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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

Today we are going to finish this series through the wonderful book of Revelation. A number of years ago at the graduation at Yale University the commencement speaker got up and spoke 20 minutes. He said "Y" stands for youth. "A" stands for attitude. "L" stands for leadership and "E" stands for enthusiasm. He spoke 20 minutes on each one of those letters and it was a long, drawn-out commencement speech in the hot sun. One of the graduates turned to his friend and said, "Well, it could be worse. We could be graduating from The Massachusetts Institute of Technology." You may feel that way as we come finally to the end of this series in Revelation.

I want to review what the book of Revelation is all about. The first part of the book of Revelation is about the vision John saw of Christ in his glorified form. Then he writes letters to seven churches, which represent where we are right now. Then beginning in chapter 4:1, the rapture of the church occurs. Then, we as Christians, born-again believers in the future will be in heaven during the time of seven years of Tribulation on the earth. Jesus said, "Tribulation like the world has never seen before." At the end of that seven-year Tribulation in which the Antichrist has gained control of the world's political system, the world's economic system, and the world's religious system, Jesus Christ will come back at the battle of Armageddon. We'll be coming back with him.

Two weeks ago we studied about the millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. I talked to you about post millennialism, amillennialism and premillennialism. I did not share with you what some people call promillennialism. They believe, "I'm just for it." Whatever is going to happen I'm pro." Someone else said, "I'm a pan millennialist. I believe it's just all going to pan out in the end." Whatever you are, the Bible says there will be a thousand years of Christ's reign on the earth. Then, last week we studied that at the end of that thousand-year reign there will be the great white throne judgement, when unbelievers will be judged. From that point on is the rest of eternity and we gain a glimpse of that tonight.

We come to the end of the book and what I want to share with you eight last things we see in the Bible. The last words of the Lord Jesus are not the Great Commission. The last words of the Lord Jesus are found here in Revelation.

Revelation 22:7-12. "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy."

“Behold, I am coming soon!”

1. The Last Command: Worship God

Notice the first two “last things.” Number one is the last command in the Bible. Of all the commands in the Bible we find the last one right here in Revelation 22:9. When John fell down at the feet of the angel to worship him, the angel gives us the last recorded command and it is, “Worship God!” Isn’t it interesting that I think you could probably summarize all the commands in the Bible in that one final command, because what does that word “worship” mean? It means to give worth-ship, to give worth to. I want to encourage you to remember that we are not to worship a preacher, we are not to worship a church, and we are not to worship a religion: We are to worship God alone, because you will be disappointed, you may be misled by anything except God himself. Don’t you know all the commands of the Bible when Jesus said, “Love the Lord God with all your heart, your soul, your mind. Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you truly worship God, then you will love your neighbor. It is interesting that at the end the last command of the Bible is “worship God.”

2. The Last Principle: People don’t change after death

Number two is the last principle in the Bible. I think this is interesting, because the Old Testament is basically a book of commands, but the New Testament is basically a book of principles by which we can live. What is a principle? It is a statement of spiritual truth where you have to study a bit to get what that truth is. The last principle we see is found in verse 11. “Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.” Here is the last principle we see in the word: People don’t change after death.

So what is the Bible saying here? I think it is trying to address a misconception some people have when they say, “I can live like the devil if I want to. I can live a sinful, wretched life if I want to, but when I go to heaven, I’m going to be totally different and I’ll be changed.” It is true that we as Christians will be changed in the twinkling of an eye and we will be like Jesus. But notice your basic character will not be changed. If you live an unholy life, “a vile kind of life,” that’s the kind of character you will maintain for eternity. On the other hand, if you have lived a holy life, a life of righteousness then when you die that’s the kind of life you will enjoy for all eternity. I’m amazed that some people think they can live any way they want and then they’ll change after death. I urge you to repent of your sins before you die. Turn to Christ. You will have no opportunity after you die.

3. The Last Identification

Number three is the last identification. Jesus says in verse 12, “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.” Then here’s the last identification. Jesus says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” Notice the last part of this identification in verse 16. “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” A very interesting study for any believer would be to take a

concordance and go through the New Testament and identify every time Jesus says, "I am." What a blessing it would be for you to learn all of those "I am's." He says, "I am the Way, I am the Truth, I am the Light, I am the Bread of Life, I am the Living Water, I am the Door." Over and over again he uses that self-identification. Here we find the last three "I am's" of Jesus in the Bible.

(a) Alpha and Omega

Notice who Jesus is. First he says, "I am Alpha and Omega." This is a repeat of what he said several times in the book of Revelation. What does that mean? Well Alpha is the first Greek letter. Omega is the last Greek letter. He says, "I am A. I am Z and I am everything in between." On the shelves in my library I have a set of encyclopedias and there are thousands of pages, hundreds of thousands of words and perhaps a million letters in one encyclopedia. Each of those words is formed using the letters A to Z. You don't have to go outside of that. All of them are formed with those 26 letters. That's what Jesus is saying. "I am the Beginning; I am the End, I am the First and the Last, I'm Alpha and Omega" and he is saying, "I am everything in between."

(b) Root and offspring of David

Not only that, but he says secondly, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David." That's amazing he could say that, because when he says, "I am the Root of David," he means, "I am the ancestor of David, out of me came King David." Then he steps to the other side and says, "Not only am I the Root of David; I am the Offspring of David." That would be like me saying, "I am both the ancestor of my father and I am the descendant of my father." What does he mean? He is identifying himself in his deity. He is saying, "I have always been." Do you remember when Jesus was talking to a bunch of Pharisees one day and they were talking about Abraham? Our father, Abraham, bragging about Abraham. Jesus made an amazing statement. "Listen, guys. Before Abraham was I am!" He was saying, "Abraham lived almost 2,000 years ago, but I want you guys to know that before Abraham even existed, I existed."

Sometimes when cultists come knocking on your door who do not believe Jesus is equal to God the Father, you can share that verse with them. And if they pull out their so-called New World Translation of the scriptures, they have mistranslated that verse. They don't translate it correctly, and any knowledgeable, honest Greek scholar will tell you they mistranslated it to try to make it fit their heresy that says Jesus is not equal to God the Father. Jesus, himself, said, "Before Abraham was, I am. I was before Abraham. I was before David." Then, he says, "I am also in the line of David." Matthew and Luke trace that genealogy back through David. Jesus is saying, "I was before David and I am after David."

(c) Bright Morning Star

Notice the third part of his identification. He says, "I am the bright Morning Star." Have you ever awakened early some morning when it is cool and crisp and it's just beginning to be dawn and the sun has not yet risen and the sky is not dark but it's not light? If you look toward the horizon and see one star shining, it's usually the planet, Venus. That beautiful star! That's what

Jesus is saying. The bright morning star is the star that still shines when all the other stars have stopped shining, after the darkest time of the night—that's who Jesus is to you. When you've gone through the toughest time of your life and you've put your faith in money, you've put your faith in people, you've put your faith in everything, guess who is still there? Jesus is still shining after the darkest time of the night.

4. The Last Blessings

Number four we see the last blessings. There are seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation. Beatitudes are statements starting with the word "blessed." Jesus gives us beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." "Blessed are the meek." "Blessed are the peacemakers." In the book of Revelation there are seven statements about "blessed."

(a) Keep these words

Let's notice the last two as they appear in Revelation. In verse 22:7 we see the first "blessed." He said, "Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book." So the first blessing is, "Keep these words!" In other words "Obey the words you find in this book." When we first began this study months ago we read that first beatitude in Revelation 1:3. The writer says, "Blessed is he who reads the words of this prophecy and keeps them." This is the only book in the Bible that specifically offers you a blessing if you will read it, if you will study it. I get blessed reading Psalms; I get blessed reading Ephesians; I get blessed reading Mark; but those books don't promise a blessing. This book does and furthermore promises at the end, "You are blessed by God." That word, "blessed" literally means "fortunate." "If you obey what you have learned in this book." That's the first of the last two blessings.

(b) Wash their robes

Let's read the second one. Look at verse 14. "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city." The King James Version says, "Blessed are those who keep his commandments." There is a great, great difference between, "Blessed are those who keep his commandments" and "Blessed are those who literally have their robes washed white." You have to study the text of the New Testament. I am speaking of the Greek text of the New Testament. When the King James Bible was translated, it was done using the Greek text of Erasmus based on what's called the *Textus Receptus*, that may not mean much to you but it was based on just three manuscripts of the New Testament. Some of you sometimes ask, "Why in the world do we even use these different translations? I mean the King James was good enough for Paul; it's good enough for me!" Right? I'll tell you why. Since the translation of the King James Bible in 1611, thousands of texts of the New Testament have been uncovered by theologians. There were only three available to Erasmus for the *Textus Receptus*? Today, we have over 30,000 texts and portions of texts of the New Testament. That's how many have been uncovered and the very best Greek texts are those that all agree that verse 14 says, "Blessed are they who have their robes washed white." Nobody goes to heaven by keeping the commandments! The only way you can go to heaven is by having your robe washed white—not in super strength detergent—but in the blood of Jesus Christ. That's the second blessing.

Titus, 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he has saved us." Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? You are blessed if you have your life washed in the blood of the Lamb.

5. The Last Invitation: Come!

Let's move on number five, the last invitation. In verse 15 John says, "Outside are the dogs," that means outside heaven. He's not talking about canines; he's talking about evil men "who practice magic arts, [sorcery, *pharmakeia*, drug abuse] the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood." Then we read again "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star. The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!'" And then this is the invitation God offers. "Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." Here is the last invitation. It is the word, "Come."

I was sharing with my Sunday School Class about this today, because we were talking about the parables of Jesus where the Master prepared a great feast and said, "Come!" I believe that is one of God's favorite words. As far as I can tell there was only one time God ever said, "Get out!" It was in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve had sinned. God said, "I'm sorry, but you have to get out!" Ever since then, God has been inviting men to come back into fellowship with him. Jesus said, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink," and "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden. I will give you rest." In the Old Testament when God told Noah to build an ark, Noah built it and he was outside the ark with all the animals when the rain began to fall. If you study what it says, literally in the Hebrew this is what God said to Noah. "Noah. Come into the ark!" He didn't say, "Go get in the ark!" he said, "Come into the ark!" Because where was God? God was in the ark. It was not the ark protecting Noah and all those animals—it was God. That's what he says to you. He says, "Come to me! I invite you to come be a part of my family! Come be a part of my Kingdom. Come be a part of what I am doing!" That's what God is saying to you today! And the last invitation of the Bible is "Let him who is thirsty come and drink." Notice what it says in verse 17, "Let him take the free gift of the water of life." If you are not a Christian, God wants to give you a free gift. The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

You cannot earn a gift. If you can earn a gift, it's not a gift—it's wages. A gift is something given to you out of love. There are a lot of people in America today who cannot accept that. They come from an ethic that says, "Anything in life that you attain you have to work hard in order to get it!" There are a lot of people who also say, "I made my money the old fashioned way. I earned it!" and there are some people who have the attitude, "I'm going to earn my way into heaven. I'm going to keep the commandments. I'm going to give to the church. I'm going to read my Bible. I'm going to go to church. I'm going to love people. I'm going to do all this stuff if it kills me and I'm going to earn salvation." Give that thought up! You will never, ever earn acceptance with God. It is a free gift. Jesus said, "Any of you who are thirsty for it come on! Come on and I'll give it to you freely."

Every time I speak on this verse I think about something that happened to me several years ago. I was doing a meeting at First Baptist Church in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. They invited me down to spend a whole week teaching the book of Revelation. We covered the whole book of Revelation at breakfast, noon service and at night. When I came to this last passage the auditorium was packed. I was preaching along the same lines that I am preaching to you tonight and I said, "God says, "If you want to be saved, come!" God says, "If you are thirsty, come!" I had 2 or 3 more points in my sermon when one ole came walking down the aisle. He was coming to Jesus *right then!* He didn't even wait until the invitation. The Pastor said, "Why are you coming?" He said, "Because the Bible says, "Come!" I'm coming right now!" They took him out and led him to Christ. If you have never trusted Christ, that's exactly what you need to do. You need to come! How do you come? Well that beautiful song says, "Just as I am, I come" Some of you are saying, "Well, Pastor. When I get better, when I've cleaned my life up, *then* I'll come." Oh, no you come "Just as you are!" but you won't stay just as you are when you come, because God will change you! The last invitation in the Bible is "Come."

6. The Last Warning: Don't add or subtract from the Word

The last *warning* of the Bible is found in verse 18. "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." And here's the last warning that we find in the Bible: Don't add to or subtract from the word. He's specifically talking about the book of Revelation, but I believe this is a warning you can apply to all the word of God. I believe with all my heart that all of this book is inspired. The Bible says, "All scripture is inspired of God" and that word, "inspired" means "God breathed." God breathed into the men who wrote the words we have in this book, and I believe all of it is inspired. I believe Ecclesiastes 3 is just as inspired as John 3, but I also believe when God spoke and he came to this last period that we are going to get to in just a minute, I believe that's when he stopped the written revelation of His word. He's still speaking to us as the Holy Spirit speaks, but this is all the written revelation of God and this is the warning he gives. "Don't you add anything to this book!"

I love Mormons. They are some of the nicest, friendliest, most family-oriented people I have ever known. I admire them. What about their commercials on television? Don't you wish the Baptists could get their act together to produce things like that? But do you notice what they say? They say, "We'll be happy to come to your house and bring you a Bible *and* the Book of Mormon." That's where they blow it, because they are adding to the word of God. The Bible says, "Don't add to it!" I don't know that any of you will add to it, unless you add some statements like, "Well the Bible says, 'Cleanliness is next to godliness.'"—That's not in there. Don't add it to it. You may say, "Well the Bible says, 'God helps those who help themselves.'" That's not in there either. Don't add to it. Be careful!

Our problem may not be adding to it. Our problem may be subtracting from it. Have you been to the home of Thomas Jefferson, that great founder of our country? I haven't, but I have read that there in his home, his Bible has been preserved in a glass case and in his Bible there are places

where he took scissors and cut out portions of the scripture that he didn't believe—mainly some of the miracles. He believed in Jesus as a great teacher and a great man, but he didn't believe in the supernatural Christ, so he subtracted, he cut away from the Bible. I warn you not to do that. Don't subtract from the word. Believe it all. Do you believe it all? That's the last warning in the Bible.

7. The Last Promise: I am coming soon!

Jesus made many, many promises. Somebody told me one time that are 365 promises in the Bible—one for every day in the year. I believe there are more promises than that, but of all the promises in the Bible here's the last promise we have. This, literally, is the last word of Christ. "I am coming soon." Jesus says it three times. In verse 7 He says, "Behold, I am coming soon." Again in verse 12, "Behold, I am coming soon." Then, in verse 20, "He who testifies to these things says, "Yes," *surely* is the word *certainly, without a doubt* "I am coming soon."

The very first promise in the Bible is found in Genesis 2:17 where God said to Adam and Eve "Eat of all the trees in the Garden that you want to but don't eat of this tree, and the day that you eat of this tree, I promise you shall surely die!" That's the first promise and that's the promise that got us into trouble. Sin! But the last promise of the Bible is Jesus said, "I am coming soon."

I always think about the old country preacher who was preaching on that text. He was getting all riled up and excited about it and he lost his place in the sermon so he ran to the front of the platform and said, "I am coming soon." He backed up and then came forward again and he said, "I am coming soon." He ran back again and then he came to the front and said, "I am coming soon..." then he tripped and fell right into the lap of a lady on the front row "Oh," he apologized and said, "Ma'am, I'm so sorry." She said, "That's okay! You warned me three times you were coming."

None of us should be surprised when Jesus comes back. If he comes back tonight, don't be surprised, because he said, "I am coming soon." If it was soon 2,000 years ago when these words were written, don't you know it's sooner now? It's sooner now than it ever was before. So get ready. He said, "I am coming soon!"

8. The Last Prayer

(a) Come quickly!

Then, number 8 is the last prayer of the Bible. Look at verse 20 again. "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Did John say that or did Jesus say that? The word "amen" means "let it be." I don't know, but this is the last prayer John said, "Come, Lord Jesus." Oh Lord Jesus please come. You said you were coming soon and I want you to come! Lord Jesus, come soon! And here's the last prayer of the Bible. He says, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus."

(b) Grace be with you

In verse 21 he ends it by saying, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people." And all of God's people read that last word out loud "Amen!" The last part of that prayer is "grace be with you." Those two prayers are interrelated. Look at the second one. He says, "May God's grace, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you." If you have God's grace with you and you are trusting his grace for salvation—not your works for salvation—you can say, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus." Can you honestly say tonight, "Lord, I want you to come back. I want you to come back soon." I know some of you kids are saying, "I want you to come back before finals this year" or "Why couldn't you have come back before April 15th when I have to pay my taxes?" but are you ready? Not only are you ready? But do you *desire* for Jesus to come back?

In 2 Timothy, some of the last words of the apostle Paul are, "I am now ready to be poured out. The time of my departure is at hand. I have kept the faith. I have fought a good fight but it's over for me." but he says, "Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me. Not only to me but to everyone who loves his appearing!" Can you say that you love the appearing of Jesus?

CONCLUSION

I remember when I was about 5 years old. Me and a friend of mine went behind our house to our backyard neighbor and we went in his garage and like little kids sometimes do, we began to steal everything in that garage. His name was Duff. We called him "Duff, Duff, the cream puff!" Nobody was at home and we hauled out every toy we could find in that garage and put it in a field beside their house in some tall Johnson grass. We went back in that garage and we started hauling off everything we could find, his dad's shotgun, *everything*. We said, "Well if we're thieves, we might as well go all the way!" We were hauling out our last load when suddenly Duff, the cream puff's dad drove up and he was no cream puff! He was honking his horn. You talk about being caught red-handed. We were standing in his driveway too dumb to drop it and run. Duff's dad got out of the car, grabbed us by the collars of our shirts, took my friend home first and told his mother what we were doing and then took me home to my mother and told her what we had done. My mother called my dad at work to come home and deal with me. You know it's bad when they have 'em come home from work. I just knew my dad was going to kill me! My dad came driving up and I want to tell you I love my dad but I sure didn't love his appearing!

I believe everybody in this room loves Jesus. You wouldn't be here on a Sunday night if you didn't love Jesus but I'm not asking you, "Do you love Jesus?" I'm asking you, "Do you love his appearing? Are you ready for him to come back?" Can you pray like John prayed, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" All I want to say is, if you can't pray that prayer, ask the Lord to reveal to you what is keeping you from praying it. Is there sin in your life you need to confess and get right, because if he appears, you'd be ashamed? Or is it because you are so attached to some things down here on earth you want to enjoy them for a while before Jesus comes back? That just says your heart is in the wrong place. If you have been laying up treasures in heaven and he comes back not only will you love him you will love his appearing!

OUTLINE

1. The Last Command: Worship God. (vs. 10)
2. The Last Principle: People don't change after death (vs. 11)
3. The Last Identification:
 - (a) Alpha and Omega (vs. 13)
 - (b) Root and offspring of David (vs. 16)
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 - (a) Keep these words (vs. 7)
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8. The Last Prayer (vs. 20-21):
 - (a) Come quickly!
 - (b) Grace be with you