

# Famous Last Words

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] at the start is the last passage in the Bible. So that's on page 1250 of your church Bibles, Revelation 22, starting at verse 6. Page 1250, Revelation 22, starting at verse 6.

The angel said to me, these words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophet sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place. Look, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll. I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, don't do that. I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll.

Worship God. Then he told me, do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll because the time is near. Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong. Let the vile person continue to be vile.

Let the one who does right continue to do right. And let the holy person continue to be holy. Look, I am coming soon. My reward is with me and I will give to 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.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to go to the tree of life and may 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. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David and 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 take the free gift of the water of life. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll. If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this 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 this scroll. He who testifies to these things says, yes, I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

[ 2 : 5 1 ] Good evening, St. Silas. Thanks a lot, Andrew, for reading. And you can find an outline inside the notice sheet if you found that helpful. If we've not met, I'm Martin, the lead pastor here. Can people hear me? Yes, good? I can't, okay. So if your Bible's fallen closed, do get back to Revelation 22. It is the easiest Bible find we're ever going to have. You just start at the back. And let's ask for God's help. Let's pray. May the words of my mouth and the thoughts and reflections of all of our hearts be pleasing in your sight. Oh, Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen. So last words, as we've already heard. So just for fun, I've got some last words from books and movies. And you can see if you know what they are, okay? So here's the first one. There's no place like home. So, by the way, if you don't know any of these, that's fine. It's just, maybe it's just because I'm old or something. Okay. So, I know some of you knew that. I heard it. So that's from The Wizard of Oz, said by Dorothy. Next one,

Roads, where we're going, we don't need roads. Anyone know that one? That's Back to the Future from Doc Emmett Brown. Okay. Here's one from a book, All Was Well.

Jack Baird has got it. Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, as it ends checking in on Harry, 10 years after his battle with Voldemort. I had another book. Actually, I don't have it on the screen. I'm going to go for it because we're on a roll. What about this one? It is a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done. It is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known. Yes, that's it. Great work, David Yorston. And I heard it down here as well from Phil.

Smashed it. A Tale of Two Cities, if you didn't hear that. Sidney Carton at the end. A couple more movies. The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he did not exist. And like that, he's gone. Usual suspects. Next one. Hang on a minute, lads. I've got a great idea.

That's from The Italian Job. You're so good at this. Yeah, you should have played your joker. So that's Charlie Croker in The Italian Job. And last one. The name's Bond. James Bond.

[ 5 : 35 ] Casino Royale was the movie where it was his last words. Now, by the time you get the last words in a book or a film, you tend to already know, don't you, how the story ends. But the writer wants to leave you thinking about something. And tonight, that's where we are in Revelation. The Bible tells one big story. It's one big book. It's by 40 different human authors. But the Holy Spirit inspired them so that God got what he wanted in his book for us. We can have confidence in that. I mean, you see that in verses 18 and 19 there, just at the end there, just to reassure us that this is God's faultless word delivered down to us. And if you've been with us in Revelation, Revelation means uncovering.

And it's uncovered for us spiritual realities about now and about the future. And in the last few chapters, that uncovering has been about how the story of our world will end. So from chapter 19, we know now there will be a glorious victory for God against evil. As John saw Jesus as this magnificent, pure, mighty warrior riding forward out of heaven on a white horse called Faithful and True with the mark, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And he comes to destroy evil forever. It's going to happen. Chapter 20, we learn there'll be a great judgment for the whole world. Only those whose names are in the book of life, Jesus' people, will go on to the new creation. The rest will face judgment. And then with what John describes in chapter 21 as the new creation, and he describes it as the new Jerusalem, we're given a promise that there will be a renewed cosmos, the new heaven and the new earth, where God describes, God wipes every tear from our eyes, and there'll be no more death, no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain. And God comes to live with his people forever. It's going to be like Eden from Genesis chapter 2 that was spoiled, but it is better than Eden. And the Spirit says to us through

Revelation, make no mistake, that is how the story will end for our world. So we know the end of the story by now. What does God then choose as his last words? Our first point tonight, the Bible ends with a promise. Look, I'm coming soon. That's our big idea tonight. I don't know if you noticed that as Andrew read it for us. We'll see it three times. Look down at verse 7. Jesus says, look, I'm coming soon.

Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll. Verse 12, look, I'm coming soon. My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. And then across at verse 20, he who testifies to these things says, yes, I am coming soon.

Jesus wants us to build our lives on this, to know, bet your life on it, he's coming, and he's coming soon. He really will return. So look at the words of the angel, verse 6. The angel said to me, these words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place. In other words, this promise is as sure as all the prophecies of the Old Testament that we can see already from the Bible writers were fulfilled in the coming of the Lord Jesus, in his first coming. And when we find that we're struggling to believe that Jesus will come back soon, let's remember that God could have chosen anyone to give this revelation to. It came from God to Jesus to an angel, and he gave it to John. He could have given it to anyone, but it's striking that he gave it to John because John was an apostle. He was an eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection. Him and Peter and his brother, John's brother James, had gone with

[ 9 : 35 ] Jesus up the mountain and seen Jesus transfigured in glory and written about that. And so they're able to say we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. They got the best glimpse anyone's ever been given of what Jesus really will look like when he comes again. And so John has that credibility for us as an eyewitness of that event and then of the risen Jesus who appeared to him and to over 500 people alive again after he died so that we can have confidence that this revelation is true. And the angel assures John and assures us these are words you can count on. Jesus is going to come back. It really will happen and it will happen soon. We get that word soon in verse 6, verse 7, verse 12, and verse 20. And it's hammered home for us in the message in verse 10. If you just look down at verse 10, John's describing the angel and he says, then the angel told me, do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll because the time is near. Now that's very striking because when the prophet Daniel, 500 years before this, nearly 600 years before this, was given a prophecy about the end times, the times of like the end of the world, he was told by the angel who gave it to Daniel, seal it up because it concerned events that were still far away. Now the angel says, keep this scroll open because it's coming soon. Now that is not to be misunderstood. With the

Lord, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day. And knowing he is coming soon is not to say that we can kind of guess the date. But we are to live every day conscious that the Lord's return is imminent. And the reason for that is that the big difference from when Daniel was given his prophecy by the angel and when John was given this prophecy about the future is that this is now the next big thing that's going to happen in the history of the world. Sometimes I'll get a request from my kids asking that we do something or that I do something. Can we do something on Saturday? Last week, recent ones, Dad, on Saturday, could we play Throw Throw Burrito? Dad, on Saturday, can we do Park Room? Dad, on Saturday, could you help me build a model Mott and Bailey Castle for my school project?

Can we do that Saturday? Or Dad, loads of cracks have appeared in my room around the bedroom walls. Could you fix them on Saturday? Okay? And sometimes my answer is something like, I will do that. It might not be Saturday. So my intention is I'm going to do that. I would really like to play Throw Throw a Burrito with Rachel. I would really like to do a Park Room Bethany. I would really like to commission a structural engineer to work out why there are cracks on the bedroom walls of the rectory. Okay?

Collectively, we need to own that problem. But so my intention is honestly to do all of those things, to get to them. But there is a load of other things on that list that I need to get to first. So it may, there may be some delay in that. Now when God gave promises to the Old Testament prophets about the end of the world, there were still some big things on his to-do list. In Luke 24, Jesus, the risen Jesus, in the last chapter of Luke's Gospel, opens the mind of the disciples to understand the Scriptures, so the Old Testament. And he says, this is what is written. The Son of Man, sorry, the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day. And that's the story of Luke's Gospel. So all of that had to happen. And then Jesus goes on, saying what was written in the prophets. He says, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations.

And that's the story of Acts, Luke's second volume. So all of that had to happen. And Jerusalem had to fall in 70 AD. Jesus had promised that would happen. There was a lot to do before the times we now live in.

[14:04] But these times are the last days. And now, in terms of the big picture, there is one thing left. The return of Jesus. That's the sense in which Jesus says to us tonight, I'm coming soon.

Live your life today, every day, conscious of it. It could happen tonight. It could happen before we next meet. So we are to make the right decisions now, conscious it could happen any time.

I was talking to a guy in our church who said, I've started praying every morning. Help me to live today, conscious of Jesus' return. Help me to do that, Lord. So we're to keep going in our faith. In verse 11, the angel signs off by kind of reminding us not to get destabilized when people around us continue to reject Jesus. In verse 11, he says, let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong. The vile person continue to be vile. Now, he's not commanding them to do that. He's just saying, there will be people around you who are not going to turn back to God. But you stay on target.

Stay on target. Let the one who does right continue to do right. Let the holy person continue to be holy. Hold on to Jesus. Be faithful to him. So that's our first point. The Bible ends with a promise, I'm coming soon. Secondly, the Bible ends with the gospel. Let the one who is thirsty come. Now, last week, we looked at verses 1 to 5 of chapter 22, and Callum helped us with that. It was terrific.

And he said, when you get to chapter 2, verses 1 to 5, it's a bit like being a child in a massive sweet shop. It's kind of overwhelming because you don't know where to start. It's just so full of richness. And these promise after promises come in chapter 22, 1 to 5. We learn that it's going to be Eden restored. Those seven precious words in verse 3, no longer will there be any curse.

[16:12] And in verse 2, the tree of life is back that we had in the garden of Eden that we were banished from when Adam and Eve sinned. But again, what this is, is it's even better than Eden. So in Eden, there were four rivers. But now we only need one river in chapter 22 of Revelation. It says there's one river, and it's flowing out from God and the Lamb. And it's the river of the water of life. That's all that we'll need, that God is sustaining us. Now, how is it all possible? Well, Jesus will come back. In chapter 19, we saw that as this all-conquering warrior. And John has seen him as this magnificent rider on a white horse. And he's seeing him in chapter 22 reigning from the throne of the new creation. Verse 3, it's the throne of God and of the Lamb. But remarkably, he still calls him the Lamb.

Do you see that? In Revelation, he keeps calling him the Lamb, even though he's now risen and he's standing in glory and splendor on the throne. He's King of Kings. He's Lord of Lords. Why is he still the Lamb?

Because this glorious future is only possible and accessible because of Jesus' work at the cross. That he has come and lived the life we should have lived. And he's died the death we should have died.

And he's endured the curse so that he can lift the curse from our creation. And so it's that work that means that we can be welcomed and clean. If you look at verse 14, we get a promise of blessing.

We get seven blessings in Revelation. Verse 14, blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates of the city. Now we know from chapter 7 of this book that God's people who are wearing clean robes and have had them washed, they get washed in the blood of the Lamb. So it's as we come to Jesus in faith and we accept that his blood was shed for our sins and we receive that gift that it washes us clean so that we are resplendent, white, without blemish, free from sin, clean. We are not going to feel any shame for anything we've done.

[ 18 : 30 ] We won't feel any shame for what anyone else has done to us. Great comfort for many of us. Imagine how that will be. Being in a world that Jesus has made utterly perfect. There's no sickness, there's no sadness, there's no sin and you know you belong there because you don't feel any guilt and you don't feel any shame because you've been made clean by the blood of the Lamb. So who can inappropriately, such a wonderful hope? Well in Revelation we've had a lot of number sevens as God's number for fulfillment or completeness. We've had seven seals, seven trumpets, seven angels with seven bowls. We've had letters to seven churches and in this last chapter we get the word for come or coming seven times. Four of them about the coming of Jesus. The promise we looked at in our first point.

He says, I'm coming. But in verse 17 we get three of them as words of invitation. Have a look, verse 17. The Spirit, that's the Holy Spirit, and the bride, that's the church, the people of God, the Spirit and the bride say, come. And that the one who hears say, come. That the one who is thirsty, come. And that the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life. So who is this for? Who is entitled to this? It's for anyone.

If you are thirsty, know that here you can have living water. Whoever you are, whatever you've done, whatever you've become, are you thirsty? Come. That's the message. And this is wonderfully an echo of the prophet Isaiah. So we're just going to turn there now to see this. Isaiah chapter 53 on page 741. If we just turn back there, keep a finger in the last page of the Bible. And page 741, we see Isaiah 53.

And if you're reading Isaiah, you get to chapter 52 and there's this incredible tension that's built up of just not understanding how God is going to keep promises of comfort to a sinful people.

And then you get to chapter 53 and we see the promised work of Jesus on the cross. So if you look at verse 5 at the bottom there, but he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on him. And by his wounds, we are healed.

[ 21 : 17 ] Verse 7 there, he's led like a lamb to the slaughter. And then God raises him after his sin-bearing death. So verse 11, it promises, after he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied.

By his knowledge, my righteous servant will justify many. So that's what's going on in chapter 53 of Isaiah, 700 BC, but promising Jesus coming and dying on the cross. And then if you just look across to chapter 55, we see the result of the servant's work is an invitation to the world. Verse 1 of chapter 55, come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters. And you who have no money, come buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Then the appeal to come to our senses in verse 2, why spend money on what is not bread and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me and eat what is good and you will delight in the richest affair. And it's a call to turn back to God.

So we see that in verse 6, if you look down, he says, seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord and he will have mercy on them. And to our God for he will freely pardon. So if you were giving a speech and it was a really long speech, you're giving a talk somewhere, a presentation, and it was really long and you were concerned that you'd said the most important bit in the middle and people might have forgotten it. What might you do?

You might say the really important thing at the end again, might you not? That would be an effective speech that at the end you say, look, if there's one thing I need you to remember, don't forget, it's this. And then we turn to the last page of the Bible. How wonderful then that the thing that God comes back to is that offer of Isaiah 55. Let's turn back there again now where he says, come, let the one who is thirsty come. Here is the living water. It really is free. Remember what Jesus has done.

This is about grace. Isn't it extraordinary that this is the message of the Bible when just the guys all around us, people walking past Park Road and Gibson Street tonight, what do they think that the Bible has in it? They think it's all commands, they're all rules.

[ 23 : 50 ] And it's this invitation. Here is living water. It really is free for you. If you're here tonight and you're still looking in, could tonight be the evening for you where you say to God, I would like to accept your free gift of the water of life and turn back to God. Today would be a great day to do that. And notice in verse 17 who is doing the inviting, that it is the Spirit-empowered church.

This is our mission that the Bible kind of charges us off with as the people of God. We're equipped to do it by the Spirit. If you want to experience the power of the Spirit in your life, if you want that experience, tell people about Jesus as the Spirit equips us to share that invitation, inviting them, come back to God through Jesus. And maybe the language here is one example that we have of maybe shaping the way we sometimes talk about our faith, that we could put how we became a Christian, when we get that opportunity to share it with someone, a bit like this. Well, I realized that I was thirsty, that actually the things in the world that people live for and that I was living for, what I was experiencing was that I was thirsty. And what I discovered is that what Jesus offers us is living water from God, our maker, that is the one thing that will satisfy that first. And it's a promise for now and it's a promise that ultimately is for the future with him. So this is a great overarching purpose for our lives, a mission to make Jesus and his invitation known. The Bible ends with a promise, the Bible ends with a prayer, come Lord Jesus. Have a look with me at verse 20.

He who testifies to these things says, yes, I am coming soon. Amen. Come Lord Jesus. So there is the prayer in response to God's promise. This is the faithful response of God's people to God's promises.

And for early Christians, this became the way that they would greet each other. Instead of saying, shalom, which was the customary greeting, peace be with you, Christians started saying, maranatha, which was the colloquial language, the Aramaic for, come Lord, that prayer, come Lord Jesus. It's a deeply subversive prayer when you're ruled by an empire as they were to know whatever this emperor decides to do. Our confidence for the future, to put this world right, is rooted in our king coming back. Come Lord. So it's a subversive prayer.

It's a comforting prayer in affliction that when things are really difficult, the prayer, come Lord Jesus, reminds us it's not going to be like this forever. He has said he's coming soon. And it's a faithful prayer because it demonstrates that we're not living for the things of this world. We're yearning to be with God. We're longing for him. And we remember that we're on our way to be home with him. In the letters to the churches that we saw in chapters two and three of Revelation, we saw that one trap we can fall into in the Christian life is just to grow sleepy, to fall out of love with Jesus, to drift from him, to drift from dependence on him. Well, if the prayer that marks our every day is, come Lord Jesus, then it keeps you awake. It keeps you looking forward, watching for his return. And in Revelation, we've seen how intoxicating the world can be. It was described as this great prostitute, Babylon.

[ 27 : 47 ] And the faithful Christian stands firm in that offer, that seduction, the lures of Babylon by praying, Maranatha, come Lord Jesus. Because we don't want to settle for Babylon. We don't want to be found thinking, I do hope Jesus comes back eventually, but I hope he doesn't come back quite yet because I'm actually really enjoying the world. Rather, come Lord Jesus. Our hopes for our lives and for the world are tethered to the promised return of the King. When loved ones around us get sick, or we get sick, come Lord Jesus. When we hear about Christians being persecuted in Nigeria, having their homes burnt down by Boko Haram, we can pray, come Lord Jesus. When we've given into sin and we feel properly rubbish about ourselves, come Lord Jesus. Change me. Bring an end to this. We've seen in chapters 21 and 22, he's going to put everything right and he's going to make us right. And whatever we've gone through, we're going to be with him forever and that will be more than consolation. And as we finish, I think there's another seven in this epilogue that might just move us to keep praying this prayer deeply in our hearts. Come Lord. And it's that there are seven names of Jesus in this epilogue. Jesus is the Lamb in verse 3 and he's the Lord in verse 21.

He's the one who's given his life, slain for our sins, who is now risen and one day every knee will bow to him. The Lamb and the Lord. In verse 13, we get three names or titles for him. He says in verse 13, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Three titles that confirm it is Jesus who will last forever. He's sustaining creation now and he will collect it at the end and he will put it right. He's in charge of history. He's the beginning, he's the end and he'll never change.

So he will be good for his promises. And then in verse 16, we get two more names. Verse 16, he says, I am the root and offspring of David.

He is the offspring of David because God promised David in 2 Samuel 7 that he would have a descendant that would reign forever. And so Jesus has to be the offspring of David, the one in David's line that would reign forever. But he's also the root of David because he comes before David because all things were made through him. So he was David's Lord and David's creator as well. He is God himself, the root of David, and he's God's forever king, the offspring of David.

[ 30 : 45 ] David. And then he says in verse 16, I am the bright morning star. I went for a run one morning on holiday in Lanzarote and I was running in the dark and it was a bit scary because it was really dark. Like I couldn't see properly the road and things, but I knew that dawn was coming. And as I ran, I turned back and as I was like on my way back, the morning star was up in the sky. And when you see the morning star before dawn, it is brilliantly bright. It's very obviously the third brightest object in our sky.

It's not actually a star, is it? It's Venus, right? So it's kind of, that's why it's so prominent. It's so near and it's reflecting the sun before the sun comes up. And so when you see the morning star in the sky before dawn, it's a picture of brightness, of glory. It's a picture of nearness. The reason it's so bright is it's so near. And it's a promise that dawn is on its way. It's coming soon. And that's what Jesus is for us now, day by day. He's bright. He's the light of the world. He is the shining glory of God in our dark world, lightening our lives, lightening our path, displaying God's brilliance in his face.

He is near. He is with us now. And knowing him, experiencing life with him, confirms for us that the dawn is on its way, the day that he appears in glory. He's worth waiting for. Let's pray together.

Amen. Behold, I'm coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. We trust your promises, Lord. We thank you for the gift of this book, Revelation. And we pray that you'll continue to use it in our lives. May we be people who come to you, who come back to you every day. Faithful people refusing to fall for Babylon's seduction, Lord. Keep us from it. Embolden us that we wouldn't be scared in the face of Babylon's threats to us. And may we keep others going around us with words of encouragement. May we invite still others to come without cost for the water of life. And as we come to the Lord's table together tonight, may you strengthen us spiritually and keep us firm in our hope of your heavenly banquet.

For your name's sake. Amen. We're going to share the Lord's Supper shortly. Amen.