

Revelation 22

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[0:00] Those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to tree of life, and may go through the gates into the city. Outside other dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.

The spirit and the bride say, Come, and let the one who hears say, Come, let the one who is thirsty come, and let the one who wishes to take the free gift of order of life.

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of the scroll. If anyone adds anything to them, God would add to that person the plagues described in the scroll.

And if everyone takes words away from the scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in the scroll.

[1:05] He who testifies to these things. Yes, I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people.

Amen. If you want to keep your Bibles open, or your abs open, that's aoy.

I'm just going to get it to this read for us. And for this is it. Here we are. The final in our series, looking at the book of Revelation. If you're not used to coming to learn, you can do it the first time. We work our way through the books of the Bible, and we'll be doing that for the last few months in the book of Revelation. And a little bit, I've had your feeling about this coming to the end. about, I feel a little bit sad.

I'm on this. I really enjoy just spending time and just the things that I feel that we, I, will be learning together. I'd love just to go back to the beginning of it and start all over again and just kind of look at it because the truths that we've been learning, I think, just be really precious.

[2:07] But just as we start, let me pray. God, our fathers, we still ourselves, we ask that you would help us to open our hearts to your word and your word to your hearts, the word written that leads us to the word incarnate who is our joy, our delight, the one whom we seek to draw close to, to know more and to glorify and enjoy.

God's good in his name. Amen. Amen. I want to start kind of getting into this passage really by thinking about the theme of home.

What comes to mind when someone mentions the word home? For some of us, it's not a great word. It's not a great thought. Maybe you think of home, it conjures up unhappy images of a childhood where it wasn't a happy place.

We have to acknowledge the reality of that in a broken world. But then for others, home means different things. You know, home, if you're a sort of highlander or an islander, might still mean, you know, where you were brought up, the island or the place you were going near.

It almost, no matter how long you've been away, you say, I'm heading home, I've been home for the holidays or whatever. Or if you're an expat working abroad, people will say, oh, so where is home for you?

[3:35] And we might say, well, Scotland, or if you're living in the UK, you might say Nigeria or Australia or the States or wherever we're coming from and living here. And we do that because a large part of our identity is still rooted there, isn't it?

You know, its history, its culture, its language have all shaped us. We have family there. And so therefore we have a strong affinity, we have a strong sense of identification with, if you like, our homeland.

But the mention of home for others is a place, you know, when you've been away on a work trip or a holiday or even at the end of a working day or the younger end of a school day, you return, you

have the key, you open the door, you walk in, you fling the bags or whatever, breathe a sigh of relief, you can raid the fridge or whatever.

It's a safe place, isn't it? It's a loving place. It's where you're known, it's where you're welcomed that you're going. And folks are there where there's a huge smile, a kisser, hugger, a meal waiting for you.

Your people are there, your values are getting worked out there, aren't they? Home's a place where we grow, we grow older in. It's a place that we're able to, and enabled to raise our kids.

[4:51] It's a place of the open table, of hospitality to others, to foster friendship and fellowship. It's where our Bibles are, where our prayer chair might be.

The spaces are that we just spend time with the Lord. It's a place where we rest. It's a place where we enjoy our creativity, like in the garden or in the house or whatever.

The idea of home, there's just, there's so much that is rich to it in the home lands. There's more that can be said about it and when I idealize it, of course, there are ups and downs in the home.

There are tensions as well as laughter. There are tears as well as joy there. And whilst we are in this world, we have our citizenships in the nations of this world, don't we?

There are many nationalities in this room and that is wonderful. And we have sort of a sense of homeland on the earth, but also we have homes which we put effort into and to maintain.

[5:54] But the Bible is really clear. These last chapters of Revelation are really clear that actually what we are living here though is an expat life, if you like.

When we become believers, when we become children of the living God, when we're adopted, when we're born again, we're born into a new life with a new identity, a new culture, and a new citizenship.

We are new creations, made new, belonging to a new creation that is coming, that is awaiting, which Alistair was talking about last week that we learned about in chapters 21.

And when you stop and think about that, it's easy to roll it off the tongue, it's easy for us to hear, but actually, an enormous privilege that is. A privilege to be given this citizenship of heaven.

To think of it as our homeland. Some of you here have been granted the right to remain or become UK citizens, and that's cost you pretty dearly.

[7:00] You've gone through all the tests that those of us who are natural residents were to ask to have a claim to be whatever king of whatever period this was, or whatever. But this citizenship that has been granted to us by, through the Lord, my God the Father, has come to us without cost to us.

It's been given to us freely. Verse 17 tells us, look at it, it's a free gift to those who will receive it. It's given freely as we receive Christ as Savior.

We're made new creations, given a new life, new citizenship, and a new home and homeland that awaits us. And some of us, actually, in general, in terms of receiving things, we're not great at it.

We're not great at receiving thanks or praise or gifts or love because deep down, actually, we don't think we're worthy of it and struggle to receive it.

And so, when it comes to thinking about this gift, we struggle to feel that we're worthy and here's the thing, actually, we aren't. We're not worthy because we've done nothing to earn it.

[8:23] But here is the thing. We have been given this free gift of grace and of goodness and of new life and citizenship in heaven. not because of us, but because of God.

He chose us to receive it. And He chose you because He has loved you since before the creation of the world. This is not just a short-term thing.

He has set His affection on you. He named your name before the world began. And He loved us so much, John tells us, that He prayed the Christ for us so that we could receive it for Him.

Yes, it did come at a cost, but not the one that we have to pay, one that He paid on the cross for us. And so, from beginning to end, He makes us worthy to receive it.

He thinks of us worthy enough to receive it because He has loved us since before time began.

[9:28] And so, He determined a plan that we might be able to help us to by purchasing our salvation for us. The thing that we couldn't do so that we could receive this gift as free, this gift of salvation and this citizenship in heaven that He waited for us.

so that we might receive total forgiveness, total acceptance. You know, that's called the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

And some of us struggle to receive that, but some of us need to let that truth sink deep into our souls, into the very DNA of our being. These truths into our innermost parts.

Because they are true. And they are true of you. And the truth of them will begin to help set us free and enjoy some of the fruit of that citizenship that we have been given.

And of course, that justification by faith is somewhat evidenced by the so-called sanctification of our lives that God works out what He has worked in in the new life that we received.

[10:46] But our citizenship is, Paul reminds us, Philippians 3.20, is in heaven. Heaven is our true and ultimate home.

And Christ said in John chapter 4 that He has gone to prepare a place for us in His Father's house, in His Father's home, in which there are many homes, mansions, is how He describes them.

So there's a whole estate of places that are lying up, waiting for us. And what we are to consider are true home plans.

And where we are to consider when we go that actually, when we go to Hentz, we're going home. home plans. So if we're on holiday, and someone asks, where is home for you?

In your heart of hearts, your first saying is heaven. Now if you say that, you might freak the night and say, oh, very interesting, and move on. But it's true, isn't it?

[12:02] Of course, you're from Scotland or the States or whatever. But actually, where are you from? Actually, heaven is my home. It's home for you.

And what a home he has been through today. We saw that last week. You know, we might look on and think about some of the images that are conjured up there are just wonderful.

We might think of some of the most opulent places on earth, where they are, possibly in the oil-rich nations. But what John conveys for us in chapter 21 outshines them all.

They are pale in comparison to what heaven will be like. And it's not like that just because it's an opulent thing. It's because it's an overflow thing, an overflow of all the beauty and creativity and glory and goodness of the God who has made it and prepared it for us.

And what he wants us to enjoy with him. And so as John communicates and as the Spirit leads John in communicating these things, imagine to the first century believers who were believers, how much that must have meant to them.

[13:22] As in the first century they struggled under the cosh of their Babylon, Rome, and its hatred and fury towards them. but also for all the believers in every generation subsequently as they have faced something of the heat of the Babylon to a greater or lesser extent of their time as it's breathing down, bearing down on them.

John has been reminding them and us of the glory and the wonder of these truths that actually now we abide in Christ who reigns and who rules.

And then one day then we will not only abide in him but abide with him fully. We will see him face to face. And whilst now we as believers may have experienced being deprived or shunned or ostracized, unwelcomed, but then, then we will be fully vindicated, then we will be fully welcomed, then we will be loved, we will breathe that sigh of relief, as we think we are home.

Heaven is our true home, our citizenship is already there, our culture, our identity, our values, they all stem from there now as believers.

That's why when we become Christians, we do sense a sort of disconnect with the worlds. Though the world, the flesh, and the devil will try to tempt us to hanker after the world, and still tempt us to invest and get our identity and so on from its culture and values.

[15:07] Actually, we sense that that's not for us anymore. I want to be there. I'm not there anymore. My values, my identity, my confidence, it comes just from somewhere else, from my true home.

It's a wonderful thing that I made of what we are receiving from the Lord Jesus Christ and what he's purchased for us. Let's not take them for granted, let us enjoy them, let us help them set us free for the freedom that Christ has set us free.

So in this final chapter, Jesus has some concluding words to say to you and I, to those first century believers, to every believer since and to us today.

This is Jesus that is speaking to us through his words. And we've been told that this word in Revelation chapter 1 verse 8 is a prophecy that foretell it is a Revelation chapter 1 verse 1 an eye opener of how things really are and also there is a letter, there is some letters at the beginning and he's signing off here at the end, just like signing off on our letter.

And what in these last verses the Lord Jesus Christ wants to do is to let this message of Revelation hit home.

[16:39] And by that I mean take it to heart. hearts. That it hit home in every sense in a deep realization of where that home is, where our homeland truly is, and the folly of thinking otherwise.

And so his words to them in the first century, to every generation, and to us are this, guard, cherish these words in Revelation but also in the whole of Scripture.

So guard against verses 7 to 9 disobeying and being led to disobeying. And in verses 10 to 17 against sealing it up and in verses 18 to 19 against tackling with it.

So firstly against disobeying it. Verse 6 I wondered when I was going to get to the passage. Here we are. The angel said to me these words are trustworthy! So Luke I am coming to see blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.

So verse 6 these words all that we've been looking at in the book of Revelation thinking about all that we've looked at the seven letters to the seven churches the seven seals the seven trumpets the seven bowls the various kind of angles if you like looking at the same period of time from the first coming of Jesus to his return helping us to understand and what to expect in that time frame remember that there is a sovereign God who is seated on the throne and whom every knee will bow as we sing who rules and who reigns of the ongoing battle in the heavenlies of the unholy trinity of the dragon the beast and the false prophet and the two destinies of the residents of the two cities that we've been looking at in these last chapters the cities of Babylon and the new Jerusalem and the destinies of heaven and hell these words he said cherish them they are true and trustworthy all these words are true and

[18:51] I think we've sensed that haven't we as we've looked through the book of Revelation in our spirit this is true and it has helped us and we've rejoiced in it as well as being sold by some of it it's interesting that we have a similar phrase in the book of Revelation applied to Jesus Revelation 19 Jesus is described as faithful and true so the incarnate word and the inspired word of scripture if you like are one and the same so when we trust in Jesus as our Savior Lord we can also trust in his word because the one who is faithful and true has authored this word that is trustworthy!

and true! Trust then in the ancient wisdom the ancient word from the ancient of days even when it cuts across what the generations and societies and cultures and philosophies are saying in our time.

I'm a little bit weary of quoting Jordan Peterson but he can say a number of interesting things he said this he said the reason that he had to be an atheist sort of looking into the existence of God is this he said that there is no one person or community or philosopher that can be trusted to give a philosophy for life and for civilizations because no one person or community is wise enough or can accumulate over the ages all that needs to be understood for our life and for our civilizations but of course there is one who has all wisdom and all knowledge all insight in which he uses all his power and authority to reign rightly the one who is revealed here verse 6 in the Old and New Testaments as he refers to the Old Testament the one who inspired the prophets and his words so there is this word it's given by the angel to John but also it is a word from

Jesus verse 7 it says behold I am coming soon you're going to see that phrase repeated three times once in each section and that is the hope as we hear those words behold I'm coming soon I'm coming soon why is he coming I'm coming to take you home I'm coming to take you home of course he said I'm coming soon of course the days since his first coming are the last days as a relative is speaking but he is coming and even so no wonder at the end John says even so selfishly we say even so today Lord we'll be just fine but in the interim what do we do verse 7 we keep the word of this prophecy and the word keeping there is a sense of cherishing let it not only hit home in your heart but under your very life in your home these truths that he reigns and that he rules that there is a battle going on that governments will let themselves be subject to the beast and the false prophets but you no matter what is happening what I'm seeing on you keep looking up keep trusting in the higher throne even though you might not even be sure what on earth he is doing trust that he knows you know it was lovely chatting to a teenager this week and then hearing them apply these truths in their own situation where I'm talking about how they got on their exam results and they didn't manage to get what they hoped for you know what they said

God is sovereign God is sovereign and so I trusted him for my future we're cherishing the truths of scripture the truths that we've been learning in this week of revelation and letting that the hope that they have hit home in the midst of hardship and discipline so let me ask this where in what area in your life and mine do we need to cherish the truth of scripture at the moment to let that truth bring light and hope in the midst of a dark season and if you're struggling to know what that truth might be

then maybe open up somebody and just let them spill truth and light into your soul words you need to hear but notice also here for those who are doing that

[24:03] Jesus speaks a blessing verse 7 blessed is the one who keeps you cherishes who obeys the words and the word that Greek is used for blessed there is the same word that is used for the sermon of the night in Matthew it's gospel where it speaks of the attitudes blessed is this and so on the Greek word is makarios and it's the same word there it means blessed or happy and so this verse is one of seven there's that number again in Revelation seven beatitudes if you like in Revelation in C2 of today so Jesus says guard against neglecting to cherish this neglecting to obey the truth of his words to take it to heart and the head and the soul and the mind and emotion to take it to bed and those nighttime hours when you're asleep or to work when you're facing these challenges verse 8 as John hears these things

I think like us as we've marveled and rejoiced in the truths that have been conveyed here he's just overwhelmed in his soul and his heart a heart that was tender to the Lord a spirit that was yielded to the king and so as he hears these things and as he's been revealed to him they're too wonderful for him his instinct is to praise and to worship and the message that he's been hearing mistakenly bows down and worships the messenger and he's like oh what are you doing don't do that so rightly redirects his gates and his affection away from himself towards the Lord in a similar way maybe when we we all have our kind of spiritual heroes from whom you know we're hearing great and wonderful things that just blessed us and helped us and venerate them that we're tempted to do and remind yourself because some of you are really gifted in the Lord and your field let yourself be venerated just sing all the glory to him so

I was briefly chatting to St. I was in the Keswick and people kept coming up to him and I was chatting to him and thanking him for his daily podcast and his teaching and his books and so on and he kept just saying just serving forward you know just redirecting them away from himself to the Romans so there's a guarding against disobeying there's a guarding against sealing it up in verses 10 to 17 verse 10 and he said to me do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book for the time is near let the evildoer still do evil the filthy still be filthy and the righteous still do right and the holy still be holy it's going on there we saw in chapter 6 that when a thing is sealed up it is paused you can pause if you like it's going to happen but not yet and so when the seal is broken the things are unpaused and begin to happen and what we've been seeing as the seals have been unsealed is that two things are set in motion for two groups of people associated with the two cities those whose citizenship is with the past few chapters we've seen the city of Babylon and its morality of verse 11 evil and filth and those whose citizenship is in heaven in the new

Jerusalem that is to come who are seeking to do what is right and is holy and the three tracks of which John speaks have echoes of the two fixed destinies of men and women that when the day of grace is over and the day of judgment comes their destiny is sealed and it echoes of Jesus warning in his parables like the parable of the foolish virgins or the rich man of Lazarus who you delay Jesus saying don't delay receiving Christ not think I'm interested I'm examining things I'm looking into it I think I probably want to follow at some point but not just yet I still want to be king of my life willing to find that that dalliance with the world goes on and on all the while our hearts becoming imperceptibly and unknowingly to us harder and harder to the gospel and the switch never comes and even though we may not never publicly swear allegiance to

Babylon it has become by default our own city and we are citizens of it and we are sealed and share its fate so whilst there's a lot of light in this passage there's also some heat here isn't there that we need to take heat off but that is true with Jesus when he speaks words that melts our hearts but he has all wisdom and insight that there are things that he speaks that sometimes want to make us head to the hills verse 12 he reminds us and says again but I am coming soon and my reward is with me and I will give each person according to what they have done I am the alpha and the omega the first and the last the beginning and the end and he has that blessedness again blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and they go through the gates into the city outside are the dogs those who practice magic arts the sexually immoral the murderers the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood you know

[30:19] I was really struck last week both as I was reading chapter 21 the time before I came to the church just refreshing myself of the passage but also as Alistair was preaching on it that holiness which means amongst other things being morally pure and set apart actually holiness is our future and so surely it should become a greater and greater part of our presence if that is where

we're destined and as in verse 14 there's this beatitude this blessing the blessing is this that having had our filthy rags of our lives washed clean by the blood of the man and we are re-rolled in his robes of righteousness having been cleansed made new within and then letting that work that he worked in us begin to work out in us as we let the power of the Holy

Spirit out work in and in and through us that blessing is our reality our filthy the filthy rags of our old lives washed clean by the blood of the land new robes of righteousness that we deserve new life given to us our wonder and that is that new life we're excited we begin to bear a new character a new being bearing the fruit of the Spirit a new morality that is Christ's we begin to live that set apart life set apart of his values in our morality in our sense of right and wrong in our speech in our lifestyle in our thought life in our use of time and money all with the help of the Holy Spirit to get work in our lives so that we can bear the values of what is to be the new

Jerusalem that awaits us and no longer the values of Babylon verse 15 and it's interesting that Jesus chooses to make sure that we know what the values of Babylon are to make that clear to us that that is the old life not the new life that we begin at it's another group of seven that old life the values of Babylon are acting like dogs and of course in that context it's wild dogs it's an unruly pack vicious and malicious wild without any sense of true right wrong those who practiced magic arts again in that time they were deceivers they would promise much they would just lead us away from trust in the Lord trust in this for your healing trust in this for your wisdom this enchantment to get someone to love you and so on do that anymore our dependence is in the Lord the sexually moral Greek root of the word is pornoi it's a wide term used in the Bible for sexual immorality but you need to look at the scriptures and the root to know what it means of course it's pornoi means sexually moral so thinking about pornography they're looking at sexually moral images it's no part of our life anymore the

Bible is clear that sex is for only exclusively in the bond of marriage between a man and a woman so no premarital or extramarital sense and that affair can be not just with another person that affair can be with our work as well it's the thing that has all our affection we neglect others and of course there's the many of other non-heterosexual combinations that are now practiced in the wider culture Jesus says it's not part of your culture your life now and then the more obvious of the murderers Jesus says you commit that in your heart the idolaters those the idols that are made yes with hands but also in our hearts where we replace the creator and take the creator's place and replace them with these idols as our cheapest and highest affection and then those who love and practice falsehoods in an

HR magazine it was reported that I had a thousand people who were made in the workplace 490 admitted to lock-in that's just about one in two every second person is lying to one degree or other that's fine in the world that's the old life that's not our life we're not the ones who bear false we're the ones who speak and in the first century as Christians start to live out their lives in the new lives that have been given you can understand with the context of Babylon and Rome hated the church because they refused to adopt the worship the values the culture and identity that stemmed from citizenship to it because they were holding on to a different citizenship to and as they sought to be set apart they received the wrath of the lamb the wrath of the man and so in the book of

[36 : 16] Revelation we're learning not to be surprised at times and in different seasons and in different places the church is moved from being venerated as it has been in our society because this western civilization was founded on Christianity but it's then moved to being tolerated and it's now moved to being somewhat despised every element of its past dismantled from society so don't be surprised that there will be times in different seasons and places when we receive the wrath of the dragon I don't want to dig too much into these things but we get the point of what's being said here these are the things of the enemies of your soul that will stop you from enjoying the rights and the goodnesses of the citizenship that is in heaven the values of our homelands a citizenship given to we who totally don't deserve it and yet is given delightfully instead so that we are enabled to verse 17 in a sense pick up where

Adam and Eve left up they were banned from eating from the tree of life but us as we enter into our new city our new home when we go there it's eating picking from the tree of life to eat from it and to root forever given to us freely as we enter through the city gate what a day that will be and in verse 16 I Jesus have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches and as in verse 13 he is the alpha and the beginning and the end he says I'm the root and the offspring of David in other words I was before him and I am after him I am David's creator and I am David's greater son and

savior and the god man the messiah and the bright morning star and of course the morning star
arises when?

The beginning of a new day and on that day the beginning of a new day that will be never ending
verse 17 the spirit of the bride that is the church saying come and let the one who hears say come
come let the one who is thirsty come and the one who wishes to take the free gift of the water of life
come Jesus has been speaking about a day when the day of grace ends but he's saying today
mercifully is the day of grace these are the days of proclamation of the wonder of this of those who
can come who are thirsty to receive from the living water that Jesus offers the new life that is to be
found in him the free gift that is free to us because him everything this is the day of proclamation in
the prisons and on the streets in the fringe and on the campuses in our sporting communities
amongst the addicted into the international community out in

India and Rwanda and Congo this week with the NASS group out in France and the many camps that have been running around the world in holiday clubs like ours last week amongst family amongst friends amongst colleagues amongst neighbours amongst 21,000 homes in Stirling that will send an invitation out to you in the coming weeks this is the day of grace this is the day of proclamation where we say come come and drink from the living waters come without money come without deserving come and freely drink from the one who is paying!

the price for you and we having looked at revelation and knowing what is coming the two there are for men and women how can we not tell and invite folks to come we dare not seal it up dare we but speak it out as he calls us to do so there's a warning against this obeying not cherishing it against sealing it up but finally very briefly against tampering with it verse 18 I warn anyone who hears the words of these prophecies of this scroll if anyone adds anything to them God will add to that person the plagues described in the split judgment and if anyone takes away not only anything but also taking away from the scroll of this prophecy God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life in the holy city which are described in this scroll!

[41:05] It's a solemn word isn't it? Time has gone but I just want us to heed the warning to adding to it and taking away from it adding to it what it is not there from the culture of Babylon or taking away from it the parts that we don't like that we prefer not to be there but to let Jesus speak the truths that people need to hear that's why we preach through the whole word and not miss anything out verse 20 he who testifies to these things says yes I'm coming soon amen come Lord Jesus the great word there is Maranatha verse 21 the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with his people amen so in closing let me go back to where we began he's coming soon and even so Lord Jesus coming but he's coming soon to do what he's coming to take us home but until that day until then we are to cherish the truths that we've been learning letting them hit home knowing where our true citizenship lies working out in our lives what he has worked in those set apart values in our homes in our marriages in our family life in our work in our retirement when we are well and when we are not in good times and in heart holding on to the one who is faithful and true and his word which is trustworthy and true and to his grace verse 21 which is all sufficient who has power to make that grace perfect in weakness and who is coming soon and who will take his home and so the people of

[illegible]