

Jesus - The Coming King

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading comes from Revelation 22. Please follow along in your bulletin or on the screen. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, brightest crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city.

Also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads, and night will be no more. They will need no light of the lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

And he said to me, These words are trustworthy and true, and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.

And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things.

[1 : 18] And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me. But he said to me, You must not do that. I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers of the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book.

Worship God. And he said to me, Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.

Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has 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, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers, and the sexually immoral, and murderers and adulterers, and everyone who loves the practices of falsehood.

I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the roots and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.

[2 : 38] The spirit and the bride say, come. And let the one who hears say, come. And let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to them, God will add to them the plagues described in this book.

And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

He who testifies to these things says, surely I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

Amen. This is the word of God. Great. Thanks, Justin. Let's just pray very briefly before we dive in. Heavenly Father, as we come to your word this morning, we want to hear from you, God.

[3 : 38] We are not interested in the opinions of man, not even my opinions, count for anything, God. And so I pray, Lord, if anything that I say is not of you, I pray to fall in deaf ears. I pray it will take no root in our lives, God.

May it just fall away. But Christ, as we look at your word, we pray that your word will speak to us.

And so, Holy Spirit, we ask you to come and take the words in these pages and the words from the sermon, God.

And what is of you planted deep in our hearts, God. I pray it won't just be an interesting talk that goes in one ear and comes out the other. But Christ, we want to encounter you in your word.

And so we ask you to come and speak to us from your word. We want to encounter you. We want you, God, to conform us to your image and to put your hope of the gospel in our hearts. So we ask you to do that in your wonderful and powerful name. Amen. Amen. Okay. If you don't know me, my name is Kevin. And we, for 14 weeks, have been working through the book of Revelation.

[4 : 37] And we are on the final chapter and the final chapter of the entire Bible, which is quite amazing. And very grateful to be here. So well done for sticking out this time.

I think for some of us it may have been tough. But I hope it's also been good and encouraging in some ways. Now, remember, the book of Revelation is not some mystical secret code book about how the end of the world is all going to happen, telling us the certain events of what's going to take place here and there and the signs and presidents, etc.

That's not what the book of Revelation is about. But the book of Revelation, 90% of it is actually an encouragement to the first century believers, as well as to us, to live lives that are fixed and focused on Jesus, to endure hardship and difficulty and persecution for the sake of Christ, and to keep our eyes on Him.

It is an encouragement about how to face opposition and live lives of faith in the midst of a broken world. And so in Revelation, Jesus calls us to live with Him and for Him in this period between His first coming and His second coming, between the cross of Christ and the throne of Christ, in this period of the already and the not yet.

And only right at the end, chapters 20 and 21, do we get to kind of the end times stuff. And so last week we looked at chapter 21, which is one of the best pictures we have of glory, of what the world to come will be like.

[6 : 09] And if you'll remember, we said there are four things about the world to come, our heavenly home. We said it's going to be a physical world. We're not just going to be disembodied spirits floating on clouds, playing harps with cheesy smiles.

We will be physical bodies in a physical world with work to do and activity and culture and music and life. We said that in our world to come, all of the wonderful promises of the scripture will find their final fulfillment.

All the good things that Jesus talks about, we'll taste in reality in our heavenly home to come. There'll be no more tears, no more heartache, no more pain, no more anger and fighting and misunderstanding.

What a glorious world it'll be. And then we saw that one of the greatest promises in the scripture is that Christ will flood us with His love. Like a bridegroom floods His bride, His wife, with His love. Jesus will love us in that way. And we will experience and know true intimacy and true love. And that day, the longings of our hearts will be fully fulfilled in Jesus.

[7 : 17] And what a glorious day that will be. And then we saw finally last week that the most essential and precious and important and wonderful and glorious and majestic, and every other adjective you can think of about heaven is the fact that God is going to be there.

And not just in a corner somewhere. God's all majestic power and His presence and His infinite glory and His infinite worth and His beauty is going to be all pervasive over all of heaven.

There is not one square inch of all of heaven in which God's majestic beauty is not going to be all pervasive and touching and healing and radiating.

As one theologian said, it's not in heaven that we find God, but in God that we find heaven. And so heaven is going to be glorious not because of what's there or what's not there, but because of who's there.

Because Christ is going to be all pervasive. Okay, so that was last week. Now today, in the first section of chapter 22 that Justin read to us, is another part about our eternal home.

[8 : 29] And we're actually just not going to have time to get there. So I encourage you to read it and enjoy it. Read about the river of life and the fact that there's no more curses there. And we'll see God face to face.

But today I want us to focus on verses 6 to the end. And in many ways, John is bringing this whole revelation into land. Do you know what that phrase means?

Is that a South African phrase? If you bring something into land, it means you're coming to the end. Like an airplane is coming into land. John is bringing revelation into land. Okay, I don't know if that makes sense to anybody here.

But there you go. John is doing that. He's taken us on this incredible journey. And we've seen some amazing things. The curtain has been peeled back. We've looked at our lives from heaven's perspective.

We've looked at the world from eternity's perspective. And we have seen that Jesus calls us to a cruciform life. Which means that the shape and the form of our lives should take the shape and the form of the cross.

[9 : 28] That through death leads to life. Suffering leads to triumphantism. Or triumph. It's probably a better way of saying it. But we've seen that those who suffer because they follow Jesus are raised to life.

Jesus calls us to a cruciform life. We've seen that there is a devil, Satan. He's real. He wants to kill the faith of those that follow Jesus. But we've also seen that he's a defeated foe.

Jesus died and disarmed him on the cross. Jesus defanged him. And coming soon, Jesus will cast him into the lake of fire for all eternity. He is a defeated foe.

So we've seen that judgment day is coming. And we'll all be held accountable for the lives that we've lived. Jesus has shown us that we live in this already and not yet stage of life.

Jesus' kingdom has already come. But it hasn't yet fully come. It's the overlap of these two realities.

Satan has already been defeated. But he hasn't fully been put away.

[10 : 26] We live in this already and the not yet stage. And so in light of all this, Jesus has called us again and again throughout Revelation to be those that endure. Those that overcome. Those that conquer by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony.

And now John is going to bring this whole journey into land. There we have it again. Okay. Now, where does this leave us? Well, Jesus has one last thing to say.

He says, look at verse 7. Behold, I'm coming soon. I'm coming soon. In fact, Jesus says it three times. Verse 7. Behold, I'm coming soon. Verse 12.

Behold, I'm coming soon. Verse 20. Yes, surely I am coming soon. I'm sure we've all had multiple experiences when something you're really looking forward to just seems to take a long time to come.

I don't know if you, maybe you've planned for or saved up for this amazing holiday. And you can't wait for it to come. And it's a few months away. And it just feels like it's never coming.

[11 : 33] You ever experienced that? I don't know those of you that are in high school. In the final year of high school, it feels like high school is just never going to end. Right? And those exams just, they are looming.

They're coming quickly, but they're also coming so slowly. And just the final graduation just seems like it's never coming. I remember when we were in Cape Town, the previous church we were involved in, we had some good friends.

And they got engaged to be married. Exciting times. And they wanted to get married very quickly. Three months. They'd got the venue. They'd got the pastor. Three months they wanted to get married.

But there was a problem. The groom's brother was on some expedition to Antarctic. And some geological thing or something or other.

And there was no ship coming back for the next four months. And so he couldn't return. And so the groom's family were very upset about this quick wedding. Right? And they were saying, you've got to wait for your brother to come back.

[12 : 33] And so this young couple were very upset. And they came to see me, the pastor, and said, what should we do? How do we respond to our family? And I said, I think your family's right. I said, in 10 years' time, your relationship with your brother is going to be more important than the fact that, you know, you got married in three months as opposed to six months.

Just wait an extra three months. So it's not going to be the end of the world. And this couple looked at me as if I had just destroyed their whole wedding. I'd just torn it up and thrown it in the bin. Why? Because they were so looking forward to that day. And an extra three months felt like, what's the point? You might as well not even get married. You've just ruined the whole thing for us. Sometimes when we're looking forward to something like that, it can feel like that.

Again, I don't know if this happens in Hong Kong. In most countries of the world, when you go on holiday, you actually drive on holiday. I know in Hong Kong we generally fly there. But in many countries, you drive to go on holiday.

And if you've ever experienced that, you're driving on holiday with young kids. And it's a long journey. What do the kids in the back always say? Are we there yet?

[13 : 39] That's right. See, this is a worldwide phenomenon, right? All the countries of the world experiences. How much longer? Are we there yet? I remember as a kid going on holiday, we used to drive to the coast every Christmas.

It was a 10-hour drive. My grandparents lived there. And five minutes into the journey. Mom and Dad, how much longer are we there yet? Last week we spoke about the glories of this renewed heaven and earth.

This place where the majestic presence of God is everywhere. There are no more tears. No more pain. No more heartache. No more anger. No more stalemate because two sides can't seem to reconcile.

No more disappointment. No more agony. And Jesus says here, he's coming soon. He's coming to bring us there, to take us to a home. And sometimes it can feel like a 10-hour car trip to a three-year-old.

It can feel like, God, when's it ever going to happen? And we look back in the last 2,000 years since Jesus died and rose again, and we can feel like it's never happening. God, when are you ever coming?

[14 : 43] And Jesus looks us in the eye and he says, I know it feels like it's taking long. I know it feels like it's forever. Behold, sit up. Take note. I'm coming soon. Behold, I'm coming soon.

Now, why should we trust him? Why should we trust him? Well, look at what he says in verse 6. In verse 6, the angel says, these words are trustworthy and true. We've actually heard that phrase five or six times as we've gone through the book of Revelation.

Jesus' words are trustworthy and true. And the reason is because his words correspond, or Jesus is the one in whom everything corresponds to ultimate reality.

What Jesus says is true is ultimately true. Everything about him corresponds to reality. You can bank your life in what he says. These are not just the words of a political pundit.

These are not just the words of a New York Times columnist. These are not just the market commentary. These are the words of the one who later on says, I'm the alpha and the omega. The first and the last.

[15 : 46] The beginning and the end. You know, alpha is the Greek letter A. Omega is the Greek letter Z. I'm the whole thing. The A to Z. I'm the one who sees the entire perspective of the whole world.

You can trust me. These words are trustworthy and true. And so Jesus says, I'm coming. I'm coming soon. And let that shape our lives, the lives that we live.

You might remember the prayer that Moses prays in Psalm 90. He prays this amazing prayer. He says, God, teach us to number our days carefully that we may develop wisdom in our hearts.

In other words, God, teach us not to be presumptuous that we have all the time in the world. Teach us not just to think, oh, I've got this world covered. I know how life works. God, teach us to number our days, to have the right perspective on our lives, that we can develop wisdom in our hearts and know how to make wise decisions.

And that's why Jesus says, behold, I'm coming soon. Behold, I'm coming soon. Yes, surely I'm coming soon. Now, in the first century, the followers of Jesus really believed that Jesus was coming soon.

[16 : 55] Many of them believed that he was coming in their lifetime. In Philippians chapter 3, Paul writes, and he says, there are a bunch of followers of Jesus who once loved him and trusted him and obeyed him. But then something happened.

Something went wrong and their faith got derailed. And look at what he says. He says, their end is destruction. Their God is their belly or their appetites, their desires.

They've set their minds on earthly things. But, says Paul, for us, our citizenship is in heaven from which we eagerly await our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will come and transform our lowly bodies into his glorious resurrection body.

See, there's two ways to think. Our citizenship is in heaven. Jesus is coming. He's going to take us home. Well, actually, this world is our home. And when we think this world is our home, what happens? We get seduced by the appetites and the desires and the things of this world.

Or in Titus 2, Paul writes, and he says, because of the gospel, we are learning to live self-controlled, upright, godly lives in this present age. Our lives in this world reflect heaven because we await our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great Savior, Jesus Christ. [18:07] And so the first century Christians, for many of them, they lived with this anticipation. Jesus is coming soon. And that meant they lived lives of wisdom. They knew how to rightly order their lives.

They weren't seduced by tangents, but they could follow Jesus and trust him, knowing that he's coming soon and his words are faithful and true. And so that's what Revelation 22 is all about. Now, how does that shape our lives? In light of Christ's imminent return, what should we do with our lives? Well, I'm so glad you've asked that question. Revelation tells us three things. Three things. Now, I must confess, firstly, it tells us to keep faithful to Jesus in light of his imminent return. Keep worshiping Jesus. Secondly, keep witnessing for Jesus. Thirdly, keep trusting in Jesus' good gospel or the gospel of grace. Now, on the bus, on the way here this morning, or in the bus on the way here this morning, I decided to turn two and three around.

[19:03] So we're going to go with number two first. I mean two and one. Number two first, then one, and then three. Okay? So if you're confused, I'm sorry. That's how we're going to do it. Okay? So let's look at number two.

In light of Jesus' imminent return, keep witnessing for Jesus. Look at verse 10 with me here. Verse 10 and 11 are actually a direct quote from the Old Testament book of Daniel. And verse 10 says this. He said to me, do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Now, the Old Testament book of Daniel is, the second half is very similar to the book of Revelation.

It's apocalyptic. It's full of signs and wonders and beasts with horns. And much of Revelation is actually taken from the book of Daniel. And what happens here is towards the end of the Revelation, Daniel is told this.

Seal up the words. Shut up the book. Okay? He doesn't say shut up. He's saying close up the book. Seal up the words until the end has come.

[20:07] So Daniel's given this revelation about how the world is going to end. The evil kingdoms are going to be brought down. God is going to establish a kingdom of righteousness. And God shows him how it's all going to happen.

But Daniel doesn't understand precisely how or when it's going to happen. Okay? So Daniel's got some kind of insight, but it's vague in some ways. And so God tells Daniel, seal up what I've shown you.

Don't reveal it because there's some things that need to happen between now and that end time. And what needs to happen? Jesus needs to come. Jesus needs to come and bring his kingdom, die on the cross, rise again, and establish his kingdom.

But Daniel doesn't really get that. And so the revelation that Daniel's got, it's half fulfilled. It's not fully revealed to him. And so God says, seal it up. Hide it up.

Don't tell people, listen, the end is about to come because it's not about to come. Jesus still needs to come. I don't know if that makes any sense. Now in Revelation, Jesus has come.

[21:11] He's died on the cross. He's risen. He's defanged Satan. He's defeated death on the cross. Now the end is ready to come. And so what does Jesus say to John? He tells him the opposite of what he said to Daniel.

Do not seal up the words. Don't shut it up. Don't hide it up. Make it known. Previously, he says to Daniel, listen, the end's not ready yet. Seal it up. Hide it up. It's not time to reveal it.

But now is the time, says Jesus, to make it known. Let all the nations of the world, all the cities of the world, wherever you go, the furthest corners of the globe, let them know that Christ is coming and that the day of Jesus is soon.

Friends, Jesus calls us in light of his imminent return to keep witnessing to the wonder and the beauty of Jesus. This may be a new concept for some of us.

You may feel like it's the super Christians, right? They get to witness for Jesus. It's the pastors and those that work for the church and maybe the elders. Their job is to witness and evangelize.

[22:14] But for me, who's just an ordinary Christian, my job is just to not make their job harder, right? I've got to be a good Christian, hopefully be a good advert, and not try and mess up their job

by being a lousy Christian.

But friends, no, no, no. However, Jesus says throughout Revelation, the whole church, male and female, black, white, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, educated, uneducated, wealthy, not wealthy, the church are his witnesses, those that bear testimony to the wonder of Jesus.

Friends, throughout Revelation, God has called his church to do that. And how does it happen?

One, it's not through the professional pastors. It's not through those that work for the church. It's through the lives of the saints who have come to see Jesus and love him and had their lives turned around about him.

And this is what Jesus is saying. In light of my imminent return, don't seal up the gospel. Don't hide it any longer. Let it be made known. In your office places, let it be known that you're a Christian, that you love and follow Jesus.

In your student housing, let it be known that Jesus is the hope for you in the midst of this chaotic time in the universities. Friends, when there's conversations around protests and what's happening in our city, let people know your hope is in Jesus and his perfect justice.

[23 : 32] With your family and your friends, let them know that sin is a reality, that you're taking sin in your life seriously, but Jesus doesn't condemn you. He's given you hope. Let your word go out that Jesus is our hope.

And then look at verse 11. It says something very strange. It says, I don't know if you picked this up when Justin read. It says, let the evildoer still do evil. Let the filthy still be filthy.

Let the righteous still do what's right. And let the holy ones still be holy. What on earth is going on here? Essentially, Jesus is saying that how we respond to the gospel has eternal and unchangeable consequences.

Right now, there's a period of amnesty and offer. There's a time when as you take the gospel forward, people can still respond to Jesus and have their lives turned around. But friends, that won't be the case forever.

The way that people respond to the truth of the gospel determines their eternal destiny. To the one who hears and responds and rejects it, he's fixed in that. To the one who hears the gospel and rejects it and continues in his sin, he's fixed in that.

[24 : 38] To those who hear the gospel and respond in righteousness, they're fixed in righteousness and fixed in holiness. And so Jesus says, for those of us that are followers, he's coming soon. But in the meantime, in light of his imminent return, let's keep witnessing to the wonder and the beauty of Jesus.

Okay, so that was point two. That was actually point one. Now we're going to go to point one. That's actually point two. Are you tracking with me? Okay, great. Let's see if we can make sense of this.

Secondly, or firstly, somehow, in light of his imminent return, keep faithful to Jesus.

Keep worshiping Jesus. Look at what Jesus says here in verse seven. Behold, I'm coming soon.

Blessed is the one who keeps the words of this book. Behold, I'm coming.

Keep my words. Keep hold onto my words. I remember when I was a kid, I would come home from school and say 2.30 in the afternoon or so.

And from time to time, my mom would have to go run some errand, drop off something, pick up something. And she'd say to me, I'm going out. I'm coming back in an hour or two.

[25 : 43] Make sure you feed the dog, clean up your room, clean up the lounge. We've got some guests coming this evening, whatever it is, right? And I would say, yes, mom.

No problem, mom. Sure thing, mom. And what would happen? One minute in, I would find some soccer ball or a cricket ball or a rugby ball or a tennis ball, something around.

And that would seduce me. And I was drawn to this round phenomenon. And would end up spending time kicking the ball or throwing the ball or doing something, right?

And lo and behold, an hour later, I would hear the gate opening or the keys in the front door. And suddenly, my mom was back. And in three flat seconds, I would run around trying to fix whatever I had broken or clean up the lounge or clean up the room or feed the dog or run around trying to put right what I had forgotten to do.

Does that sound familiar? Now, these days, a strange phenomenon. Not much has changed, except it's not my mom. It's my wife, right? Claire will say, I'm going for a run.

[26 : 54] Barth the kids. And don't forget the chicken in the oven, right? It's got to come out in 20 minutes' time. Yes, love. Sure, love. I've got it. And you know what happens, right?

Now, wives, don't nudge your husbands, okay? It's not them. It's only me. I'm sure your husbands have never done that before. Look at what Jesus says here.

He says, I'm coming soon. Take note of my words. Keep my words. Listen to what I've said. Pay attention to my words. In chapter 1, Jesus said, blessed are those that hear these words and read the words of Revelation.

Here, he says, not just blessed are those that hear it or read it. Blessed are those that keep it. Friends, it's one thing to listen to the book of Revelation or listen to sermons about it. But Jesus wants us to keep the words that he says here.

Blessed are those who keep them. And what are these words? What have we seen? Well, we've seen that Jesus is the one true God. We've seen that he's worthy of our worship. We've seen that Satan is doing everything he can to pull us away from Jesus through false teaching and seduction and persecution and opposition.

[27 : 59] We've seen that those that are faithful to Jesus receive a rich reward, even though it appears like they're suffering. We've seen that they're martyred, but they rule. They suffer, but they rejoice. They're persecuted, but they are triumphant.

But then something happens here. Look at verse 8. Look what happens here. John shows us how easy it is to get seduced by good things that are not ultimate things. Look at verse 8. He says, Friends, even some of the good things in life, even God's good gifts to us, the blessings of God. It could be our job, education, our children's education. It could be the spiritual gifts that he gives us. It could be our children. It could be their promotion at work. Even things like an angel.

Good things have a way of taking our eyes off of the ultimate thing, off of who Jesus is. And God comes to us and says, In light of my imminent return, fix your eyes on Jesus.

Not on the good gifts that I've given you. Let those things point you towards the wonder of Jesus. Let Jesus be your delight and your joy and your object of worship and fascination.

[29 : 17] Friends, it's very tempting to even look to religion or spirituality to save you. Some people say, Yes, I'm a very spiritual person. I pray. I meditate. I go on retreats. I'm in touch with my spirituality.

Friends, those things won't help you in the day that Jesus returns. Look to Jesus. Worship him. Friends, are you looking to Jesus this morning? Friends, if you're a follower of Jesus this morning, is it possible that maybe like the Christians in Philippi, that our desires, our appetites have become our God?

They've become more important to us than who Christ is. Friends, is it possible that we might have set our minds on earthly things? Rather than being drawn to worship God, is it possible we're worshipping the good gifts that he's given us rather than Christ himself?

Friends, look to Jesus. Hope in Jesus. Turn to him in repentance if you need to. Confess your sin and adultery. And then delight in his amazing grace. Now, how do we do that?

How do we make sure that we keep Jesus forefront of our minds? Well, that brings us to our third and final thing. And that is this. In light of his imminent return, keep looking to the gospel of grace.

[30 : 31] Look at verse 12 and 14 with me. Jesus says this, Behold, I'm coming soon. I'm bringing my reward with me to repay each one for what he's done.

Okay? So Jesus tells us that he's coming and he's going to reward those that have been faithful to follow him in this lifetime. Those that have suffered with him and endured with him, he will reward us.

Remember in chapter 20, two weeks ago, said the same thing. He is going to hold us accountable for the lives we've lived and he will reward those that have been faithful. But the problem is that shouldn't lead us to self-righteousness or pride because the gospel tells us it's God's grace that enables us to be faithful in the first place.

So God comes and he rewards faithfulness, but it's his grace that helps us to be faithful anyway.

And think of how Paul writes this in Corinthians. He says, By the grace of God, I am what I am.

And his grace towards me was not in vain. Yes, I worked harder than all the other apostles, but actually it wasn't me. It was God's grace at work within me. Or think what he says in Philippians 2.

[31 : 37] He says, Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Follow Jesus, for it is God who is at work in you to will and to act according to his good pleasure.

Or in Titus, Paul says, God's grace teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live sensible, righteous, godly lives in this present age.

So it's God's grace that helps us to do that. So Jesus comes and he says, Listen, one day I'm going to reward you for your faithfulness. And what will we do? Well, we actually sang about it earlier. I didn't know we were singing about that. But Revelation 4 says, The elders, in other words, all of God's people, take the crowns off their heads. The rewards that God gives them. And they lay them down at the feet of Jesus and say, Jesus, even these rewards, even the good things that I did in my lifetime, actually it is all your grace.

It's all glory to you. All honor to you, God. I don't deserve the glory. Worthy are you, our God and King. In other words, friends, how do we become faithful followers of Jesus?

[32 : 39] We need to get the grace of God into our hearts. We need to be in awe of his gospel. We need to meditate on the truth that though we are sinners, Jesus loved us and died for us, and his grace needs to change us and transform us.

And so that's the second thing. Look at what happens in verse 14. He says, What on earth is going on there?

Remember in chapter 7, there's this vast multitude of people from every culture and language and tribe and nationality and black and white and Chinese, and we're all there before the throne.

And an angel comes and says, Who are all these people? And then another angel says, These are the ones who are clothed in white, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

What's Jesus talking about? He's talking about those that have come to him with their stains of sin and shame and guilt and had the stain removed because they've been washed in Jesus' blood on his death on the cross.

[33 : 42] Friends, the way we remain faithful, the way we become the people that God's called us to be, is not just by trying harder. It's not just by trying to be good Christians. It's not just by saying, I must do better.

It's by remembering the grace of Jesus that he died on the cross to wash us of our sin and our shame. There's an amazing verse in Romans chapter 2, and it says this, It is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance.

Friends, when you've done something wrong, and you feel guilty, what is it that's going to lead you to come before Jesus and have that guilt washed away and your conscience atoned for?

What's going to bring you to Jesus' throne once again? It's not his severity. It's not the fact that you think, I should be a better Christian. It's not your mom or dad saying, I can't believe you did this.

You know what it is? It's the kindness of God. It's the grace of God. It's the patience of Jesus towards you, that though you and I don't deserve his grace, he lavishly extends it upon us.

[34 : 43] He washes us white in the blood of Jesus. That's what brings us to repentance. That's what brings us to faithfulness. That's what makes us the kind of people that are going to endure this life and become the people that he's called us to be.

Friends, the entire gospel message, from the beginning to the end, the entire Bible, is that on our own, our sin condemns us. We stand accused, guilty as charged, and our only hope is to come to the hope and to place our hope and trust in Jesus and his death on the cross.

Do you remember that old hymn? What could wash away our sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What could make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Friends, the temptation in this life is to think, Jesus saved me and now I've got to work hard to make myself the person God's called me to be.

No, no, no, no. You look to Jesus to save you and you look to Jesus to sanctify you. You look to Jesus to become a Christian. You look to Jesus to grow as a Christian. Friends, I'm not just justified today.

Because of the blood of Jesus, I'm forgiven today and tomorrow and loved this week and until I commit my next sin and thereafter and for all eternity, I am saved, forgiven, loved because Jesus died on the cross for me.

[35 : 55] Friends, look to Jesus. Look to his death. Look to his bloodstained hands. Find your hope and confidence in him. Friends, what's going to make us the kind of people that are faithful to the end?

In light of Jesus' imminent return, look to him. Look to him who died to cover your sin, past, present and future. Look to Jesus who welcomed those that society and religious crowd thought were too sinful, too far gone.

Friends, look to Jesus, the one who said, anyone that comes to me, I will never cast out. Friends, look to Jesus, the perfect lamb who died so that the guilty could be pardoned. Friends, look to Jesus so that in this life you can be free from striving, free from religious guilt, free from needing to earn his love or acceptance, free from religious baggage.

Friends, look to Jesus who took your sin and your shame and your guilt upon himself so that you and I can be clothed in his robes of righteousness. Friends, this very week, today, tomorrow, Wednesday, Friday, each one of us are going to be tempted to look to ourselves for our justification and our self-worth and that is a dead-end street.

That's taking your self-worth and driving it off the cliff. You have a good week, you make that deal, you sign the deal, you get a promotion, you get a bonus and you're going to feel on top of the world. The next week comes, you have a lousy week and you're going to feel like depressed and rubbish. [37 : 18] Friends, don't look to yourself. Look to Jesus. Look to him. Book of Revelation ends with these words. He who testifies about these things says, yes, I'm coming soon.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, come. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with everyone. Amen.

Amen. Let's close in prayer. Lord Jesus, we confess, God, that we see you very dimly.

Like Paul says, God, it's like looking through a dirty glass window and we can sort of make you out but God, we look forward to that day where we see you face to face.

Oh God, we look forward to that day when you Christ return and you take us to be with you in the renewed heavens and new earth. God, where we are, we know you and we love you.

Oh Jesus, come. Come Jesus and heal our broken world. God, come and heal the aching and the agony in our hearts. Come, Lord Jesus, and remove the anger and the pain, Lord God.

[38 : 22] Come and wipe away our tears, God. Come and deal with our grieving and our mourning and our loss. Jesus, come we pray. Come we pray. But God, until that day I pray, teach us as a church what it means to live wisely.

Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Jesus, teach us to live in light of your imminent return. To worship you and trust you, not the good gifts that you give us.

To be faithful witnesses to your goodness and your grace and to trust your gospel, we pray. We pray these things in your wonderful and your powerful name. Amen.

Amen. Amen.