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Jesus will come soon, but when is soon? by Ben M.

Rev 22

If I said I'll see you soon when would you think that would be? A very important issue that we find in the scriptures is: 'How long is soon?' We've been looking at the last book of the Bible and we've come to Revelation chapter 22:6-21. Verse 21 is not only the last verse of chapter 21, or the last verse of the book of Revelation but it is the end of the Bible. So we've reached the end, the last word that God has given us. We will be making a very serious mistake if we don't take note of this signing off of Holy Scripture. We have read many deeply troubling and harrowing visions in this book but now we come to this extraordinary and hopeful conclusion. Although we have to pass through so many trials, the sense of future reward that we are presented with is so full of the hope of God's future plan.

How long is soon?

There is one question that this book has been moving towards and here it is in the last chapter. It deals with the personal bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of time: the wrapping up of history, the ushering in of the New Heaven and the New Earth, and all the plans God has for the world. The profoundly important question that people have asked down through the centuries is. 'When?' When is Jesus going to return? In this chapter this word, soon is repeated three or four times. In verse 7 "Behold, I am coming soon" This word soon is the sole unique piece of information that we need to understand about when Jesus will return. So, it seems reasonable to ask, after 2,000 years, 'How long is soon?'

Let's just go back and refresh our memories as we bring this series of study to an end. It will help us address this question of 'How long is soon?' Right from the outset we have this expression 'soon' in Revelation 1:1. '...what must soon take place.' In Revelation, Jesus visits John, the last of the apostles to be alive 30-40 years after they first met Galilee. He is sent back from Patmos to the temple in Jerusalem with a new message: (chapter 11) a warning to God's people to leave Jerusalem because destruction is coming soon. We talked about the window of 'peace when there is no peace' brought about by Vespasian's sudden return to Rome after the death of Nero, when Jerusalem thought they'd been saved. But, they did not take heed and 2 years later, in 70AD, Titus arrived to decimate Jerusalem. The message was urgent. The 40 years of grace passed its final deadline. This destruction was to happen soon. Those many Christians, who obeyed the warnings, evacuated the city and were saved. The sacrificial system came to an end because Jesus had made that final once and for all sacrifice for sin. Anyone who takes hold of that sacrifice by faith will be saved.

Where is Jesus?

John is the last apostle. The others are all martyred. Jesus said in Matt 24 that this generation will not pass away until all these things come to pass. These things must happen imminently because John is the last apostle left alive. However, one thing is left outstanding. Where is Jesus? Bound up in all this is the personal return of Jesus. 2,000 years later we still have not seen Jesus' return on the face of the earth. There has been a lot of excitement over the establishing of the state of Israel since 1948. Is this somehow related to these prophecies of Christ's return because all these things

are happening? The temple has not been rebuilt in the city, but the New Jerusalem won't have a temple. However, the streets are not paved with gold nor is there a river running down the centre of the city with leaves of a tree for the healing of the nations. Jesus is not sitting on a throne at the heart of the city of Jerusalem today. He is not worshipped or loved as Lord of that city. Eternal life will flow from his rule and there will be no more death. Sad to say, today's city of Jerusalem suffers daily death and destruction. When Jesus comes the city of this chapter will come with him based on the apostles teaching and lordship of Christ: no more death, suffering, tears,

Soon

Matthew 24:36 says, *"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."* All we do know is that the return will be soon. What do we understand by the word soon 2,000 years later? The Greek word used for soon is **tachel** meaning quick or suddenly, unannounced like a thief coming into your house at night. It is translated from the Hebrew **meherah** meaning quickly, inferring speed. Every time this word is used there is a sense of warning and imminent danger. You won't have time to think twice. We are warned but it will take us by surprise if we have not listened because it will happen suddenly. It will be a shock like a flash of lightning coming out from God. No time to change. We must be ready. Those in verse 11 will remain as they are, *"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."* When Jesus comes it will be so sudden that you will be caught as you are. There will be no time to adjust your attitude. You have to be already living that holy life to be caught in that moment of grace. In that moment we will be seen for who we are and we will be judged accordingly.

If we understand soon as suddenly we can look back over these last 2,000 years as a time of opportunity to get ready, to be prepared for that great and terrible day of the Lord's coming. Precious time has been given over and over again to "those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city." (Rev 22:14) Those who died prepared will be raised with him on the last day. Those who are not ready will still be in their vileness and filth, outside, unready.

Come

'The Spirit and the Bride say come.' (v17) Are you ready to meet the Lord? The consequences of not being ready is to find yourself outside the city eternally. How can you say 'come' unless you have that deep assurance that you are washed and ready? You can go quietly about your normal business knowing that you are ready because you know that your sins are forgiven and that you are walking with God. Are you thinking, 'don't come yet, I haven't done all the things I want to do. Don't interrupt my plans.' The grace of God prepares people for his return. I am a sinner. I can't help myself, I am incurable. Lord Jesus you carried the weight of my punishment on that cross. I will love you and be your loyal servant if you will let your blood avail for me.

Jesus is coming soon. Suddenly! Be ready to go with Christ into the new heaven and the new earth. I trust we will all be there together.