



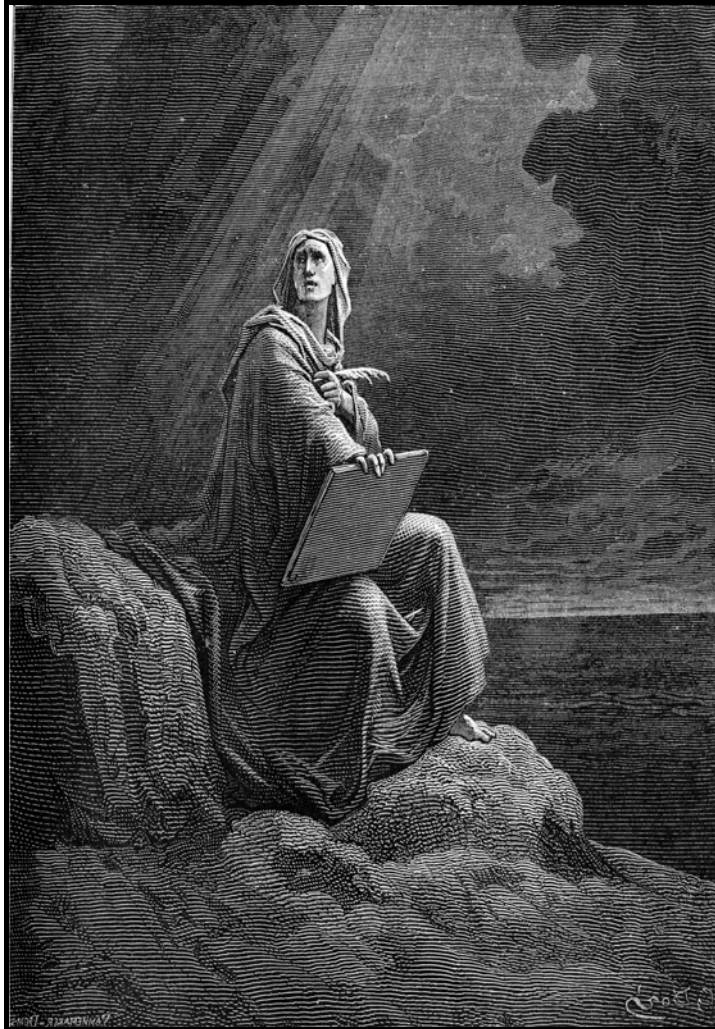
*“Then the Angel Showed Me the River of the Water of Life”
Illumination from the “Bamberg Apocalypse”*

The Conclusion

Revelation 22: 6-21

The angel said to me, “These things are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show His servants the things that must soon take place.” “Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.” 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, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who

keep the words of this book. Worship God!” Then he told me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.” “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me and I will give to everyone according to 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, that they



“St. John on the Island of Patmos” by Gustav Dore

may have the right 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, the bright Morning Star.” The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him 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, “Yes, I am coming soon!” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.

“The angel said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God

of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show His servants the things that must soon take place.

“The angel said to me...” - In a manner very similar to that of the prologue and the salutation (Revelation 1:1-8) the epilog now concludes and affirms the prophetic message of Revelation. Lenski suggests that the unique nature and character of John’s visions necessitate such a concluding affirmation:

“If it be asked why these visions receive such an attestation at the end, their very character and their nature are the answer. Here is prophecy regarding the things which must occur couched in visions, many of them portrayed in strange symbolical actions and language. Are these human inventions? We meet commentators that think so and yet cannot discover the man who did the inventing. Many men smile at these visions and scorn them as the vaporings of a diseased mind. The solemn, even legal attestation is needed for our sake so that we may be most completely assured.” (Lenski, pp.655-656)

Lutheran scholar Joseph Seiss notes: *No book in the Bible has a more pointed attestation, a stronger safeguard against tampering, or a more urgent recommendation for study and observance than does the Apocalypse, especially in its Epilogue.”* (Seiss, 3:, pp. 449-450)

The original text does not identify the speaker in this instance. It simply reads - *“And he said to me.”* The NIV’s interpretive insertion of the noun ***“angel”*** is, in all probability, correct, given the similarly worded assertion of the prolog that ***“He made it known by sending His angel to His servant John.”*** (Revelation 1:1). The same wording recurs later in this verse - ***“sent His angel to show His servants the things that must soon take place.”*** This angel is designated with the definite article -



“The Revelation of John” by Hans Klim

literally in the Greek , “*the angel of Him*” serves to identify a particular, well-known angel. Some commentators refer to this heavenly messenger as “*Angelus Interpretans*,” the Interpreter Angel, who conveys God’s revelation to the apostle and explains or interprets that revelation when necessary.

The angel’s message is an emphatic assertion of the reliability and the accuracy of the visions which John has received and recorded - “***These words are trustworthy and true.***” Similar assurances have been previously offered in reference to the content of specific visions (cf. Revelation 19:9; 21:5). The attestation is broadened here to include all of the revelator’s message. One does not exceed the scope of the text to broaden its application to all of sacred Scripture, the inspired and inerrant Word of God. “*Here they are an explicit affirmation of the entire prophetic message of Revelation...these words also apply to all of Scripture, with Revelation, the final book of the canon, serving as the Amen to the entire Word of God.*” (Brighton, p. 640)



***“Christ the Alpha and the Omega”
12th Century Spanish Fresco***

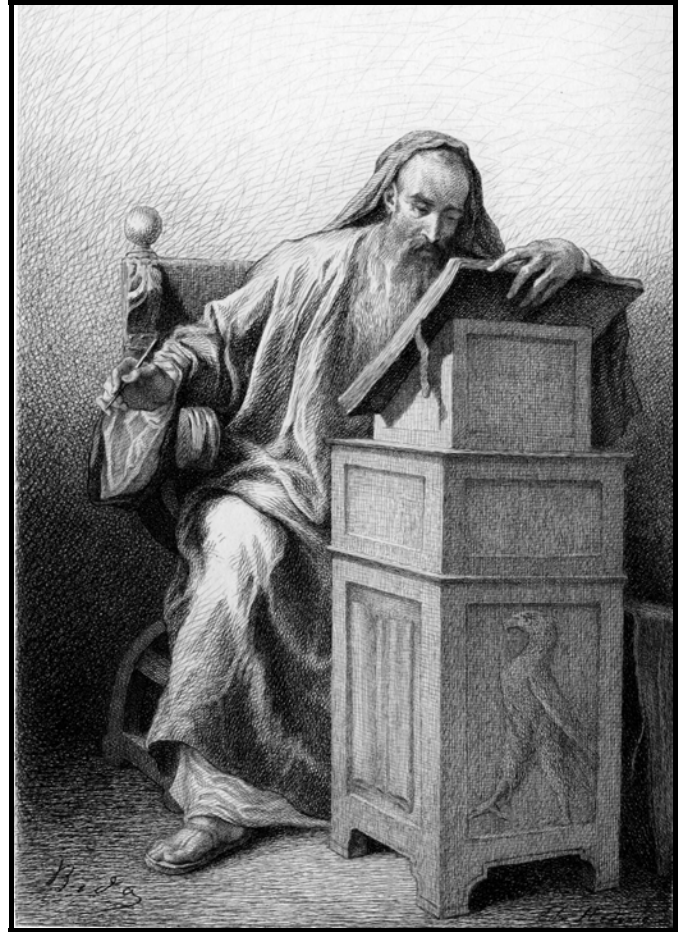
These same adjectives are elsewhere applied to Christ Himself - ***“These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation.”*** (Revelation 3:14; cf. also 19:11) Dr. Brighton properly notes:

“These statements that God is righteous and true declare that there is an absolute truth, a truth that is righteous and so never changes, a truth that is faithful in its intent. God is the source of this truth and the Lord Christ is the faithful witness to it.” (Brighton, p. 640)

“The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets...” - The phrase which follows explains the basis for the trustworthiness and truth which has been attested. This is a message from ***“the Lord*** (Greek - *“ho kyrios”*), ***the God of the spirits of the prophets.”*** The language recalls that of Revelation 19:10 - ***“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”***

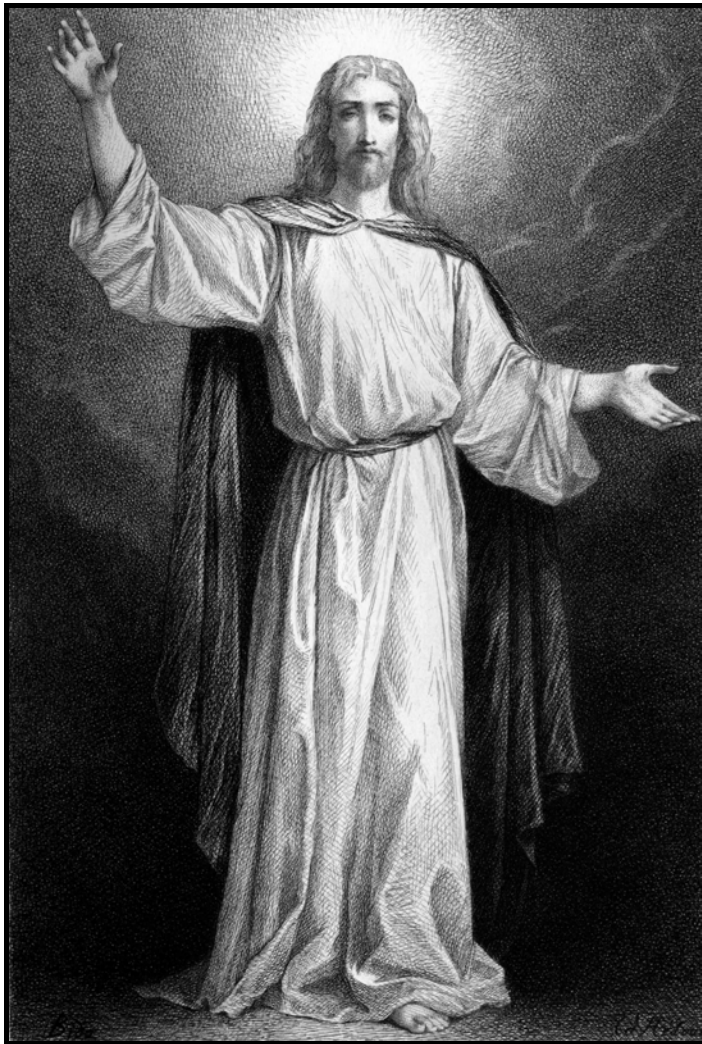
Although the term ***“spirits”*** is often used in Scripture in reference to human life in general (i.e. Numbers 16:22; 27:16), in this context the reference is most probably to the natural intellectual faculties of the prophets ***“raised and quickened by the Holy Spirit”*** (Swete, p. 303) ***“subjected to God, enlightened and inspired by the Holy Spirit”*** (Thomas, p. 496). In this manner, the text clearly identifies John with the long stream of prophetic revelation which has poured forth from the spirit of God across the centuries, beginning with Moses and now reaching its triumphant culmination. ***“The Lord who inspired His prophets of old to see the invisible and to speak the ineffable is the Author of visions of John in the last urgent days before His return.”*** (Franzmann, p. 144)

“To show His servants the things that must soon take place.” - The language directly and deliberately reflects that of Revelation 1:1- ***“The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave Him to show His servants what must soon take place.”*** The



“St. John the Revelator”
19th Century Bible Illustration

parallel is designed to mark the completion and conclusion of that which God has disclosed to His inspired prophet. The people of God in Christ are again designated as “*douloi*,” that is, “*slaves*.” We are men and women who have been bought and paid for in the precious blood of the Redeemer shed for us upon the cross. Now we belong to Him and are called to serve and obey Him. The verb “*must take place*” (Greek - “*dei genesthai*”) is the word commonly used in revelation to express the sovereign control of God in accomplishing His purpose and plan for mankind. These things “*must take place*” because all things are under God’s control and they are necessary for the fulfillment of His divine plan. The text breathes a definite sense of urgency and imminence. All this is going to happen “*soon*.” As John writes, the apostolic age is drawing to its conclusion. The latter days have come and the time of Christ’s return is drawing near.



*“Behold! I Am Coming Soon!”
19th Century Bible Illustration*

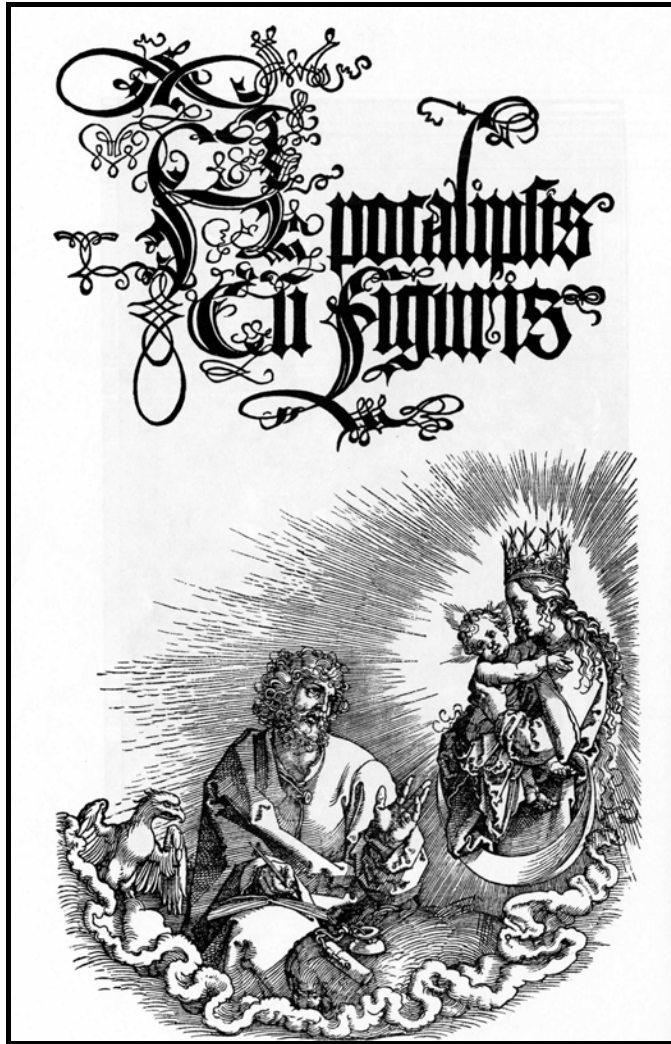
“Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of prophecy in this book.” - The voice of our Lord Himself interrupts to express the profound urgency of the situation. The interjection unmistakably refers to the Second Coming of Christ. In Chapter 1, Christ had designated Himself as “*The Alpha and the Omega...Who is, and Who was, and Who is to come, the Almighty.*” (Revelation 1:8) Jesus had proclaimed virtually the same message repeatedly in the letters to the seven churches: “*I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown.*” (Revelation 3:11; cf. also 2:16). The beatitude of the prologue (Revelation 1:3) is reiterated here at the conclusion: “*Blessed is he who keeps the words of prophecy in this book.*”

In this instance that which is commended to the attention of the reader is *“the words of prophecy in this book.”* In the prologue the more general phrase - *“the words of this prophecy”* is used. The variation may indicate the virtual completion of the scroll which is now in hand. The identification of the writing as *“prophecy”* in conjunction with specific reference to *“the words”* reinforces the message that this book is the product of the plenary verbal inspiration of God. This is the sixth of Revelation’s seven beatitudes. He who would receive the promised blessing is instructed *“to keep the words of prophecy in this book”* - that is, to believe them as faithful and true and live according to them.



“I Fell Down to Worship at the Feet of the Angel” by Jean Duvet

“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, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and all of you who keep the words of this book. Worship God!”



*“Apocalypse With Illustrations”
Title Page to the 1511 Edition by Albrecht Dürer*

“I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things.” - John addresses the reader directly for the first time since the opening chapter of the book. In Revelation 1, John had identified himself as the human author of this book three times (cf. Revelation 1: 1,4,9). He repeated assertion of authorship at the book’s conclusion is his own personal attestation of the works reliability and authenticity. *“The writer adds his human guarantee to the superhuman words scattered through vv.6-17.”* (Thomas, p. 499) In the original this statement takes the form of an emphatic exclamation. This was not some flight of fancy, the product of personal imagination. St. John actually ***“heard and saw these things.”*** The words are reminiscent of Peter’s affirmation of the historicity of the apostolic gospel of Jesus: ***“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were***

eyewitnesses of His majesty.” (2 Peter 1:16)

“And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship...” - The prophet’s re-action to these awesome visions is completely understandable. He is overcome, literally swept off his feet. He falls to the ground before the angelic messenger in adoration and awe. This is the second time John has fallen to the ground in worship before an angel in Revelation. He did the same in Revelation 19:10 after having witnessed the resplendent Bride of Christ, prepared for the Marriage Feast of the Lamb (cf. Revelation 19:10). The repetition of his action here is perplexing to some, given the admonition which he had received in the former instance to worship God

alone. No doubt his action in both instances was completely spontaneous, an unconsidered, automatic response by a man who was completely overwhelmed by that which had been revealed to him. Dr. Swete correctly suggests: *“So astounding was this whole vision, the crowning glory of the Book, that the Seer forgets the warning he has recently received and again prostrates himself before the angel.”* (Swete, p. 304)

“But he said to me, “Do not do it!...” - The angel quickly and categorically rejects John’s worship, as in the previous instance. Worship is the prerogative of God alone. The worship of any other being, no matter how well intentioned or sincere, detracts from the unique majesty of God and must be firmly rejected. *“The bewildered prophet for the moment had lost his bearings, and needs this reminder of something that he already knew quite well.”* (Thomas, p. 501) The angel identifies himself with three groups in describing himself and his role. First of all he declares, ***“I am a fellow servant with you”*** (Greek - *“syndoulous sou emi”*). What thrilling words these must have been for St. John, if not immediately in the intensity of this moment, at least in retrospect! This glorious heavenly angel who has conveyed the most incredible wonders of God in heaven declares that he and John, Christ’s apostle are the same. That is to say they perform the same function in revealing and conveying

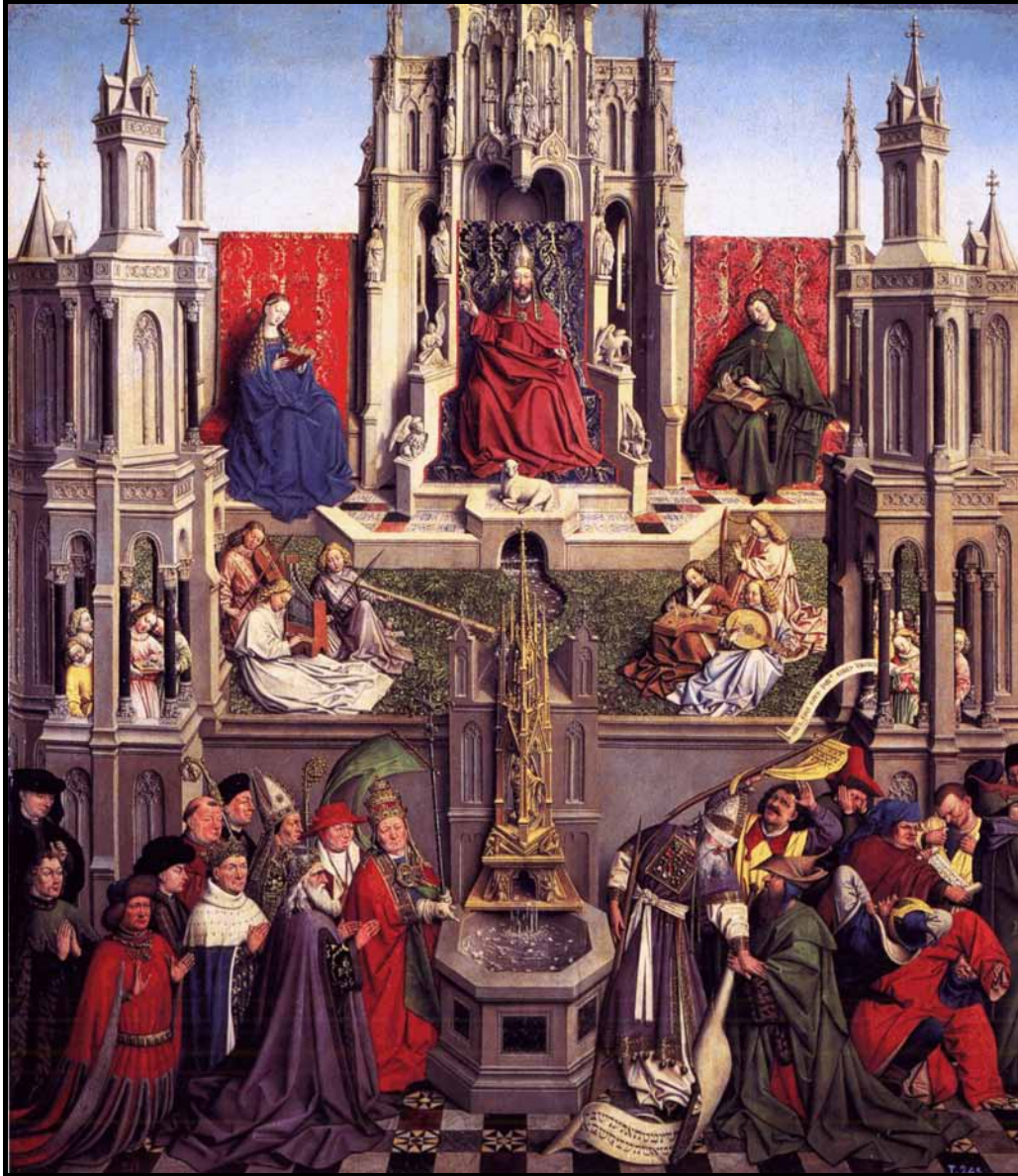


“The Prophets and Apostles” by Jan van Eyck

God's Word to His people. They are literally slaves together (*"syndoulous"*) in the same great task. The angel next extends the brotherhood of that service beyond St. John himself to ***"your brothers the prophets."*** In this way, not only is St. John exalted, but the prophetic office in general. The phrase also serves, once again, to endorse that which John has revealed by including him in the company of God's inspired spokesmen, the prophets. John's Apocalypse is a writing of divine prophecy as surely as the writings of Moses, Isaiah, or any of God's other inspired spokesmen. Finally, one more group is included in the angel's declaration of solidarity - ***"and of all who keep the words of this book."*** This would reach out to include every faithful Christian who strives to live in a manner consistent with the will of God as it is defined by the written Word of God.

"Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy." - The angel continues his concluding instructions following the worship interruption. The message of Revelation is not secret, nor should it be concealed. The book must remain open for all to read and obey. Many centuries before, Daniel was given the opposite instruction - ***"The vision concerning the evenings and the mornings is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future."*** (Daniel 8:26; cf. 12:4,9-10) But now the decisive moment in human history has already occurred. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the crucial turning point of all history and they have already occurred. Now, in the aftermath of Christ's first coming, the end times, the latter days are already at hand. The church, the people of God in Christ, urgently need to hear, believe and obey this word of prophecy.

"Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong..." - The theme of urgency and imminence continues. Judgment is at hand. Those who stubbornly spurn and scorn the warnings of God's Word will surely continue in their evil ways. The grammarians style the imperative verbs here as *"imperatives of permission"* rather than the typical imperatives of command (Thomas, pp. 502-503). Throughout the end times, God will allow and tolerate, for now, the wickedness and corruption of men. Lenski cites the parallel of the our Lord's parable of the tares and the wheat - ***"Let both grow together until the harvest."*** By contrast, those who ***"do right"*** and are ***"holy"*** are encouraged to persevere in the faith and faithfulness until the Lord's imminent return. The words of the prophecy are to remain open and available throughout this time so that sinners



*“The Lamb’s Fountain of the Water of Life”
From the School of Jan van Eyck*

may hear and repent and believers may hear and obey. Brighton summarizes:

“The possibility is still present right now for change of status before God - from unrighteous and filthy to righteous and holy - through hearing the warnings of God and the gracious invitation of His mercy in Christ. But now is the time, not tomorrow, for the hour is late. This passage underlines the extreme urgency of the church’s mission to proclaim the Gospel and to persevere in the righteousness and holiness that are hers by grace.” (Brighton, p. 646)



"The Final Judgement" by Peter Cornelius

“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” - Again the Lord Jesus sounds the clarion call of imminent return. The language reflects the prophecy of Isaiah 40: ***“See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and His arm rules for Him. See, His reward is with Him and His recompense accompanies Him.”*** (Isaiah 40:10; cf. 62:11)

The ***“reward”*** (Greek - *“misthos”*) terminology highlights the role of Judgment Day as the final demonstration before all of humanity assembled together of the perfect righteousness and justice of God. The purpose of the Last Judgement is not to determine the eternal fate of anyone. The souls of the great majority of humanity will have already been in heaven or hell. Judgment Day is the irrefutable public demonstration of the justice of God’s judgement. In secular Greek *“misthos”* monetary compensation in the form of salary or wages. In the Bible, the word is characteristically used in a spiritual sense to refer to the gift of eternal life in heaven. For example, in His Sermon on the Mount Jesus promises those who endure persecution: ***“Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven.”*** (Matthew 5:12) The evidentiary role of works in the final judgment is the necessary result of the purpose of the judgment in incontrovertibly demonstrating the justice of God. Works here serve as the objective evidence of faith (cf. Matthew 25:31-40). Brighton properly highlights the significance of the first person pronoun in the phrase ***“My reward is with me.”***

*“Christ calls it **“my** reward,” not their reward; it is the reward which Christ Himself earned, and which He freely gives to all believers by grace. The “reward” itself is the gift of eternal life in God’s holy presence, earned for God’s people by the death and resurrection of the Lamb of God.”* (Brighton, p. 647)

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” - Christ’s promise of imminent return is *“signed by the Lord’s own threefold signature.”* (Lenski, p. 666) These titles unmistakably assert the divinity of Christ. In Scripture, God is the only independent existence. He does not have a source. He is the source of all things. He is without beginning and without end, *“Jahweh,”* the great *“I AM.”* (cf. Exodus 3:14) God is both the point of origin and the destination for all that which He has made, our source and our destination. Our origin from Him and our absolute dependance upon Him is the essential difference between the Creator and the creature. The use of the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet effectively express this truth and serve to identify Jesus as true God.



“The Redeemed in Paradise” by Giotto, 1431

“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. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.” - This is the seventh beatitude of Revelation, the final benediction of the book, as it were. The imagery of the blessing is drawn from throughout the earlier visions. The washing of robes refers to the great multitude before the throne of the Lamb in Revelation 7:14 - *“These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”* This is a powerful image for the forgiveness of sins won for us in the precious blood of Christ poured out upon the cross. Those who have been forgiven now have the right to stand before God’s heavenly throne. The *“tree of life”* is drawn from the vision of paradise restored which was presented earlier in this chapter: *“On each side of the river stood the tree of life bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing*

of the nations.” (Revelation 22:2) Life in the new Eden will be as God intended in the beginning and the curse of death will have been banished forever. The text here literally describes the right of access to the tree’s life-giving fruit as “*authority over the tree of life.*” The right of passage “*through the gates into the city*” alludes to the vision of the glorious Holy City, the New Jerusalem which John had observed “*coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*” (Revelation 21:2)

“Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts...” - In stark contrast to the eternal blessedness of the redeemed, the status of the damned is presented as eternal exclusion from the presence of God and the blessings thereof. Those who have chosen to remain clad in the filthy rags of their own unrighteous must remain forever outside in “*the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*” (Matthew 8:12). “*The dogs*” (Greek - “*hoi kunes*”) is a metaphor for those who are wicked and



“Idol Worshipers” - 19th Century Bible Illustration

morally corrupt throughout Scripture (cf. Deuteronomy 23:18; 2 Kings 8:13; Psalm 22:16,20; Isaiah 56:10; Matthew 7:16; 15:26; Mark 7:27; Philippians 3:2-3). *“In the Orient dogs are scavengers and objects of great contempt. In this verse they are perhaps not just impure persons but the impudently impure, those addicted to unnatural vices.”* (Thomas, p. 507) The list of those excluded is very similar to the list of those consigned to the lake of fire and brimstone in Revelation 21:8.



“King David, the Sweet Singer of Israel” by Jan Debray

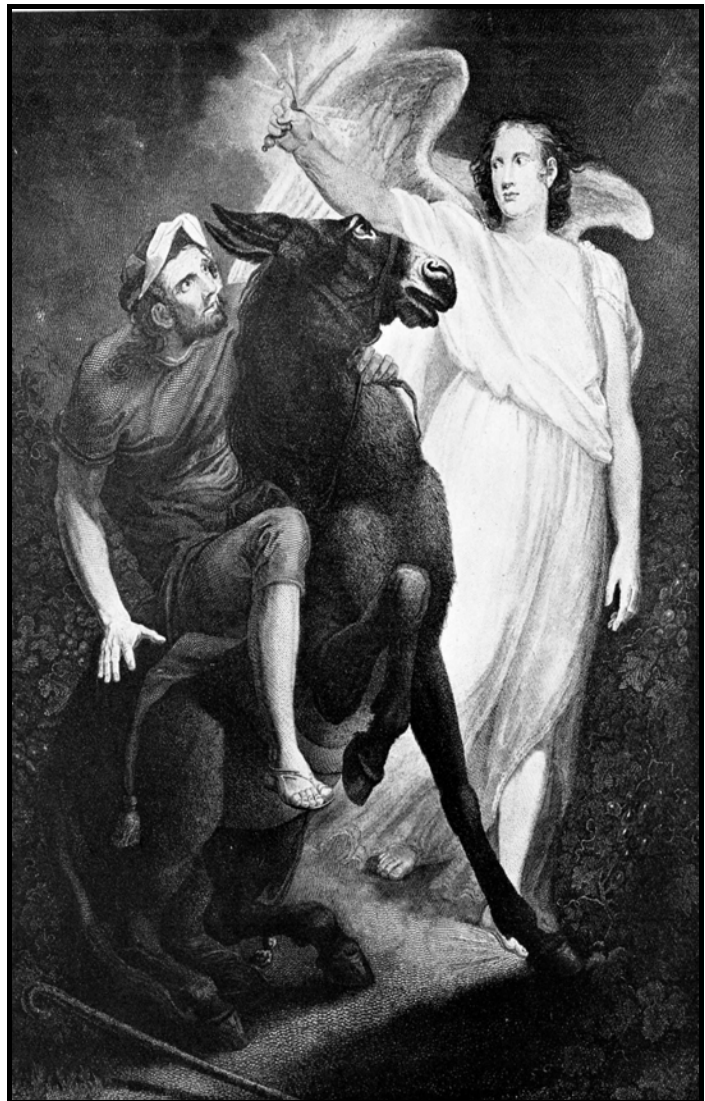
“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” - A third attestation of the divine inspiration of this Revelation’s prophecy is offered by the Lord Jesus Himself. That which the angel and John have already attested is now affirmed by Christ. Special attention is drawn to this personal assertion by the unique combination of the words ***“I, Jesus”*** (Greek - *“ego Iesous”*). Brighton notes that this is the only instance in the entire New Testament where our Lord refers to Himself by His personal name. *“His personal name, Jesus, points to His humanity and to His intimate relationship with John and with all of God’s people. He is John’s personal and loving*

Savior and friend.” (Brighton, 653) The Lord endorses the angel as his personal messenger. The same language is used in John 20:21 to describe the sending of the apostles as the personal representatives of Christ. Jesus specifically claims the content of the angel’s message in the seven visions (**“this testimony”** - literally *“these things”* - Greek - *“tauta”*) as His own. The information is intended for all the people of God - **“for the churches.”**

“I am the Root and the Offspring of David...” - Jesus identifies Himself as the Messiah promised in the prophecies of the Old Testament. He is the **“Root and Offspring of David.”** In Revelation 5:5 the Lamb is presented as **“the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.”** As Jesus indicated, quoting Psalm 110:1, the Messiah would be both David’s Son and Lord:

“When Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, He asked, “How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit declared: “The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand until I put Your enemies under Your feet.” David calls Him “Lord.” How then can He be his son?” (Mark 12:35-37)

Jesus is both the ancestor and the descendent of David, the source of his royal dynasty and the Messianic King who would come to fulfill his line. **“The bright Morning Star”** is the star whose appearance in the heavens signals the end of the night and the imminent coming of the day. Ancient Balaam had foretold: **“I see Him, but**



“The Prophet Balaam Before the Angel of the Lord”
by James Northcote



"The Star of Bethlehem"
by Frederic Leighton, 1862

not now; I behold Him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a Scepter will rise out of Israel." (Numbers 24:17) That prophecy led the wise men from the East to Bethlehem. *"The 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, p. 395)

"The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." - Christ Himself remains the speaker in these verses. Lenski is correct when he notes *"It is Jesus who adds "And the Spirit and the bride are saying..."* (Lenski, p. 669) Our Lord describes the immediate and emphatic response of all the people of God, *"the bride,"* (Ephesians 5: 23-32; Revelation 21:2,9) and *"him who hears"* to His announcement of His imminent return. That response is prompted and empowered by the Holy Spirit. All God's people cry *"Come!"* This earnest eagerness for the Lord's return must characterize the Church in every place and time. Christians are by definition those *"who have longed for His appearing."* (2 Timothy 4:8). At the conclusion of his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul expresses this ardent yearning in the Aramaic words *"marana tha"* - *"Come, Our Lord."* (1 Corinthians 16:22) This ancient prayer may well have



“Christ and His Bride the Church” by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

been one of the oldest components of the liturgy of Holy Communion in which, ***“whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death until He come.”*** (1 Corinthians 11:26). Dr. Gregory J. Lockwood writes:

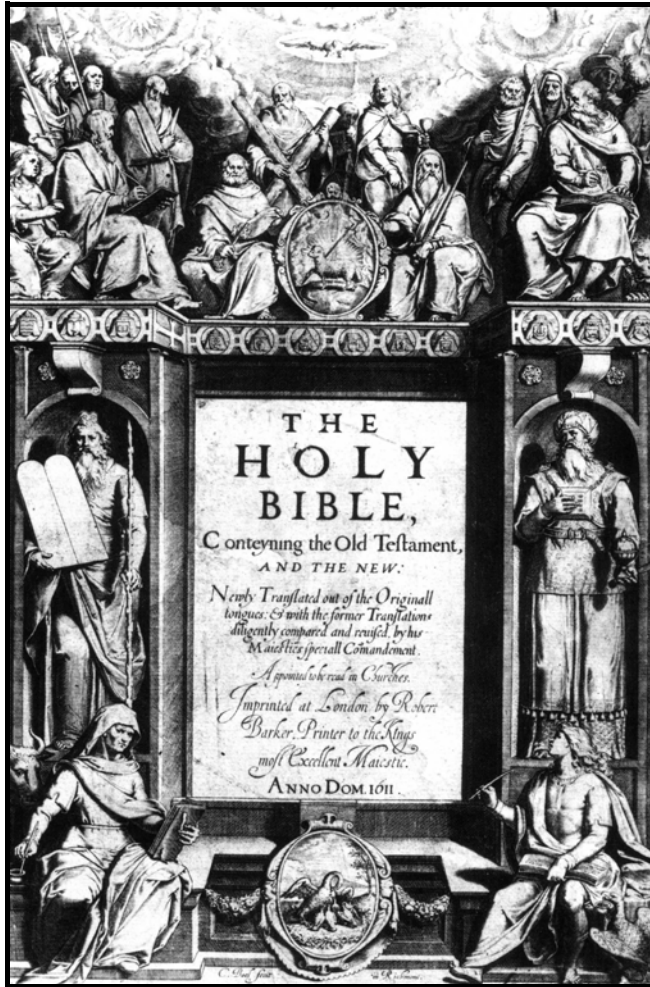
“Thus Paul now cries to the Lord from his heart using the language of his heart, his mother tongue, Aramaic: “Marana tha! Our Lord, Come!”...Like other Aramaic or Jewish words that became common coin in the early church (“amen,” “hallelujah,” “hosanna”), “marana tha” seems to have been a beloved expression because of the way in which it gave voice to the Christian expectation and hope.” (Lockwood, p. 632)

“Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever...” - The text abruptly shifts to exhortation as the knowledge of Christ’s imminent return serves to remind us of the urgency of our evangelistic task. The time is short. Judgment is coming. Now is the acceptable time, today is the day of salvation. Jesus urges those who have not yet tasted the sweet waters of the river of the water of life to come forward now before it is too late. The language parallels the appeal of Isaiah 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.” (Isaiah 55:1-2)

“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city which are described in this book.” -

A stern word of warning is added as the Book of Revelation draws to its magnificent



Title Page to a 1611 English Bible Depicting the Prophets and Apostles

conclusion. Once more, the words are spoken by our Lord Himself. The Greek text stresses the personal nature of the admonition - literally “*I myself testify*” (Greek - “*martyro ego*”). No one dare alter the words of this writing either by addition or subtraction, for it is a book of “***prophecy***,” that is, a book written by the plenary verbal inspiration of God. A similar warning from the prophet Moses concludes the Old Testament Torah: “***See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.***” (Deuteronomy 12:32; cf. 4:2) The warning prohibits not only literal addition or subtraction but also misinterpretation and distortion. R.C.H. Lenski, one of Lutheranism’s most prolific Bible commentators, offers this profoundly personal response to our Lord’s warning:

“Let me say for myself that I have kept the Lord’s warning before my eyes so that I might not add or take away any of these

“logoi” or any part of one of them. Here and now I fervently pray, that if in any “logos” I have gone amiss, He may pardon me, bring the correction to me, and prevent damage as a result of my error. I count every sentence in Scripture holy, to be touched only with sanctified heart and pen.” (Lenski, pp. 673-674)

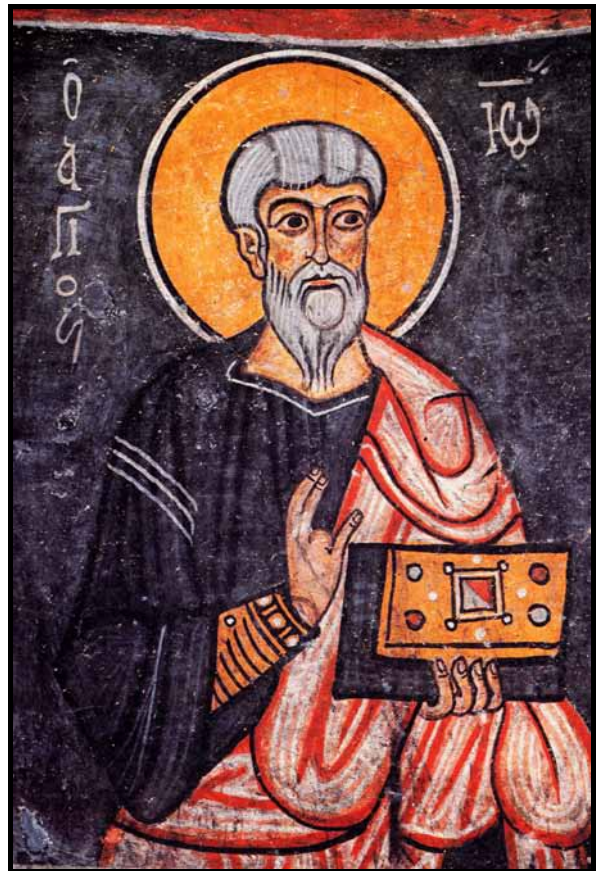
Such an attitude of humble awe and prayerful submission before the Sacred Scriptures must be the perspective of every genuine scholar of the Bible.

This stern admonition against addition, subtraction or distortion, while specifically stated in reference to the Book of Revelation is correctly applied more broadly to all sixty-six books of the Bible. Dr. Brighton is completely correct in his assertion:

“The warning that Jesus gives here in Revelation 22:18-19, while directly applying to the Book of Revelation, should also be applied by inference to the entire Bible, since Revelation is the climax and conclusion to the entire canon, both the OT and the NT. For the writings of the entire Bible are also so to be received as the very words of God and thus not to be altered.” (Brighton, p. 656)

Those who would challenge this more general application to all of Scripture ignore the unique circumstances in which these words were spoken. St. John, the last of the apostles, is recording the closing words of his final book near the end of his own life. The great company of the prophets and the apostles dies with him. Surely it is no mere co-incidence that as the Revelation of St. John comes to an end, and with it the sixty-six books of the Bible, this solemn word of warning is spoken. Walter Chantry says it exceedingly well:

“Some men have ridiculed an appeal to Revelation 22:18,19 when discussing the close of the canon (the end to divine messages from the Lord). However, in the context of all that the Bible says about Jesus being the final prophet, the climax of revelation, the words are most significant. It is the same Jesus Christ who speaks in this last chapter of the Bible...Our Lord makes this comment in the closing verses of the last confirming witness to his revelation. The Savior gave his warning through the last living apostle at the conclusion of his ministry. Some would prefer to weaken our Lord’s warning signal by saying that it applies only to the Book of Revelation. But such strong and unusual language must be more than a prohibition to tamper with that one writing. We must see it as did



*St. John, the Last Apostle
12th Century Byzantine Fresco*

Matthew Henry. He wrote, "This sanction is like a flaming sword to guard the canon of Scripture from profane hands." Revelation is no usual book. It is a sweeping analysis of history from the first advent of Christ to the second. Jesus had promised that the Spirit would teach his apostles "all things" (John 14:26). The Spirit had come and fulfilled the promise. Apostles had communicated the authoritative Word. The task of revelation was finished. The Book of Revelation was the last apostolic word to the church. The almighty Savior, seated at God's right hand, opens his sovereign lips personally to declare that nothing is to be added to what has been recorded." (Chantry, pp. 36-37)

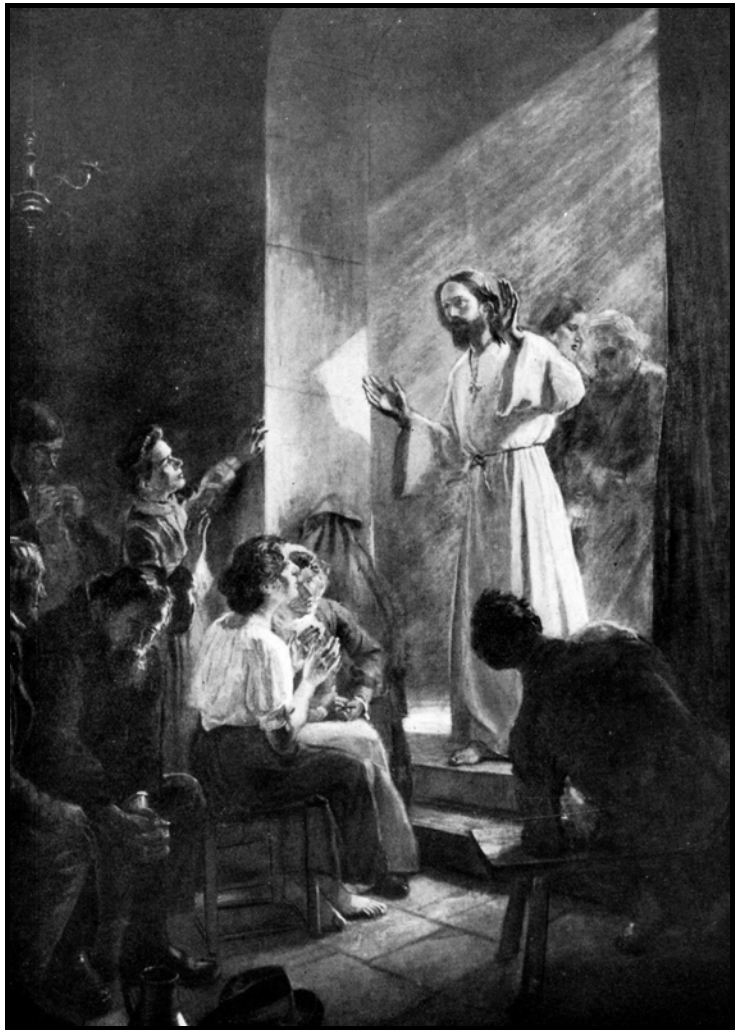


"King of Kings and Lord of Lords" by Rudolf Schäfer

The penalties specified in the warning are couched in the language of Revelation's awesome visions - the addition of the plagues, the loss of the tree of life and the loss of the holy city.

“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.” - Revelation ends with “a promise, a prayer, and a blessing.” (Brighton, p. 657) The promise is spoken by the Lord Jesus. Having heard the expression of His people’s yearning hearts, He affirms one final time ***“Yes, I am coming soon!”*** This is Christ’s last word to His Church before He actual return. He is on the way. His arrival is imminent. Do not despair. Do not grow weary. Jesus is coming soon.

“Amen. Come Lord Jesus.” - The Revelator’s response is immediate and enthusiastic. His words, as noted in the commentary on Verse 17, are drawn from the ancient liturgies of the church. The Aramaic transliteration “***Amen***” - “so be it!” and a Greek translation of the Aramaic prayer “*marana tha*” - ***“Come, Lord Jesus.”*** This is the heartfelt desire and urgent prayer of every Christian, at every place, in every time. The Advent Hymn, “*The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns*” concludes with the same urgent petition: “*The King shall come when morning dawns and light and beauty brings. Hail, Christ the Lord! Thy people pray: Come quickly, King of Kings.*” (ELH # 101)



“Come Lord Jesus!” by Fritz von Uhde

“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.” - The letter concludes with an apostolic benediction. Until the great day of the Lord’s triumphant return, we who are His own live by His grace. That undeserved love is His gift to us for every day of the meantime. He sustains and strengthens us as His people. In Him, that is, in His grace, we live and move, and have our being.



“Amen! Come Lord Jesus!” by F.W. Shadow

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