

## “My Favorite Time”

REV. 22:12-21

Last words are very important to us. When someone speaks for the final time, people listen carefully to what is said because they know that the words will be significant.

P.T. Barnum, the famous circus showman, asked what the big show's gate receipts were at Madison Square Garden with his final words. He revealed what was most important to him.

Alisa Bonaparte, Napoleon's sister, was thought to be asleep by those in her room as they were talking about life and death. One remarked that there was nothing quite as certain as death. Everyone was surprised when Alisa opened her eyes and added *except taxes*. Then she closed her eyes and passed away, but she left behind a famous saying - Nothing is certain in life except for death and taxes.

Contrast these with the words of D.L. Moody from his deathbed to a friend. He said, *Soon you will read in the papers that D.L. Moody of Northfield is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. At that moment, I will be more alive than I am now.*

If we consider human parting words to be of special significance, how much more should we take note of God's final words to us. As God was concluding his revelation to us through the pen of the Apostle John in the book of Revelation, he ended with the words that we just read. These words speak of my favorite time, a time that none of us have yet experienced, but a time that will be more glorious than we can even imagine. There are 4 last words in God's final message to us that I would like to focus on with you this morning.

1. FIRST, THERE IS THE LAST PROMISE that is recorded in the Bible in God's final message to us- *Behold, I am coming soon* is repeated 3 times in this final chapter. In verse 7 - *Behold, I am coming soon*. 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*. And then in verse 20 - *He who testifies to these things says, Yes, I am coming soon*. This is the last promise that we have recorded in the Bible - Christ's promise to come again for his people - soon.

Now to our human way of thinking, Christ's promised return is anything but soon. Almost 2,000 years have now passed since this promise was made and Christ has not yet returned. We have a tendency to think that 2,000 years is not soon. But the word that is used here literally means *quickly or speedily*. It is not the length of time between the promise and the fulfillment that is being emphasized, but it is rather the manner of Christ's coming that is being referred to. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes back, He is coming quickly - soon. Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians that Christ's return will happen in the twinkling of an eye. *1 Corinthians 15:51-52*

*Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*

Now the obvious application to this last promise that the Lord Jesus Christ has given to us is that we must be ready at any time for our Lord's return. You can't do much in the twinkling of an eye. You don't have time to get saved in the twinkling of an eye. You don't have time to reconcile with a loved one in the twinkling of an eye. You don't have time to confess sin in the twinkling of an eye. You can't change the direction of your life in the twinkling of an eye. We have to be ready every moment of our lives for Christ's return in order to be sure that we will be unashamed at that moment.

Pastor Earl Kelly of the First Baptist Church in Holly Springs, Mississippi was preaching on the Lord's return in a message some time ago. Just as he quoted Matthew 24:27, *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.* At that moment when he finished quoting that verse a large spotlight in the rafters in front of the pulpit fell from its socket and shattered on the floor startling all the members of the congregation. Pastor Kelly seized the opportunity and said, *Christ's coming will be just as sudden and unexpected as the dropping of this light bulb, and just as shattering to those who are not Christ-centered.*

But even though the wording of the promise indicates mainly that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is going to be very sudden, there has never been a generation that has had more reason to believe that Christ's return will occur soon in a chronological sense than our generation. Jesus gave many signs to his disciples that would indicate his coming was imminent. Frankly, some of those signs were representative of almost every generation that has lived since Christ ascended back into heaven. There have always been wars and rumors of wars. There have always been nations rising up against nations. There have always been famines and earthquakes. There has always been persecution of God's people. There have always been false prophets and wickedness on the earth.

But there have been some unique developments in our generation that would indicate that God's program here on this earth might indeed be ready to move to its next step soon.

\*For the vast majority of the past 2,000 years Israel was not an independent nation nor did it appear that there would be any hope that she ever would be an independent nation again. Jewish people were literally scattered in nations throughout the world. But then in May of 1948 Israel became an independent nation again. And this tiny nation although few in number has developed and risen to be a dominant force in the world. Even though Israel is the 100<sup>th</sup> smallest country with less than a thousandth of the world's

population, she has contributed to the world far beyond her statistics. The cell phone was developed there, most of the windows XP operating system was developed there, the Pentium chip & microprocessor were designed, developed and produced there, voice mail technology was developed there, AOL instant messenger was developed there, Israel has the largest number of scientists, technicians, and university graduates per capita of any other country in the world, she has the 4<sup>th</sup> largest air force in the world, and a 100 billion dollar economy that is larger than every nation on her border combined. It is just phenomenal what this tiny nation of only 5 million Jews has accomplished. The nation of Israel had to become an independent nation for God's end time events to unfold – that now has happened.

\*As I mentioned last Sunday, a committed and dedicated group of Jewish believers in the O.T. Scriptures has now completed every article of furniture needed for a 3<sup>rd</sup> temple to be established and function and they are eagerly awaiting and expecting the soon coming of God's Messiah. There needs to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> temple for God's end time events to unfold. I receive a daily news summary on line from Israel called Arutz Sheva. This past Tuesday, a popular T.V. program called Tuesday Night Live in Jerusalem had a discussion on the Temple Mount area. Let me quote from the news report: "On Israel's most popular English T.V. show, Tuesday Night Live in Jerusalem, hosts Ari Abramowitz and Jeremy Gempel presented the absurdity at the entrance of the Temple Mount that Gentiles are allowed to enter freely while Jews cannot. The Jews of Jerusalem were asked to relate to the question: *Are we ready for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Temple?*" That happened just this past week. Notice, the question was not *is there going to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> Temple or should there be a 3<sup>rd</sup> Temple* but the question was *are we not ready for it to happen?*

\*When we were over in Jerusalem, we didn't have opportunity to watch much T.V. because there was only 1 television set in the mission guest house where we stayed for almost the entire time we were there. It was in the shared kitchen area. And it was programmed to only get 1 channel – the BBC world news channel. So, needless to say, we watched hardly any T.V. – which was a good thing. But once in a while, when we were eating breakfast, we would turn on to BBC world news to find out what was happening throughout the world. The BBC world news channel is really true to its name. Almost every nation that has newsworthy events is covered and all covered about equally. The U.S. doesn't receive any more airtime than any other nation. What amazed me in our time there was how interconnected the world has become and how what happened in one country would often influence what would then happen in another country. If the stock market in Asia dipped sharply, other markets would often soon do likewise.

I used to wonder how the nations of the world would unite under one world leader. After all, the nationalist spirit of nations historically has put them at odds with other nations. In the past, if one nation

accepted a leader, other nations predictably would be probably reject that leader just because of their nationalistic spirit. But the world has become different in our day. The world is far more connected. And there are universal problems that affect every nation in the world. There are environmental issues and economic concerns and human rights matters that simply cannot be solved by one nation alone. It is far easier to see a single world leader emerging today as the Bible clearly prophesies than at any other time in human history.

\*And it is far easier to see that happening in a relatively short period of time than ever before. In this American Idol world in which we live (by the way, many countries are having their own version of American Idol today, a person can move from total obscurity to being a household name almost overnight. If I were to ask you who Barak Obama is just a couple of years ago, I doubt if any of you would have known who I was talking about. I didn't know who he was just a couple of years ago. He was an obscure local politician in the Chicago area. But now, just a few years later, he is President of the United States. There has never been a day when a person can rise so quickly from obscurity to universal prominence as today.

\*All of these and other factors that we don't have time to mention would lead us to believe that the promise of Christ's return will not only happen suddenly as predicted in the Bible but it could also happen in a short time chronologically as well. Certainly Christ's promised return could happen at any moment and it shouldn't surprise any Christian who knows the Bible at all.

In the 260 chapters in the N.T., there are 318 references to Christ's second coming. For every prophecy of the first coming that was fulfilled, there are 8 promises that Christ will return again. And Christ's last promise to us is that He will return soon, quickly, in a flash. We had better take that promise very seriously. But we must move on to the 3 other parts of God's last words to us.

## 2. NEXT, WE HAVE A WARNING ABOUT GOD'S PROPHECY - 22:18-19

*<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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.*

As God completed his revelation to us, He was very careful to warn us about adding to or taking away from His word. Now I know that there are many who say that these words refer only to the book of Revelation because the entire canon of Scripture was not put together in a book such as we have at the time when John wrote these words. And certainly this warning is made specifically to this book that John is writing. But God knew that Revelation would be the final book added to the canon. And God knew that

Revelation would have its final resting place as the last book in the Bible. So I think that these words carry special significance as a warning to those who would dare tamper with the entirety of God's inspired word.

We are living in a day when people are feeling free to take great liberties with God's word to us. We already have gender neutral translations of the Bible and politically correct translations of the Bible - as if God the creator of all things were so insensitive that he couldn't have foreseen the embarrassment that His word would be to our enlightened generation today. Now I just heard of a translation of the Bible that has removed all references to God because that might be offensive to some people.

Now there is nothing wrong with making a translation of the Bible into the language of a people as long as we seek to give as accurate a rendering as possible for God wants people to know his word and be able to read his word. That's the reason for God originally writing his word in Koine Greek rather than Classical Greek. Koine Greek was the trade language; Classical Greek was the language of the scholars. God desires to communicate with us through His word. How thankful we are to have copies of the Bible in the English language so that we can all study it without having to learn Hebrew and Greek.

But least we take liberties in placing ourselves in judgment over God, He also sternly warned against adding to or subtracting from his words. In fact, this is the last warning that God gave to us - do not add to or take away from my prophecy.

3. But let's move on to LOOK AT THE LAST PRAYER - 22:20

*He who testifies to these things says, Yes, I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*

What a great prayer this is. It's not one of the longer prayers in the Bible. It's only 4 words. It's not the most eloquent prayer in the Bible. It even has the amen at the beginning instead of at the end. We all know that this is not proper prayer etiquette. But this prayer showed the heart of the Apostle John. The oldest of the Apostles. One who had walked with the Lord Jesus Christ probably when he was just in his late teenage years. John had witnessed the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord. And then John had seen all of the original disciples go one by one until only he was left. And now at least in his 80's, possibly in his 90's, John was still eagerly awaiting the return of the Lord.

The Apostle Paul wrote of a special reward that God has reserved for those who live their lives eagerly awaiting the Lord's return. *2 Timothy 4:8 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

One of the best prayers that we can pray is *Come Lord Jesus*. It is one of the best prayers because it's the last prayer in the Bible - so it must be an important one and it certainly is a Biblical one. It is one of the

best prayers because those who long for the coming of the Lord have a special crown of righteousness awaiting them. And it is one of the best prayers because it will keep us focused on what is most important in life lest we become sidetracked by all the temporal pleasures of the world that the enemy loves to use to distract us.

#### 4. FINALLY, LET'S LOOK AT THE LAST PROVISION - 22:17

*Revelation 22:17b*

*Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

Isn't it just like God to end his revelation with an invitation to drink freely of the water of life. The invitation is to whoever is thirsty and whoever wishes. Anyone who recognizes his or her spiritual need is invited to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, the fountain of living water to have his spiritual thirst finally quenched. I can't help but think that the Apostle John must have gone back in his mind to that memorable scene at Jacob's well when he originally penned these words. John was the only gospel writer who recorded Christ's meeting with the woman of Samaria. After the Lord had sent the disciples away into town to buy some food, he initiated a conversation with this Samaritan woman who had come to Jacob's well to draw some water. And after asking her for a cup of water, Jesus excited her curiosity by saying, *If you only knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. John 4:10.* The Lord Jesus went on to say, *Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. John 4:13,14.*

Christ's heart was to share God's truth with people so that their spiritual thirst would be forever quenched. John came back from town to find Jesus talking to this Samaritan woman some 70 years before he wrote the final words in the Bible. He found out what they had talked about then and recorded it in his gospel account. And now, God's revelation ends with a similar invitation. Whoever is thirsty and whoever is willing, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Water still flows from Jacob's Well today. It has flowed for almost 4,000 years now since the time when Jacob lived. There is a Christian businessman who makes soap from pure olive oil using water from Jacob's well. I used some of his soap this morning when I showered. So God's invitation to drink freely from his water of life has been offered to every generation and we have the assurance that God's well of forgiveness will never, ever run dry.

On the American side of the Niagara Falls, between the face of the precipice and the great overleaping sheet of water, there is a vacant space called the Cave of the Winds. For a fee, a guide will give you a rubber

raincoat and then lead you slowly until you literally find yourself under the falls. Just before you, thousands of tons of water are rushing down, with thunderous roar and blinding splashes of spray and mist. If you were just a few feet out under the water, you would be crushed to death with its savage impact. But though you are standing in a spot of seeming peril, you are perfectly safe for the great veil of watery death passes right by you and spends its fury on the rocks below.

So it is with the one who is safely covered by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the righteous wrath of a holy God, sin must be punished. The perfect character of God demands that every transgression be paid for in full. But the one who has trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ stands safely under the shed blood of the Savior. For Jesus suffered God's wrath for sin upon the cross of Calvary so that all of those who trust in him can be safely covered by his blood. Those who reject his spiritual protection must of necessity suffer the wrath of a holy God. But it is not God's will that any should perish. So he freely invites all who are thirsty and all who are willing to drink from the well of his salvation that will satisfy their spiritual thirst forever.

\*A final promise from the Lord Jesus Christ - I am coming back quickly and my reward is with me

\*A final warning concerning God's prophecy - do not add or take away from the inspired word that I have given to you.

\*A final prayer - Come back, Lord Jesus

\*And a final reminder of God's provision - Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.