies in Revelation, here is a great story that illustrates the message of this biblical book:-

An old missionary couple had been working in Africa for many years and were returning to New York City to retire. They had no pension. Their health was broken. They were defeated, discouraged, and afraid. They discovered that they were booked on the same ship as President Teddy Roosevelt, who was returning from one of his big-game hunting expeditions. No one paid any attention to the missionary couple. They watched the fanfare that accompanied the President's entourage, with passengers trying to catch a glimpse of the great man.

As the ship moved across the ocean, the old missionary said to his wife: "Something is wrong. Why should we have given our lives in faithful service to God in Africa all these many years and have no one care a thing about us? Here this man comes from a hunting trip and everybody makes much fuss over him, but nobody gives two hoots about us."

"Dear, you shouldn't feel that way," his wife said.

"I can't help it; it does not seem right."

When the ship docked in New York, a band was waiting to greet the President. The Mayor and other dignitaries were there. The papers were full of news about the President's arrival, but no one noticed this missionary couple. They slipped off the ship and found a cheap flat on the East Side, hoping the next day to see what they could do to make a living in the city.

That night the man's spirit broke. He said to his wife. "I can't take this. God is not treating us fairly."

His wife replied, "Why don't you go to the bedroom and tell that to the Lord?"

A short time later he came out from the bedroom, but now his face was completely different. His wife asked, "dear, what happened?"

"The Lord settled it with me" he said. "I told Him how bitter I was that the President should receive this tremendous homecoming, when no one met us as we returned home. And when I finished, it seemed as though the Lord put His hand on my shoulder and simply said, "But my son, you are not home yet!"

The above story from almost one hundred years ago highlights the main subject of the book of Revelation. Revelation reminds God's people today and for the preceding two thousand *this world is not their home*. As Christian's experience hardship and difficulties in life, and often oppression and fierce opposition because of their loyalty to Christ and to the gospel - they must keep in mind they are not home yet.

A day is coming, however, when we will be welcomed home – and the whole of Heaven will be there to greet us.

Yes, indeed, come Lord Jesus!

Question 8: Are you looking forward to being in your real eternal home? _____
