

***Responding to the Apocalypse***

***Stay Calm and Pray***

Revelation 22:20

July 19, 2020 am

HDBC

**In recent** years there has been a growing interest in the apocalypse. Movies, books and TV shows repeatedly include apocalyptic themes. End of the world, destruction of modern culture, return to some primitive form of life. Everything from **biological contagions to nuclear destruction to alien invasion**.

**This is not completely new.** TV shows like ***The Twilight Zone*** and others have often incorporated apocalyptic scenarios in their programming. Stories like ***War of the Worlds*** and shows like ***The Walking Dead*** have peaked our imagination.

**The current** coronavirus situation has caused some to wonder if this is part of some apocalyptic era that we are soon to be entering. You can find videos, blogs, and more declaring that the end is near. Now, to be candid, I don't know what the immediate future holds. I don't know if we are about experience the end of the world as we know it. I don't know if the events depicted in the last book of the Bible are going to come true in our life time.

**But I do know this!** The best way to respond right now is to ***Stay Calm and Pray***. We even have an example of what to pray. We can pray the same thing John, the apostle prayed, when he saw the world coming to an end.

**It is one of the shortest prayers in Bible.** But its significance is not diminished by its length. **This was during a time of great persecution.** Jerusalem has been destroyed. Believers have been scattered. Many were losing their lives for their faith. The world was one of great danger for Christ-followers. They were singled out for terrible atrocities throughout the Roman empire. Many were tortured and some killed in barbaric ways. It was in this setting that John prayed.

**More specifically,** John prayed this after his panoramic view of the second coming of Christ and the events surrounding it. John was an old man. He had been exiled to the Island of Patmos. He was focusing on the Lord on a Sunday, when he received this incredible vision of future events. He saw famine, destruction, bloodshed, persecution; unimaginable heartache. He saw ***The***

**Apocalypse**, literally. That is the word that is translated **The Revelation** which is the name of the final book of the Bible. So, how did John respond to the Apocalypse? He stayed calm and prayed. And notice what he prayed.

Read Text. I want to point out four things about this prayer.

### 1. It was Simple

Some of the greatest prayers uttered in history have been prayers that have been short and simple. They usually come in the heat of battle, when there is no time for lengthy, wordy praying. They are sincere, heartfelt, and powerful. They most accurately reflect the true feelings of the heart.

**I am not** impressed by long prayers. If they are long because they need to be long, that is fine. But often when prayers are long it is because the person praying is trying to impress those around. **I've been in enough public meetings where various pastors have been asked to come to the stage to pray, to know that this happens.** I can assure you that God is not impressed by the length of our prayers.

### 2. It was Biblical

To pray this prayer is to agree with Scripture. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is coming again. And in this case John is praying in response to the clear promise of the Lord Jesus. Three times in this last chapter of the Bible we find Jesus saying that He would come.

Verse 7 *And behold, I am coming quickly.*

Verse 12 *Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me . . .*

Verse 20 *He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly.*

John response confirms his believe in three Biblical truths.

#### A. Confirms His Belief in a literal return of Jesus

Some might want to spiritualize the teachings about the return of Christ. This prayer proves that this is not what John believed. **He clearly is looking for a literal, physical return of Christ.** If he did not believe in a literal return, this prayer would be meaningless.

**The second** coming motivates and encourages us. It gives us hope. This is why **Satan** works really hard to get us to deny or at least forget about this great future event. But listen to the testimony of Scripture.

Matthew 10:23 *Jesus said whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next, for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel **until the Son of Man comes.***

Matthew 16:28, *Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death **until they see the Son of Man coming** in His Kingdom.*

Matthew 24:29. *Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky, the powers of the heavens will be shaken and then the sign of the **Son of Man will appear in the sky.** Then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, they will see **the Son of Man coming** on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.*

John 14, *I'm going away to the Father's house to prepare a place for you. And if I go **I will come again** and receive you to Myself that where I am there you may be also."*

Acts 1:11. *This same Jesus who is taken from you **shall so come** in like manner as you've seen Him go.*

**Even a casual reading of the New Testament** reveals that Jesus is coming again. In almost every book of the New Testament there are references which point to this. Those first generation believers fully believed he would come again . . . soon. John was no different.

## **B. Confirms His Belief in the imminent return of Jesus**

This prayer confirms John's belief that Jesus COULD come at any time. Some have taught that there are things preventing Jesus from coming. John did not believe there were a series of events that HAD to happen before Christ could come. This prayer shows that he believed Jesus' return could be anytime.

### **C. Confirms his belief in the positive impact of the return of Jesus**

John believed the return of Jesus would make things right that had been so wrong for so long. He saw it as the ultimate solution to the brokenness of the world.

**It was** the most important event to come. It would set in motion the fulfillment of the promises of eternal life, heaven, rewards and deliverance from sin, suffering and heartache. For John, and for all believers, the return of Jesus was something to anticipate with great joy.

### **3. It was Personal**

Remember that John was one of the 12. He was one of the three who were closest to Jesus. He described himself as the one whom the Lord loved. Possibly no other person on the planet had a more intimate relationship with Jesus, than John. Jesus was his Lord and Savior, but also his friend.

**John** was probably the last of the apostles to die. He has waited longer than the others to see Jesus face to face. They've come to see Jesus through their deaths. John anticipates seeing through His second coming. He longs to see that face, to hear that voice, to be together once again with his friend.

**Many** in the this room have experienced the death of a loved one. You live with the longing to see that person again. You may have a confidence that you will . . . one day . . . but you long for that day to come soon. That's how John felt.

### **4. It was Bold**

It was simple in that he was asking God for one thing.  
It was Biblical in that he was asking God to do what God had promised to do.  
It was personal in that John and Jesus were close friends.  
But it was also bold!

Think for a moment about what this prayer really is about. Jesus is definitely coming again. We have established that. And, we know that the **time-table for that return is fixed in the mind of God**. In this prayer John is asking God to set in motion all the events related to the ending of this earth and the beginning of the new heaven and new earth. Is he asking God to alter his schedule and move things up? NO!

**Keep in mind** that this prayer would have no effect on God's timetable. Think about it. If John's prayer could speed up the timing of the return of Christ, could not some other believer's prayer slow down the return of Christ? **John's prayer** was not an attempt to change the timing of Christ's return. So, what are we to make of this prayer?

#### **A. Affirmation of God's plan and purpose**

Did you notice something unusual about John's prayer? The ***Amen*** came at the beginning, rather than at the end of his prayer. The ***Amen*** was in response to what Jesus had just said. The ***Come Lord Jesus*** was John's way of saying he agreed with things that God planned to do. I'll mention two:

##### **1) Redemption of creation**

Remember the words of Paul in **Romans 8:18-22**. Paul indicates that all of creation is suffering under the weight of sin and is longing to be redeemed. This will happen only after the return of Jesus. The earth will be destroyed and we will enjoy a new heaven and a new earth, along with the New Jerusalem.

##### **2) Judgment on the wicked and banishment of Satan**

Remember, John has just seen an incredible vision of things to come. He saw some mysterious things. He saw some frightening things. He saw the wrath of God being poured out on the planet. He saw the ultimate defeat and banishment of the Devil. John's prayer includes an affirmation of God's judgment on people.

John has seen the final chapter. He has seen the ultimate victory through Jesus Christ. And John prays, ***Amen, come Lord Jesus.***

#### **B. Declaration of his personal readiness**

This was bold also because it indicates John's great confidence in his personal readiness to stand before God. John was saying, "I'm ready." No unfinished business hovering over my head. I've done all I was supposed to do. ***Lord, you can come now. Wow!*** I want to be at that point in my life. How about you? Are you there?

**This is the last voice** we hear from a man in Scripture. He is eagerly desiring physical, personal fellowship with the Lord. Contrast this with what we see in the Genesis 3. There we find the first man hiding from God because of his sin. So, in the beginning we find a man hiding from God. In the end we find a man asking to see the Lord. What changed?

**From** Genesis 3 to Revelation 22 we find the story of God's plan to forgive people. Because of what Christ did for us on the cross, we don't have to fear coming face to face with God. We can not only anticipate it, but long for it.

**Could you honestly** and sincerely pray this prayer right now and know that you are absolutely ready to meet Him? You can if you are . . .

- . . . Born Again
- . . . Walking in Obedience
- . . . Understand the Impact that it will have

**Imagine that** you are living in an older home that shows the wear and tear of history. Floors are scuffed. Walls are marked up. Plumbing backs up from time to time. This house wears the scars of many decades of service, but it still provides you with an adequate place to live.

**One day** the original builder and owner of the house shows up. We'll call him Mr. Smith. He looks at the house and then shares some good news. He tells you that he is going to fix up the house. In fact, he tells you he is going to tear it down and make everything brand new.

**You are excited!** You ask **When**. He simply says, **when I come back**. He walks out of the house down the driveway and disappears around a corner. That promise changes your whole perspective on the house. From time to time you find yourself gazing through the large living room window past the front yard and down the long driveway watching, anticipating and longing for the coming of the one who will make all things new. You remember the words of the future benefactor as he walked out the door the last time, I am coming again, soon. As you rehearse those words in your mind, you find yourself uttering your response, **amen, come!**