

## The Sixth Beatitude In Revelation

In chapter 22 of Revelation, we have the final words of Christ to the world. It contains two beatitudes and a strong warning. Part of the warning and the first of the two beatitudes are in Revelation 22:7.

- "Behold,
- I am coming quickly!
- Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Behold: The use of the word behold is an imperative or demanding statement. In the military or classroom, the one in charge might say something like, "heads up and pay attention." What follows is very important, as are all statements that affect our salvation.

I am coming quickly! Christ is coming, as we discussed in the third beatitude (Revelation 16:15). Here the timing of His coming is mentioned in the same ambiguous manner as that used of the timing of the thief's appearance. Like the KJV, ASV, BBE, NKJV, and NASV use "quickly," the ESV uses "soon" to define the timing. By comparing the parallel statement in Revelation 16:15, the emphasis is on the swift, unexpected, nature of the appearance. The thief does not announce his coming, so planning and preparation must be made to prevent damage from the thief. The Christ will come suddenly, declaring His approach. "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

It would seem that some disciples thought that Christ's return would be soon after Christ's ascension, and they were becoming anxious that He had not returned. To comfort them, Peter wrote to remind them of the longsuffering nature of God and the Christ (2 Peter 3:8-13). So the preferred understanding is that Christ's second coming will occur in a very short period, at the end of time. "... in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

There will be a great blessing for those found watching for His coming. When we review the promises made to people in the Old Testament, we see some very long periods of waiting and watching for Christ's first coming. From Eve (Genesis 3:15), over 4,000 years. From Abraham (Genesis 18:18), 2,000 years. From David (2 Samuel 7:12-16), 1000 years. Those who waited, believing in the promises, and obeyed the commandments, watched, and were rewarded. Hebrews 11 lists just a few.

Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book: This sixth blessing is like the first (Revelation 1:3) in content. It is like the third blessing (Revelation 16:15), in that these are Christ's own words spoken to John to be recorded so that all humanity can read and benefit from them. Christ calls them "words of the prophecy," meaning that they are words from the all-knowing God, telling us about things that will happen at a time known only to God. There is only one instance recorded when John is shown or told things that he could not write down for us, "...Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them" (Revelation 10:4).

Many false teachers say that these words are not to be altered because verses 18 and 19 places a curse on those who change them. They attempt to confine this curse to Revelation so they can change the rest of the New Testament with a clear conscience. But the Greek scholar Marvin R. Vincent says of this in his book "Vincent's Word Studies" "The book (βιβλίον) ... is also used to denote a division of a work, and is therefore appropriate here to mark the writings of a single prophet as related to the whole body of the prophetic writings." The comment also applies to Luke 4:17, where it refers to the writings of Isaiah. The implication is that the immediate blessing is said in reference to this writing of John, but the application is to all God-given writings from Genesis to Revelation. Each portion of prophecy revealed to one individual is incorporated into a collection of prophecy and delivered to humanity as the Bible, the complete unalterable scripture from God.

Therefore, to "keep the words of the prophecy of this book," means to keep not only this portion but the entire body of prophecy, from Genesis to Revelation. Moses, as he encourages Israel on the plains of Moab before they crossed Jordan told them; "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32). Jesus also rebuked the Pharisees for changing what God commanded: "... Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition" (Matthew 15:6).

The directions given to John specified that all writings were to be open for everyone to read. "And he said to me, 'Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand'" (Revelation 22:10).

It may not be today, tomorrow, or even thousands of years from now, but Christ's second coming will be quick, sudden, and unexpected by the world. But for those who watch and wait in faithful obedience, it will be the entrance into eternity and the blessings of heaven.