

Amen, Come Lord Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn back to the chapter we read in Revelation chapter 22.

I'd like us to take for our text this evening the words that we have in verses 20 and 21.

Revelation 22 verse 20. He who testifies to these things says, Surely I am coming soon. Amen, come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen. And in particular those words, Amen, come, Lord Jesus.

Well, we find ourselves at that time of year, do we not, where many have been considering the birth of Christ.

[1 : 0 6] And of course, although there is no specific mandate in scripture for us to put one day aside in order to remember the birth of Christ, it is nonetheless good for us to do so.

This is the point in history when God became man. This is of course one of the most significant historical events that has ever been.

That ever will be an event through which salvation would be provided for everyone and anyone who would care to put their trust in Jesus.

This is the first advent. The Bible also speaks about a second advent. And in fact, this second advent that the Bible speaks of is spoken of quite a lot throughout scripture.

It's not just mentioned briefly, we see it more than once on the pages of scripture. Yet this advent is an advent that is depressingly neglected by the Church of Christ.

[2 : 1 9] Yes, we hear much about the first advent, that is true, but virtual silence when it comes to this second advent.

What am I talking about? Well, of course, I'm talking about none other than the second coming of Christ. And that's what we have before us here in this chapter in Revelation chapter 22.

Revelation, which literally means a disclosure or an unveiling. This is a prophetic disclosure from John, from Jesus rather to John, you remember during his exile on the island of Patmos.

This is a disclosure that can, yes, be applied to the here and now, especially the first few chapters of this Revelation where we see various different churches mentioned.

The Church of Laodicea and all the other various churches. And it's true that at various points in the history of our own churches, we can identify ourselves with what we read.

[3 : 2 7] And so this Revelation is a Revelation that very much applies to the here and now. But this is a Revelation that also has a strong reference to the here after, the world to come, the afterlife, the realities of eternity.

And in fact, as we come to these last two verses in the whole of Scripture out of 66 books, 1189 chapters, 784,000 words from Genesis all the way through to Revelation.

It's interesting to notice it not that the words that God has chosen to end with, to put a full stop to this whole Revelation, too, are the words that point so clearly to this second Advent.

Surely I am coming quickly. That's what Jesus says to John. That's what Jesus says to you and to me tonight, to which John replies, even so come, Lord Jesus.

Dear friends, I wonder when the last time these words came from your lips or my lips. When was it the last time that you said to the Lord, even so come, Lord Jesus.

[5 : 03] Does this second Advent, does it feature in who you are as a Christian? Do you consider it? Do you think on it? Do you meditate upon it? Do you dwell on it?

Do you look forward to it? Well, friends, you should. You should because this first Advent that many of us have been thinking about in the days that I've just gone by, it is completely and utterly meaningless if we do not consider it alongside the fact that Christ is coming back.

At any point, on any day that Jesus will come back physically to this world, and that he will take with himself his precious redeemed, just as it's worth reminding ourselves of the birth of Christ, it really is worth reminding ourselves of this glorious reality.

Have I forgotten it? Have I forgotten it as we go forward into this new year? See, it's Spurgeon knew what he was like. He knew that as a sinner, he was liable to forget these things.

And so it's said that on his study door, he had a piece of paper pinned up, and a piece of paper he had two words, perhaps today, perhaps today.

[6 : 33] What anticipation, what expectation. He knew that he could forget, and so every time he went into that study, he was reminded of the very fact that perhaps today the Lord could come back.

Friends, what has gone wrong? Why is it that these words perhaps today have largely been replaced with words that spell out, well, perhaps one day, perhaps another day in the future, but not today, perhaps in hundreds of years, yes, but not in my lifetime?

Why is it that these words of John here, words that very much put a full stop to the end of this revelation? Why is it that they are alien to us as a church, when in actual fact they should be ingrained in the very marrow of who we profess to be?

What's gone wrong? I think there are a number of reasons for this, a few of which I'd like us to think about just for a short time this evening.

Sadly, it's true to say is it not that we are good at extremes. We're good at responding to erroneous teaching by going to extremes.

[7 : 56] There's an error that comes up in the church, and so we respond to that error by going to the complete other side, and in the process we throw the baby out with the bathwater.

In the process we throw out any good that was perhaps in that teaching, because we don't want to visit it at all. We know these kind of things that have happened in the history of the church.

I think the second coming is one such area that has fallen foul of this. In response to various sects who have undoubtedly made it their defining feature to predict when Christ will come again, who perhaps pinpointed a day and a time and inviolably been wrong, and in response to such sects what have we done?

Well, we thought that any kind of consideration to the second coming is somehow fanatical. And so we've left it to one side. We've shelved it. We know it's there. We know it's in the Bible.

We know it's to come. We don't really talk about it. We don't consider it. We don't dwell upon it. Yes, we're happy to gather together in fellowships, and we're happy to split hairs on minutiae and scripture.

[9 : 11] That simply is not revealed, but the second coming that's spoken of so clearly here, we don't talk about. And of course, it would be fanatical, would it not, if this were to be the identifying feature of our church.

If we were to be like that church in Thessalonica that downed tools and sat back and waited for the Lord to come at any time, they gave up their jobs, they gave up doing anything useful because they thought, well, He might come.

What's the point? What is the point in anything? That is extreme. And of course, that is not what's being asked for us, of us.

Friends, that doesn't mean that we do not think about it at all. Another reason is that perhaps we see this promise as being so far away.

People can make promises to us a long time ago, and we forget them. When we don't see these promises being fulfilled, we forget that they've ever been made. And somehow they grow dim.

[10 : 19] And so eventually, it's as if that promise has never, ever been made. This is a promise that's been made 2,000 years ago. And still here we are in Carlyle Free Church on the 5th of January 2020 and still no sign.

Where is this Lord Jesus who has said to us, He's coming quickly? Where is He? This is a spirit that was seen in 2 Peter 3.

Scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing. They will say, where is the promise of His coming? Forever since the Father fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.

All things are continuing. We can have that self-same spirit even as the bride of Christ, even as the children of God.

We say, well, she said He's coming quickly and still He hasn't come. And so we lose sight and we become complacent as to this promise.

[11 : 28] But what do we read in Matthew's Gospel? In Matthew 24, Jesus answered and said to them, take heed that no one deceives you, for many will come in my name saying, I am the Christ and will deceive many.

And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines, pestilences and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Here Christ is speaking so plainly as to the pointers, as to the indications that the end is near. And yet is there anything in this list tonight that we can say isn't taking place in some form, in some way, in some part of the world?

The reality is that we are in the end days. This is a promise that has been unfolding around us for the past 2,000 years. Christ is coming.

[12 : 46] And perhaps not keen to speak about this for another reason. And that is that when we think about the second coming, we might think that we're in danger of veering into speculation, wild speculation.

There's a fear of us perhaps coming up with our own fanciful ideas as to what this will look like. For us to impose on Scripture what Scripture doesn't make clear to us, and so we don't talk about it at all.

But yet friends, we needn't be fanciful or fictional when talking about this, because the fact is that Scripture is not silent on this issue.

Yes, we perhaps do not know the finer details of this day. And when we're reading things such as this, we know that at times there is that which possibly could be symbolic.

We do not know, but still we know enough. What do we read in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4? For the Lord himself, we read there, will descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

[14 : 04] Then we who are alive shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord, therefore comfort one another with these words.

He's going to descend, He's going to descend from heaven, and every eye will see Him. It's true to say that He came into this world on that first advent so humbly.

We're hardly anyone knew that He had been born where nobody was able to see Him, but not in the second advent. This will be an advent where every eye will see Him descending in all His majesty.

This will be anything but discreet as He comes in all His glory, in all His splendour.

That trumpet will blast. We don't know if this is symbolic, but again as we think about what Scripture says elsewhere, this is a very fitting description, is it not?

[15 : 15] That's one of the most wonderful things about Scripture. It interprets itself in various different ways. And when we go to the Old Testament and we see those times that the Lord came down as it were to meet with His people, this was a meeting that would be announced with a trumpet blast.

We see this in Exodus 19 where we read, then it came to pass on the third day in the morning that there were thunderings and lightnings and a thick cloud in the mountain, and the sound of the trumpet was very loud so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God and they stood at the foot of the mountain. More than that, this trumpet also signifies in Scripture the Lord coming to rescue His people.

The Lord coming to rescue His people from hostile oppression. You read of that in Zechariah and Zechariah that this was the signal for their deliverance.

And so surely it's more than appropriate that when the Lord descends in the sky, the sound of the trumpet will be heard the world over. A sign of deliverance from the Lord's people who are still alive.

[16 : 35] A sign of deliverance from this sin-sick world. And as well as this, as well as the sound, we know that Scripture speaks of the Lord Himself descending with a shout.

And we know there is power in the breath, in the word of God. We see this at the beginning of time when God breathed life into the very dust of the earth, when man came from the dust of the ground.

We see this at the tomb of Lazarus, when Lazarus who was dead in the tomb hears the voice of Jesus telling him to come forth. And he rises up alive triumphant over the grave.

And perhaps more significantly, to many gathered here tonight, this is the same breath, the same voice that He factually called you from darkness to light.

From spiritual death to life. That is the greatest miracle of all. By nature there is no one in this church who would choose to follow Christ.

[17 : 48] It is completely impossible without the Spirit of the Lord breathing that life into you. And so it is this self-same breath that is going to bring to pass something quite extraordinary on that second advent.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first upon hearing the shout of the coming Christ.

We read that the souls of believers which have been in heaven since they've died, what that looks like, we do not know that period between death and that glorious resurrection.

We don't know what that looks like, but we believe it to be true. And on that great day these souls will be reunited with their bodies in each and every single grave of each and every single child of God who has died.

The sea will even give up its dead and all will rise to meet with Christ in the air. This is not fantasy fiction, this is the truth. This is what the Bible tells us.

[19 : 06] And so as an aside we might ask, well what are these bodies going to look like? Will they be different to the bodies that we have now? Well again we must be careful that we don't go into areas of wild speculation, but we know that the Westminster Divines, they thought about this themselves.

When dealing with this they said that at the last day, this isn't the confession of faith, at the last day those who are alive shall not die but shall be changed.

All the dead shall be raised up with their self-same bodies and no other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again with their souls forever.

The same but different. You will still be you, but with different qualities, sinless qualities.

We see more of this in 1 Corinthians 15 when talking about these resurrected bodies. Paul says that this corruptible must put on incorruption, this mortal must put on immortality, so that when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.

[20 : 38] What a thought. This will be a reconstituting, redefining moment for those who have died in Christ, a glorious moment.

Is it any wonder that John is here saying even so, come Lord Jesus, why are we not tonight crying out this self-same thing, come Lord Jesus, what are we scared of?

So this isn't speculation at all, this is reality. In fact, after this description in Thessalonians relating to the Second Coming, what does Paul commend us to do? This is really very interesting. He says in chapter 4 verse 8, after that description, he says, Encourage one another with these words. Do we do that? Do we sit together and encourage one another with these words when we see ourselves so weighed down with the world, the flesh and the devil?

Are we so tired as we try and make our way through this world, objections on every side? Do we encourage one another with these words? Do we pray that prayer even so, come Lord Jesus?

The final reason that this second advent is perhaps neglected is that perhaps you're even saying this as you sit in the pew tonight, that you say, well, ah yes, I know Christ is coming again, I know that. Scripture tells me that. But certain things need to happen first.

[22 : 29] It's not true that the Jewish people need to be taken in as a whole. Is it not true that those who are false Christs will need to rise up and deceive if you don't even possible the elect?

Scripture says that, does it not? Well, yes, Scripture does tell us these things. But there are problems with this way of thinking. Because what we're doing friends is we are imposing on an infinite God, a finite timeline of events.

We are saying to God, no, no, this cannot happen. This cannot happen because it does not fit in with how we perceive things are to happen. We are saying to a God to whom a thousand years is like a day and a day, a thousand years that no, you cannot do this yet.

Really? Are we making God that small? Are we binding Him to time?

He is, and we praise His name for this, He is so much bigger than this. And aside from that, is it not true that we are so poor at accurately interpreting the prophecies that we read here in Scripture?

[23 : 51] We see this, do we not, in the first incarnation? There we had these wise men, they came to Jerusalem. They came to Jerusalem looking for the Messiah, the promised Messiah, the Messiah who had been promised through many, many pages of Scripture.

And here they come to Jerusalem, this holy city. They ask all these holy men, the rabbis, the teachers of the law, those men who knew the Scriptures inside out, back to front, upside down.

They knew it all, but they had no idea that the Messiah was going to be born. Why? Because they had it all so wrong.

Could it not be that we have it wrong when we are interpreting some of these prophecies? He tells us he is going to come as a thief in the night when we are not expecting it.

He doesn't say once you've understood this prophecy, then I will come because it makes sense to you, no. That would not make God God. That would make God come down to our level of understanding.

[25 : 03] And we thank Him that He is not at that level. There is no doubt He's coming. It may be that we die before that, but He's coming in one way or another.

And we need to be ready. We need to have that spirit of spurgeon when He said, perhaps today. And just as we need to keep revisiting that great incarnation and its consequences for all of humanity, we need to keep revisiting the fact that He is coming back.

And you know friends in doing so we will have a completely, by the grace of God, a completely different outlook on life. Yes, we continue to live our lives here on earth. Yes, we do all to the glory of God.

We give thanks to His name for all the blessings that are ours from Him. But yet as we live our lives here on earth, we live our lives with one eye here and one eye to eternity.

We have a loose grasp of the here and now in the knowledge that all that is in our hand can be taken at any given moment. And as a reminder of this, are we not each and every week in our community as those whom we know and love are taken from us?

[26 : 29] Just think of a bride getting ready for her bridegroom. We know that the bridegroom loves the bride as she is, that she doesn't need to make any special effort, that he's going to marry her for who she is.

And it is not true that that bride makes a special effort for that meeting of her bridegroom. When that marriage is going to be consummated, she makes a special effort.

Not because she thinks that the bridegroom is going to love her anymore, but because she wants to give him her best. Friends, we are the bride. Christ is our bridegroom.

And yes, we know that Christ Jesus loves us just as we are, because our righteousness is in him, not in ourselves. He loves us just as we are, and we give thanks for that.

It is not true that as we wait for him, as we find ourselves here in time, we want to make an effort for him, waiting for him to come. We want to live lives that are bathed and fragranced in those eternal reality, lives that reflect a hope and a joy and a peace that goes so far and beyond the things of this world.

[27 : 52] We live in a world that is crying out for something, looking for something desperately to give them meaning and purpose, and they look to us as the Lord's people. Do we give them cause to think that what we have is not worth having?

Is it so that we are so consumed with ourselves that we fail to reflect the glory and the joy of our Savior and the hope that we have, the eternal hope that we have in Him?

We don't have that depressing thought tonight if we are a child of God, that depressing thought that this is all there is. The here and now, a few short years filled with joy and laughter, pain and sorrow, various different experiences.

How depressing would it be for us if that's all we had to lay hold of? I can't think of anything more utterly miserable and depressing, but that's not the hope that is ours as Christians.

We have something far greater that is ours. We cry out, do we not? When we think of this, even so come, Lord Jesus.

[29 : 17] Paul, the dark John, rather, did so. He did so because he knew that the second advent would herald that new heaven and that new earth.

He knew that the second coming would herald that day that he would be freed from this body of sin. He knew that that second coming would herald the day when he would physically see Jesus face to face and be made like him.

How then can we not tonight long for that day? What do we think that we have here that is better than that prospect? Friends, I fear and I include myself in all that I say tonight.

I hope you realise that, but I fear that at times we think that going to be with Christ or even that second coming is something fearful because what we have here is somehow better, that going to be with Christ we will be short-changed, that our eternal experience is something so abstract and strange that we don't really want it.

That's not the way it is. This is going to be a physical heaven, a physical earth rather, with physical bodies. This is going to be a life that is going to be lived, a life without end.

[30 : 38] It is not going to be in any way inferior to what you have here in time. Christ himself longs for that day.

This is also temporary. A speck on the landscape of eternity and Christ is longing for that day when his bride will be brought in with himself. What does he say in that high priestly prayer in John 17?

He says, Father, I desire that they also whom you gave me, maybe with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which you have given me, for you loved me before the foundation of the world.

He desires that we will be with him. He desires that we will behold, that we will see his glory. Yes, we get glimpses here and there through his word, through the fellowship of his people, but we have not seen his glory in all its fullness yet.

And he is longing for that day. But friends, I challenge you and myself with you tonight. Are you longing for it? Does it feature in who you are?

[31 : 53] Is it so that you make as much fuss if you like over this day that is to come as that first incarnation? Okay, as we think about these things tonight, it's true that our hearts are heavy.

And perhaps because of this, we are hesitant to pray this prayer. We're not keen on saying even so come, Lord Jesus, and there's a reason for that.

Because there are those whom we know, those whom we love, perhaps even in here tonight, who aren't ready for that great day. And so we're hesitant to pray that prayer for Jesus to come because there are those whom we desperately wish to see saved.

Their husband, their wife, their mother, their father, their children, their neighbors. And so as we look forward to that great second coming until that appointed time, we do cry, even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly in the power of your spirit and turn this community upside down.

Don't you long for that? Come in a tangible way to draw sinners to repentance. Come, Lord Jesus, oh, won't you come?

[33 : 25] Let's pray that. We can pray that. We ought to pray that. Because we know that there are those tonight for whom this second coming is anything but something to look forward to.

It's not a source of joy, but a source of fear. Tonight they're not saying come, they're saying stay away, don't come. Please do not interrupt my life as I know and love it here in time.

Stay away. I wonder are you saying that tonight? If you are, it shows that clearly you are not ready that you need to get your house in order.

Because if you do not get your house in order, dear friend, on that day, you are going to be crying out as Revelation 6 tells us, you're going to be crying out to the hills and the mountains themselves, fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

And I do not say this lightly. I do not say this because I enjoy it and I would rather not say it, but for a wrath this is going to be.

[34 : 48] What an eternal anguish this is going to be in hell itself forever, where truth will be realised too late.

Yet it needn't be so. John knew that it needn't be so. He longed as do I, as does every Christian whom you know. We long that every sinner would have this glorious hope.

What is John saying in his closing remarks? He says, he who testifies in these things says, surely I am coming soon. Amen, come, Lord Jesus, the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen.

Friends, if you all know the grace of the Lord Jesus, you too will be able to confidently and boldly ask the Lord to hasten the day when He will come to earth.

Maybe so for all of us gathered here tonight, young and old, we might not think we need God. We might think that our lives are far better without Him.

[35 : 57] Friends, you cannot be further from the truth. I've been there, I know what it's like to live a life without Him. I know what it's like to be attracted by all the world that seeks to give us, but at the end of the day, leaves us feeling empty and lost in this world.

We don't look to this day. When the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ would be with us all, that we would look to that day when He will come in the clouds and receive His bride to be with Himself.

Because, dear friends, He is coming. The question I leave you with tonight is are you ready to pray?

Lord our God, we know that in many ways these things are too deep for us to understand, but yet we know that they are real, they are real because they are truth, they are real because this is you at word and it will not return to you void.

It will accomplish that which you please. So we pray, O Lord, that even as we leave this building yet again this night, that we would, Christian and non-Christian, take these words to heart, that we would think upon them, that we would meditate on them, and that indeed they would lead us to seek all the more after Christ.

[37 : 57] So help us to be ready, help us to be ready for that great day, for we know not when it will come that we would make our calling and our election sure that we would seek the Lord while He is to be found, that we would call upon Him while He is near, and we give thanks, O Lord, that even this night you are near.

You are an omnipresent God, a God who is everywhere, a God who says to us, come unto me all you are, you labourer are at heavy laden, and I will give you rest, that we would know that rest for our souls as we go into another year on life's journey, for none of us know who will be here even this time next year, and so we pray, O Lord, that your word will be blessed and may it effect you to your dear unconverted friends here this night, and all to your glory.

Forgive us then, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.