

DID YOU COME?

Revelation 22

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The final chapter of the story of Jesus is found in Revelation 22, our Scripture for today. The first five verses of chapter 22 are a continuation of the theme of Revelation 21, the New Jerusalem.

Reading from the New International Version, Revelation 22:6–21 says, “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.’

‘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 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, and the bright Morning Star.’

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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.”

After a year and a half long study in the Book of Romans, I closed the last message of Romans by asking the question, “Did you receive the letter?” Thinking of that way of ending the letter of Romans, and realizing that now, today, we’re at the end of the Book of Revelation, if I were to sum up the essence of this book it would be then with a question to us all: “Did you come? Did you come?”

Revelation 22 is concerned with the answer to that question.

I. We want to take a moment to look at whether or not we have really understood what John has been saying to us by the power of the Spirit in the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

I might ask by way of review of the book, “Did you come with John to experience the Revelation of Jesus Christ?” The way that John invited us to come with him was at certain moments in the narrative of the book of Revelation. To remind us that a new juncture was beginning and he would do this through the repetition of the phrase “I was in the Spirit.” So ask, as you look at the unfolding divisions of the Book of Revelation, in the Spirit did you see and hear the Lord communicating to His people?

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Chapter 1:10 describes John as being in the Spirit on the Lord's day and he sees the Lord standing in the midst of the churches. The first three chapters of the Book of Revelation find the Lord communicating to His people, the seven churches of Asia Minor. We might ask as we think of the Lord and being in the Spirit on the Lord's day that it's possible that we could have blinders on our eyes and muffs on our ears so that we could actually block out the message which the Lord Jesus Christ is communicating to us through His servants and through His word. John is reminded in a time of exile and a time when he's banished on a little island off the coast of the Roman province of Asia that he was not banished from God's presence and that he could be in the Spirit. And if he would become in the Spirit he would see things so much differently than he saw them simply through natural eyes.

Whenever we take time in prayer to be caught up with God's concerns and His will for our lives we will be communicated to by the Lord.

Chapter 4:2 describes another time John is caught up in the Spirit. It marks the second major development of the Book of Revelation. We ask in this Spirit, "Did you see Christ reigning?" For it was in the Spirit that John was caught up into heaven. The first thing he saw in heaven was a throne and one seated on a throne. And for the next twelve chapters of Revelation, 4–16, in the midst of the unfolding of judgments on earth made known to us as signs as the seals that are broken and trumpets that are sounded and bowls of wrath that are outpoured. With a holocaust that comes upon the world at the end of the age, the first thing we are to see before we have any aspect of God's judgment is the fact the Lord God omnipotent reigns, the one who sits upon the throne.

For those who know the Lord, there is no crash coming, for those who are fixed on him and whose hope is in Him will stand. They are planted upon the rock which when the winds beat

against it and the rains come from above and the waters come from beneath their house stands. Christians in that sense don't need to plan for a crash. The Lord is our rock and our fortress. We as Christians are to be caught up so with the message of Revelation that we have sort of a distance between ourselves and our possessions. Distance even between ourselves and those we hold dearest. If our possessions are ripped away or our closest companions are ripped away yet we have the Lord seated on a throne, high and lifted up, ruling and reigning and God's people are never fatherless and their king has never abdicated His throne. The message of Revelation again and again has been to remind us that the Lion is the Lamb, the suffering Son of God, the Christ of Calvary is the lion of the universe. This message that John is given where in the Spirit he has seen Christ reigning has been deliberately intended in the first century to encourage an afflicted church, to impart patience to them in the midst of their suffering, and to vindicate the character of God that, in the end, justice will prevail. Those same purposes hold good today. When we pick up Revelation we find it an encouragement and we find it also imparting patience to us in suffering.

A third time that John is caught up in the Spirit in the Book of Revelation is in chapter 17:3. He is caught away into the wilderness where he sees Babylon falling. Babylon represents the whole world's system. Every kingdom that is outside the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is caught up in that word Babylon. He sees it falling, and in an hour of time fallen, fallen is Babylon the great. Revelation is being written to people who are on the way to the martyr block. In the day before movies, Revelation serves as a video for the early Christians as they're headed toward martyrdom. As they face the moment, instead of looking at the scene, John has given them a reel to run in their minds that suddenly these see not their own collapse but they see the fall of any civilization that is opposed to God. Babylon is fallen and they, in the end, are vindicated and

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stand. Revelation is a book for heroes who want to follow Jesus Christ and remain loyal to Him no matter what.

John has caught us up in the Spirit to see that the kingdoms of this world were coming down.

The fourth and last time John is caught up in the spirit in Revelation is in chapter 21:10. He sees the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. It is so incredible. John is staggered to try to give us an idea of what Jerusalem is like. He has seen it coming down from afar, a diamond gleaming city. As it comes nearer he has noticed its exterior gates and walls. He has noted the circumference of the city. As we come to Revelation 22:1–5 he takes us into the interior of the city, something he didn't do in the twenty-first chapter. He's close enough now to see the features of the inside of the New Jerusalem and he is caught up with several things.

He first sees the water of life river, which flows down the center of the main street of the city.

The central location is the sign of its great accessibility. Water of life. We tend to take water for granted. In the biblical world water was a more precious commodity to the ancients than it is to us. Water of life to the ancient would have an even more significant connotation than it does for us. To have access to water and not just any water but the water of life freely flowing down the main street of town and pure was something to stagger the mind.

In Scripture this water of life that flows is built on a lot of imagery that is found elsewhere in the Old Testament. In the Garden of Eden there was a river that flowed that watered the garden and earth. In Psalm 46:4 the psalmist looks forward to the time where in the new city there is a city whose streams make glad the city of our God. Ezekiel saw a river in restored Jerusalem coming from the temple, which watered the holy land. Zechariah 14:8 says “On that day living water will flow out of Jerusalem.” And Jesus says in John 4:14 to the woman at the well, “Whoever drinks of the water that I give them will never thirst. Indeed the water I give him will become in him a

spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The water which Jesus spoke of spiritually in John 4 has now become transposed to literal water in Revelation 22. It is clean water and its source is the throne of God, signifying that all life comes out of God’s throne. The throne is not only the throne of God but also of the Lamb (22:1). The water comes from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Notice it’s not “thrones of God” but the “throne of God and the Lamb.” A consistent phrase in the Book of Revelation to describe the fact that the Lamb and God possess the same throne. The source of life is in the Lord. And its availability is for all. The celestial fountain of youth has been found for ever and ever. Have you drunk from the water of life? Has eternal life begun? Jesus indicates that when we receive Him into our lives we already have life. Eternal life starts. If you’ve drunk from Him in this age you will drink forever of the water in the New Jerusalem. The second thing that catches John’s eye in the interior of the New Jerusalem is the tree of life. There are really three trees in Scripture around which the whole history of earth is gathered. One of these three trees is unique to the Old Testament. It is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil found in the Garden of Eden, which was forbidden the first man and woman to take. The reason why it was forbidden is once you take of the knowledge of good and evil you must experience evil. The first family of the human race took of the knowledge of the good evil, ate from the tree, and all of us since then have eaten from the tree and have become sinful through our disobedience to God.

There is another tree in Scripture that is unique to the New Testament. It is not found in the Old Testament. It is described in Acts 10, verse 39 “They killed him by hanging him on a tree.” And 1 Peter 2:24 describing this tree of Calvary says. “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.”

A third tree in Scripture around which the whole history of the human race revolves is this tree of life, which is found in both the Old and the New Testaments. In the Old Testament it is found only in the beginning in Eden. When the first tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was partaken of, the tree of life was closed off to mankind's touch. They were banished from the garden that they might not take and eat. Because if they have life forever and are inherently evil what kind of life is that? So the access to the tree of life was cut off.

But through the tree of the New Testament, the tree of Christ, the tree of the cross and of Calvary the way has been opened whereby we who ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil may now come back and eat of the true tree of life and Eden has been opened again to all who have faith in Christ Jesus.

The Scripture has come back on itself that as it began by describing the banishment of all mankind from paradise, in the end all who will come through the tree of Calvary come back to take of that tree of eternal life.

There is a richness in this tree that can be in no way compared to any tree on earth. This tree has no parallel in this age. The tree of life in Revelation 22 does not go through the ordinary cycles of budding and blossoming and fruit bearing and harvesting, or only giving a crop once or twice a year. But is loaded with different fruit every month of the year. It describes the absolute triumph of life over death. A tree that can be that productive means the curse is forever gone.

The third thing that catches John's eye about the interior of the city and perhaps the goal toward which he has been working is the fact that in the city there is the presence of God. He notes in verse 4, "They [or we] will see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads" (NIV). The opportunity to see God face to face. Again the Trinitarian emphasis. It's not "They shall see *their*

faces,” that is, of the Lamb and of God. But they—meaning us—will see “his” face—of both the Lamb and of God, singular pronoun.

What does this mean to “see his face”? I think in reference to God and to the Lamb it means two things. In the Old Testament to see the face of God was a forbidden experience. Moses, God’s great servant, asked to see the face of God and was refused so that he only saw the back part of God. The more you walk with God the more you want to see Him and know Him better. That’s the idea behind seeing His face. That any mystery attached to His being might be removed. But the less you want to know God, the less you want to walk with God, the less you will want to know of Him and You’ll be moving away from His face. To behold God face to face is to know Him absolutely. Exhaust the depth of His being. To remove the last mystery about the being of God.

In the Old Testament that experience was not granted to anyone. In the New Testament, however, we are told that the face of God is seen in Jesus. John says in John 1:14, “We have beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” In John 14:9 Jesus says, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” This phrase “We shall see God face to face” has at least two meanings.

On the one hand it means that we will know God wholly as compared to our incomplete knowledge of God now. That what we don’t know of Him will be then fully known.

But it also means by seeing Him face to face that we will look again upon the face of Jesus. A face that we have known and upon whose shoulder John the apostle himself had leaned.

So in looking to see God face to face John knew that he would understand more than he had ever understood before. But he knew also he would see again the Lord who had loved him.

The believers as they see his face are going to be stamped on their forehead with the Lord's name. Remember the symbolism of what is happening. Those who belong to the Antichrist were marked with a stamp on their forehead and on their hand but those who belong to Christ bear Christ's mark. In the Old Testament the high priest wore a gold plate on his head, which simply said, "Holy to the Lord." It meant that his life was utterly consecrated to God. That is what is going on in this Scripture, to say God's people who see His face always bear the mark of complete and total consecration to God himself.

His servants will serve Him, verse 3. But they also, in verse 5, reign with Him forever and ever. I think that's a fitting contrast. On the one hand we will serve the Lord. But on the other hand we will reign forever and ever. And there's nothing incongruous about that—serving and reigning go hand in hand. It's a terrible thing to serve without reigning, by the way. When we think of serving God in heaven it has a delightful aspect, something you do that really gives you fulfillment.

John asks these questions: "Have we come to understand the message of Revelation? Did we become in the Spirit as he?"

II. There then comes an epilogue to the book in verses 6–21, which involves various kinds of counsel and persons speaking: An angel speaks, John speaks, the Lord speaks.

There's an interplay back and forth. The chief idea of the conclusion gathers around two ideas. One idea is that the Lord is coming soon. And the other is that we must keep the words of the prophecy of this book.

A. The first thing that happens in the conclusion of the book is the certainty of Christ's coming. An angel declares that certainty by indicating that the words which are found in Revelation are trustworthy and true. That says to us that we cannot discount the Book of Revelation. We cannot

leave it neglected in our Bible. We should not pretend that it doesn't exist. We should also snatch Revelation from the hands of those who would make it a book of speculation, and bring it back into the possession of the everyday life of the believer to recognize that these words were written for us. They are trustworthy and true. And they speak to us with great power. The Lord's own witness to the certainty of His coming contains the phrase, "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who keep the words of prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7).

Some of us have looked at this phrase, "Behold, I am coming soon," and have said the early Christians really missed it. What happened to this business of soonness? Peter describes it in 2 Peter 3:8 when he says a day with the Lord is as a thousand years. What he is suggesting to us is the Lord's idea of soonness may be completely different from our idea of soonness.

We look at the idea of "I am coming soon" and we realize it's coming from the Lord's perspective. For Him it is soon. We also recognize that the Lord is saying to us in every generation, "I want people to be expectant toward My coming. I want no generation to settle down and say it can't be today." Indeed either by our own death or by the coming of the Lord it will be soon.

B. While waiting for the Lord to come, we are to keep the words of His prophecy, not to *debate* the words of the prophecy but to *keep* them. Revelation was not written to satisfy our intellectual curiosity about the future. But so much that we might be able to live in the will of God now and be able to get through tough times knowing that God is with us.

In verses 8–11 John is given some prohibitions as the book is drawing to a close. One is the worshipping of angels. This is the second time in Revelation John has made the mistake of falling down before an angel to worship. That may be suggestive to us that some angelic beings have such majesty that they inspire worship, awe, and grandeur. We see the beauty of such

beings as in a phrase like this. But the angels do not want worship and will not allow it. Other than God, only the devil wants to be worshipped.

So John is brought back up on his feet and he's given another prohibition, and that is he cannot seal up the words of the prophecy of this book. The idea of sealing up the word of prophecy is found three times in the Old Testament in the Book of Daniel, once in chapter 8 and twice in chapter 12. What was happening, Daniel was writing certain things about the end and he was saying, "This so much relates to the end that in this day you're not going to be able to understand it. So seal up the book and don't unroll it until the end." The end generation will be able to figure out what's going on. It doesn't pertain to the present, that's why it's sealed up.

But John when he is writing is told, "All the message which I have given you pertains to the present. Therefore leave the book unsealed." Then with the idea of the book unsealed it will come as a confirming word to people. Those who are determined to do wrong will continue to do wrong. Those who are determined to do right will continue to do what is right. John recognizes that as the end time comes persons who have built habits in their life of either moving toward the Lord or moving away from Him will tend to become confirmed in those habits. The water is still open, for whoever will may come, but there is a point in our personality where if we continue to refuse God we might be confirmed in our perpetual resistance to Him. Our character becomes permanently fixed and change then would become impossible.

The word then in verses 12–16 speaks in the longest segment of the Lord's direct speaking since chapter 3. He is coming to bring first of all assurance to those who are united to Him. He assures in verses 12–13 of His soon coming and of its reward. He says, "My reward is with me." A specific phrase that is used: "I will give to everyone according to what he has done." There are people who take a Scripture like that and say, "What does that do with the doctrine of

justification by faith, and grace is a free gift, in light of the fact that He's going to give us for what we have done?" Whenever we take a Scripture like that we must look at it in terms of its context and not set it against other Scripture. The context in Revelation means that, what we have done if we are faithful to the Lord, is be patient in tribulation, steadfast under persecution, and faithful to Christ.

The Lord then reminds us of His nature—the beginning and the end. The first and the last. The source and the completion. He imparts a blessing: "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life" (verse 14).

III. There are seven blessings in the Book of Revelation and this is the last one.

This is the Bible way of talking about forgiveness of sin. There are two times in the book of Revelation where it talks about us having our robes washed in the blood of the Lamb. One is in Revelation 7:14 where we find the multitude that come through the tribulation. And I understand tribulation here being all the time since Christ until now, not just the end seven years. They are described as having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

That word "washed" is in the past tense. Meaning it's a once-for-all action. It occurred. But here in describing "blessed are those who *wash* their robes" (21:14), the verb is in the present tense meaning it's something we must continue to do. In other words, forgiveness of sins is a once for all act, but there is also such a thing as continual cleansing. I think perhaps the best illustration of this is what Jesus does in John 13 where He's wanting to wash the feet of His disciples. Peter protests, "Lord, you'll never wash mine." Jesus says, "Unless I wash you, you'll never have part with me." Then Peter says, "Not only wash my feet then but wash all of me." And Jesus replies, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet for his whole body is clean."

That is the Lord's way, too, of symbolically talking about salvation, that when we have come to Him, when we first come to Him, we've been totally washed. Our sins are gone. They're buried in the deepest sea. We don't need to be bathed all over again. We don't need to be resaved every time we do something wrong. But when we do err and sin as a Christian we're to take this counsel of Scripture: "If we confess our sins he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). The washing that's being talked about in Revelation 22:14 is the washing that comes for the Christian who already has been washed from his sins, but who has collected sins along the way. And small unfaithfulness is sometimes big unfaithfulness to the Lord. Revelation is saying to the believer, "Don't let sin pile up in your life. Don't let it accumulate."

I think sin piling up in our life—I've used this illustration on occasion—is like letting a kid go without a bath for about a month's time. You probably have no awareness of what that would mean. When my parents were on the mission field they ministered among a group of people, the Tibetans, who never washed from the time they were born until they died. It was against their religious conviction. I think there was probably a good reason for that religious conviction—it was very cold and they lived outdoors. It just made good sense not to catch pneumonia. But there was encrusted dirt. If you've ever gone for a number of days without taking a bath or let your children go without taking a bath you know that the dirt gets rather caked in. You practically—if you've gone too long of a time—almost need to take a Brillo pad and get at it. If you've let things accumulate too long it hurts. The skin is tender when you rub it away.

I think that's why sometimes when a Christian has gone a long period of time in his life and hasn't really sought the forgiveness of the Lord and comes back and asks the forgiveness it's a very wrenching and hurting experience. If they would daily take the washcloth of the Lord's

forgiveness and apply it to the uncleanness that builds up in their life it'd be much more easily removed. The Lord invites us to come to Him on a regular basis if we have committed sin, and He will be faithful and just to forgive us our sins. He is helping us to live a life in preparation to be with Him.

The Lord says that outside the Holy City are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, and the like. These persons are all marked by a single common trait. They cannot be loyal to commitments. Those who cannot be loyal to their commitments toward God and toward others must be outside of the city.

IV. The Lord bears testimony to the fact that He has sent this revelation to the churches.

For anyone from Israel who has come into the believers he identifies Himself as the Root and Offspring of David, meaning He was before David (as his Root) and He is since David (as His offspring). He is the bright Morning Star, fulfilling the prophecy that the prophet Balaam made in Numbers 24:17. Balaam, the guy to whom donkey talked, had a word when he said, "Behold a star shall rise out of Jacob." The morning star is the one star in the heavens that still remains visible when all the other stars are gone. In the morning light it can still be seen. What this phrase in reference to Christ is saying is that when all the stars are gone His is the only star that will be seen.

We still use the word "star" to refer to recording artists, movie stars, and the like. Their star is going to fade quickly. The stars of all those who've followed Christ may even shine for a while. But when the full day appears, Jesus is left for us to behold. He is the bright morning star.

In light of all that Revelation has had to say, there has to be an invitation. So the Spirit, who bears witness to Jesus, invites us to come. The bride, which is the Church, joins the invitation and says to all, "Come." And everyone who hears the message of the Spirit and of the Church

likewise, joins in saying “Come.” The invitation to come is reserved for a specific class of people: Those who are thirsty for God. They may come and take the water as a free gift. It’s an open invitation—whoever may come.

There is then a final warning in verses 18-19 about taking from or adding to the words of the prophecy of the book. What John is saying here is that when the message of Revelation has been understood, then the person is no longer in a place where he can sit in judgment upon its truth. But the truth must set in judgment upon him and control his thinking.

Then, there is Jesus’ final promise in Revelation 22:20: “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’” I’ve tried to consistently say as we’ve looked, “Coming soon” may be the Lord’s coming for us by His second coming from heaven, or it may be His coming to meet us in death. In either case we’re going to meet the Lord in our generation. And the coming of the Lord is soon.

Sometime ago I went through a 1949 *Time* magazine to get a picture of what life was like when I was a boy. It’s amazing how much life has radically changed in these years. I think it helped me understand even better Christ’s phrase “I’m coming soon.” Christ’s coming has been soon for millions of people who have gone to the Lord in this time. That phrase “I’m coming soon” ought always to be taken for us, not only in regard to his physical return to the earth but in regard to our brief tenure on this earth. And the fact that soon we go to meet Him. Scripture is always saying to us, “Now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). We respond with those who hear the message of Revelation and hear Jesus saying, “I’m coming soon,” we cry out Amen! Come Lord Jesus. We’re not afraid of death. We may have some temporary spasms of fear but in the ultimate analysis those who know Christ are not afraid of His coming and are not afraid of death. The coming of Jesus Christ for Christians should never be a terrorizing kind of fear. It is the

blessed hope of the church. When Jesus says, “I’m coming soon,” instead of saying, “Wait, Lord, I’m not ready! Please don’t come yet,” we can say, “Amen! Lord Jesus, come soon!”

John then gives the benediction. A benediction closes this Scripture. “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen” (verse 21). Grace. That’s what the early Christians needed to live in the trials, which they yet faced after this book closed. Grace is what we need to live through our own experience. It’s very fitting that the Bible should close with the emphasis on grace. That we, who by virtue of our own sin have broken God’s laws and stand worthy of punishment and separation from him forever, are included by God in His fellowship and His eternal plan for the ages, that He’s come to gather us to himself and all this is through God’s grace. May we with John have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ resting upon us God’s people. Amen.

Closing Prayer

We quiet ourselves in this moment, Lord Jesus, before You. We acknowledge once more our faith in You. We praise You, Lord Jesus, that You have not left us in the dark about our own personal future or about the future of the world or the new heavens and earth which are coming. But You have given us in Your word a sure guide and path. If we choose to walk away from this knowledge, we choose to ignore the truth and spurn Your grace. But if we choose to respond to Your invitation to come and freely take of the water of life then we have hope in every situation of life. We have hope when we are going through financial struggles. We have hope when we are going through alienation from others. We have hope when old age and illness may come crashing down about us. We have hope when the dreams of life that we have dreamed that we would do may not be done. We have hope, too, if we don’t go through reverses because we’re wise enough not to trust in our health, not to trust in our financial stability, not to trust in our

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dreams that are coming true. But to go beyond all of these to trust in You. You are our hope. You are our light. You are our life. Thank You, Lord, for this word of Scripture that has come to us in these weeks together. Thank You for John and for the circumstances that brought him to Patmos that in the exile in his life he might have a word from You. Thank You for all the people who so faithfully copied John's words and the other words of Scripture through the centuries often in cloisters and hidden away places. Persons who were faithful to You in giving us Your word unaltered and true. Thank You, Lord, for the people through the courage to protect Your word from extinction, for Wyckliff, Luther who helped ensure for us the reading of this book. Thank You for the people who have brought this word to our lives and spoke it fresh to us. Thank You that we may now be ourselves a part in the transmission of this word to others, that having heard the word of God we might keep it in our hearts and lives through Jesus Christ. Amen.