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"THE MORNING STAR" REVELATION 22:12-16

This Week's Core Competency

Eternity – I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish his eternal kingdom. John 14:1-4 *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.*

The cry of the first century church was "Come, Lord Jesus!" (1 Corinthians 16:22; Revelation 22:20). Their desire for and expectation of Christ's imminent return impacted not only their Sunday morning gatherings but their daily lives. Though some took their "imminent eschatology" too far (2 Thessalonians 3:11), most sought to allow the nearness of Christ's return to be motivation for living righteously: "So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:9-10). The New Testament writers urged believers to live in light of God's impending judgment. One's holiness

My greatest thought is my accountability to God.

- Daniel Webster

was intimately connected to the belief Jesus could return at any moment.

Much of our contemporary conversation regarding the return of Christ is devoid of reference to the judgment believers will face. This may, in part, be due to confusion over the difference between the "judgment of faith" and the "judgment of works." Randy Alcorn has provided a helpful clarification: "When we die, we face judgment, what is called the *judgment of faith*. The outcome of this judgment determines whether we go to the present Heaven or the present Hell. This initial judgment depends not on works but on our faith. It's not about what we've done during our lives but about what Christ has done for us. If we have accepted Christ's atoning death for us, then when God judges us after we die, he sees his Son's sacrifice for us, not our sin . . . This first judgment is not to be confused with the final judgment, or what is called the *judgment of works*. Both believers and unbelievers face a final judgment. The Bible indicates that all believers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of their lives (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). It's critical to understand that this judgment is a judgment of works, not of faith (1 Corinthians 3:13-14). Our works do not affect our salvation, but they do affect our reward. Rewards are about our work for God, empowered by his Spirit. Rewards are conditional, dependent upon our faithfulness (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 2:26-28; 3:21)" (Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, 47).

The Apostle Paul states that some Christians will live their lives in such a way that, though they will

cont. pg. 2

enter heaven, they will do so as one suffering loss (1 Corinthians 3:15). At the judgment, it will be manifest that their lives were filled with temporal things—things that made no eternal significance; things that are burned up in the fire of God's judgment. These Christians will suffer the loss of lives that might have been lived for Christ and his kingdom—something they can never get back. They will suffer the loss of eternal rewards including "increased responsibility, increased intimacy with God and an [increased] capacity to enjoy him" (Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 286).

With the potential loss of eternal rewards in mind, Christians ought to seek to "live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work" (Colossians 1:10).

For Discussion

You are part of a small group Bible study at church. Several of your friends are participating with you, including Donna. Donna has been a believer for several years and attends church regularly. When the topic of God's judgment of believers comes up within your Bible study, Donna pushes back strongly. She doesn't see how Christians could experience judgment if they have been "saved by grace." She quotes Romans 8:1 - "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ." Does Donna understand the full picture of God's judgment? What would you share with her? What verses might you use?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Revelation 22:12-16

12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

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 into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

16 "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."
(NIV(c)1984)

Cf., another translation

12 "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

14 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. 15 Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." (ESV)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Underline "soon" in v. 12.
- * Circle "reward" in v. 12.
- * Bracket "according to what he has done" in v. 12.
- * Highlight "the Alpha and the Omega" in v. 13.
- * Circle "blessed" in v. 14.
- * Bracket "wash their robes" in v. 14.
- * Circle "tree of life" in v. 14.
- * Bracket "may go through the gates into the city" in v. 14.

- * Circle "outside" in v. 15.
- * Bracket "the dogs....practices falsehood" in v. 15.
- * Bracket "testimony for the churches" in v. 16.
- * Highlight "the Root and the Offspring of David" in v. 16.
- * Highlight "Morning Star" in v. 16.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. If Jesus' words in Revelation 22 were spoken before the close of the first century A.D. and he has yet to return, how are we to understand, "I am coming soon"?
2. What is the reward of which Jesus speaks?
3. Put the name "Alpha and Omega" in your own words.
4. What Bible story is mirrored in the second half of verse 14?
5. Why are the immoral "outside" the gates of the city?
6. Who is the "you" whom Jesus mentions in verse 16?
7. What is significant about Jesus being the "Offspring of David"?
8. What from this passage leads you to be better prepared for Christ's return?
9. **Discussion:** Should eternal rewards be motivation for righteous living?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Revelation 22:6-21 serves as the epilogue to John's Apocalypse. The section concludes the book and reemphasizes the message of God's revelation to John. Two major themes are addressed within this section: the authenticity of the book as true prophecy and the nearness of Christ's return. The epilogue in many ways mirrors the prologue found in 1:1-8. The two serve as bookends to the revelation.

Within the epilogue, is the passage that we are considering for this week's study - Revelation 22:12-16. This passage contains **five sayings** related to Jesus' authority, the return of Christ and the judgment to come (v. 12, v. 13, v. 14-15, v. 16a, v. 16b). Some scholars attribute each of these saying to Jesus. Others attribute the third saying to John.

The central message of this passage is found in the **first** saying. In it Jesus declares, "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done" (22:12). One commentator writes, "The nearness of the parousia throughout the NT is the basis for the call to ethical commitment. Since Christ is returning soon, we had better be ready at all times, lest he find us unprepared like the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) or the servant who wasted his talent (Matt. 25:14-30)" (Osborne, 787).

Christ is coming soon to bring his "reward." This "reward" is his payment to "everyone according to what he done." As Mounce notes, "The distribution of rewards on the basis of works is taught throughout Scripture. Jeremiah 17:10 is representative: "I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve" (Mounce, 406-407). The notion of "judged according to works" is prevalent within Revelation. It is used in reference to both believers (2:23; 11:18; 14:13; 20:12; 22:12) and unbelievers (18:6; 11:18; 20:13).

Some have misunderstood the nature of the "judgment of works" and have dismissed it as opposing "justification by faith." One commentator provides further insight: "We must clarify, however, that this is not a "justified by works" theology. It is clear in Scripture that we are "saved by grace through faith ... not works" (Eph. 2:8-9; cf. Rev. 1:5-

6; 5:9-10; 7:14; 12:11; 22:14) ... The teaching here deals not with salvation by works (though it does deal with salvation in its broad sense) but with our eternal reward" (Osborne, 788).

Sayings 2-5 expand upon Christ's imminent return and impending judgment. The **second** saying reveals Jesus' authority to return and bring the age to a close: "By emphasizing that he is 'the Beginning and the End,' Jesus also reminds recipients of this book that he rules history. Jewish texts about the end-time sometimes reminded readers that as God created the world, it was God who had the power to conclude it (4 Ezra 6:6)" (Keener, 515).

Verses fourteen and fifteen comprise the **third** saying. Within this saying is found both a blessing and a strong warning related to Christ's return. One commentator explains, "The contrast is between the blessedness of the faithful and the fate of the wicked" (Mounce, 408). The faithful are rewarded with access to the tree of life within the gates of the city - signifying an eternal existence in the presence of God. The wicked are consigned to a place "outside" the gates, beyond the experience of God's manifold presence and blessing.

The **fourth** saying parallels Revelation 1:1-2 and reveals another point of unity between Jesus and God in the Apocalypse. Just as God had sent his angel to John to reveal to him this testimony of Christ, so Jesus "(as a king) authenticates his royal herald, the angel who takes the decree to the people" (Osborne, 791).

The **fifth** and final saying within this passage identifies Jesus with two messianic names: the Root and Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star. "Both titles refer not only to the messianic nature and glory of Jesus but also his great power over the wicked" (Osborne, 793).

One scholar provides a helpful conclusion: "We must keep in mind that we will be judged for our deeds performed in this life (22:12). Too often Christians have used other theologies to justify regularly sinning and then asking forgiveness as if there are no consequences. Revelation reminds us that on some level there are consequences to all the choices we make, that these consequences are just, and that therefore we should bury the excuses. When we sin, we deceive ourselves if we say that we

cannot stop; we should be honest enough to admit that we do not choose to stop. Such honesty is a prerequisite to acknowledging that Christ offers us the grace to live holy if we will appropriate it. The

warning to wash our robes (22:14) can apply to church people (3:4). In view of Jesus coming (22:12), we must 'get ready'" (Keener, 521).

The Message of the Passage

Jesus is returning soon and will bring his judgment. Be ready!

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“The Morning Star”

(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 12 **soon** "It is best to take the utterance at face value and accept the difficulty of a foreshortened perspective upon the end rather than reinterpret it in the sense that Jesus 'comes' in the crises of life and especially at the death of each person . . . Matthew 24:42-44 counsels every generation to be on the alert for the return of the Son of man" (Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 404). One who truly understands that Jesus is coming soon "sees every moment of life in relation to the coming of God's kingdom" (Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 159).
- v. 12 **reward** "In Revelation the 'reward' is eschatological and relates to the eternal recompense that will be given believers [and unbelievers] . . . It refers literally to 'payment for work done,' and as such can refer to 'punishment' as well as 'reward.' Indeed, this fits the context remarkably well, with the saved and unsaved side by side in both Rev. 22:10 and 22:14-15" (Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, 787-788). It is important to note that "rewards" will only be assigned to believers and "punishments" will only be assigned to unbelievers; see Isa. 40:10 and Rev. 11:18.
- v. 12 **what they have done** Some Christians misapply the Reformation doctrine of sole fide (justification by faith alone), causing them to neglect or even reject a judgment of works (2 Cor 5:10). The idea of "judged according to works" occurs many times throughout the NT, and often in Revelation; in regard to both believers (2:23; 11:18; 14:13; 20:12; 22:12) and unbelievers (18:6; 11:18; 20:13).
- v. 13 **Alpha and Omega** The terms "Alpha and Omega," "First and Last," and "Beginning and End" are each restatements of the idea that God is universally sovereign over the entirety of history. These names are used for both God and Christ (for God, see 1:8 and 21:6; for Christ, see 1:17, 2:8, and 22:13).
- v. 14 **blessed** This is the seventh and final beatitude (blessing) in Revelation (See 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7). Like the others, this blessing is extended to one who perseveres in the faith.
- v. 14 **wash their robes** The washing of their robes speaks of "ridding their lives of the accumulated filth of this world and living pure lives before God" (Osborne, 789). This spiritual cleansing ultimately occurs by being washed in the "blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14). The verb "wash" (Gk *pluno*) in verse 14 is in the present, signifying a continual action.
- v. 14 **tree of life** The "tree of life" is a symbol of immortality. It is found in the New Jerusalem (Rev 22:2) as it once was in Eden (Gen 3:22).
- v. 15 **outside** "This hardly means that their home for eternity will be in the suburbs of the Holy City" (Osborne, 790). The idea carries the thought of exclusion and shame; being cut off from the covenant community (Lev 24:14; Num 15:36).
- v. 15 **dogs** "Dog" is used in Scripture for various kinds of impure and malicious persons.
- v. 15 **magic arts** Cf. "sorcerers" (ESV).
- v. 16 **you** The plural "you" in verse 16 indicates that the revelation is not a private affair but for the entire church (Mounce, 408).
- v. 16 **testimony** John's testimony (Rev 22:8) is corroborated by Jesus, who stands behind the entire revelation (22:16). "This seems to be an official "testimony" sent from the heavenly court to the troubled churches on earth" (Osborne, 792).
- v. 16 **Root/Offspring of David** "[Jesus] is the fulfillment of the Isaianic promise that the Messiah shall come forth as "a shoot . . . from the stump of Jesse" (Isa 11:1, 10; cf. Rom 1:3)" (Mounce, 408). He is the promised King, in the line of David, who will one day return and eternally reign over his people.
- v. 16 **Morning Star** "As the 'bright Morning Star,' Jesus compares his glory with a celestial body often worshipped by John's contemporaries, and also claims to be the Messiah (Num 24:17)" (Craig S. Keener, *Revelation*, 516). "This morning star is a promise that the long night of tribulation is all but over and that the new eschatological day is about to dawn" (Mounce, 409).

Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.
Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

When my son was young he had a terrible respiratory infection. I sat up with him most of the night as he struggled to breathe and would lapse into coughing fits. It was dark in his room and as we sat there through the night he kept asking over and over when it would be morning. I remember as the first light of dawn crept into the room he began to settle down and let himself fall asleep. Something about the morning was comforting to him. As I read today's passage, I get a sense of that hope that comes with the morning dawn. Jesus, our bright Morning Star. In Him alone is our hope.

Make time this week to make hot chocolate and watch a sunrise with your family. In October, Venus is in a great position to be seen clearly. Venus reaches its maximum brightness shortly before sunrise which is the reason it has often been referred to by ancient cultures as the Morning Star. The one that shines brightest in the sky. Use this opportunity to talk to your kids about how Jesus, our Morning Star, shines brightly in our lives. He is above everything and the only One worthy of our highest devotion and praise. To Him be the glory who is coming soon!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Revelation 22:12-16

1. According to this passage, when is Jesus coming?
2. What is He bringing with Him?
3. In what three contrasting ways does Jesus describe Himself in verse 13?

What Do You Think

1. How do you feel when you think about Jesus coming again?
2. When Jesus describes Himself as the "bright Morning Star", He is telling us that He is our Hope, our Light and our Guide. How does He guide you?

What R U Going To Do

Parents, your kids have been learning the entire passage of Philippians 2:5-11 throughout this series. Now is the time to celebrate their hard work. Plan a special time for them to recite the passage and then reward them with a special treat!

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Prayer - I talk to God so I can know Him, ask Him for things and find out what He wants me to do.

Memory Verse

Philippians 2:5-11

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.