***The End is Near

RV250-02***

Revelation 22:10-12. Our subject is "Preparing for the End." Against the dark background of the pending seven-year Tribulation event, the Christian who is filled with the Spirit project's poise and stability? A Church Age believer's air of confidence about the future comes from God's assurance that he will be glorified, that someday he will have a resurrected body, and that someday he will enter an eternity with God. The Christian in Temporal Fellowship knows that this is true, and therefore he is of good cheer. He will live forever in a glorified body in the glory land. No matter what comes upon us in this life, we are always anticipating that which is ahead. Therefore, we are poised and stable. There is no panic. There is no deterioration. There is no disorientation. Therefore, there is no whining and no self-pity. There is nothing so terrible as a human being who is a believer who lacks poise and stability. In our world, the only way you have that is when you are oriented to the Word of God so that you know what your destiny is. You know what's out there, and you know the problems that are going to be yours along the way: no whining, no self-pity, eyes upon the Lord, and therefore confidence to the maximum degree. Why people want to stumble around in this life, botch up their lives, go through miseries of all kind, when a young person who's grown up in our ministry would want to do that, is always amazing to me, that somewhere in the human mind there is a trigger that only you can control.

**Positive Volition to God's Word Yields Poise and Stability**

And that trigger is called positive volition. Once you decide that the Bible is the true Word of God, then you will be more serious about it and you will act upon it. Like when Jesus, when the crowd left Him on that one occasion, turned to His disciples and in a pointed expression said, 'Will you leave me too?' And their response was, 'Lord, we won't leave you. Where can we go? You're the only one that has the truth.' They had grown to that kind of discernment. 'Where would we go, everything else there is religious and trivial and pretense. But with you, we have the truth. We have what is real, where else would we want to go?' So, the Lord Jesus gives us assurance of our glorification and that's what keeps us going. In spite of the world's tribulation, disintegration and destruction, we are headed for glorification.

One more passage of Scripture that stresses that, because I think it is so important for us to understand where we are going in our lives, that's the only way we will have poise and stability. That's the only way we will have quality choices. We are going to live like kings forever in resurrected bodies with the creator God. Turn to John 10:22, please. This is one of the places in the Bible that is quite clear that Jesus Christ claimed to be God. The liberals like to tell us that He never claimed to be God, only His followers said He was God. The truth of the matter is, He claimed it on many occasions, and this is one of the most outstanding. But in this passage also, we have another comfort to us of our glorification, and that needs to be the background for those of us who are now living close to the end of the age and we are living close to the time when we will be gone, and the Rapture will take us away. The Tribulation events that we have studied here in this book will come to pass. Those things are beginning to shape up and they are frightening. But our poise and stability is based upon our knowing the end result.

This passage stresses that ultimate result for us. John 10:22 says "At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem;" The feast of the dedication was an eight-day national holiday, and it is mentioned only here in the Bible. It is in December and therefore, verse 23 points out that the time was during the winter months. Today, this holiday is still celebrated by the Jews, but it is called Hanukkah, and it is an eight-day celebration beginning on December 25th. It is also called the Feast of Lights. This celebration originated in 168 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the men who took over ruling part of Alexander the Great's empire after he died, Antiochus Epiphanes took over the Syrian portion of that vast empire that Alexander had built. He attacked Jerusalem. He destroyed a large part of it. He slaughtered the Jews and he plundered the temple. His contempt for the Jews was so great that he wanted to destroy their religion. So he sacrificed a pig on their altar, which obviously is an enormous desecration for the Jews, because a pig is a filthy, unclean animal: both by its habits and nature, and by ceremonial religious factors that relate to the pig. It's an unclean category of animal. Furthermore, Antiochus Epiphanes tried to destroy the Jews religion by destroying all the copies of the Old Testament that he could find. That was unfortunate. What they could not hide he was able to destroy.

Well, the time came when a man arose who had enough of this. His name is Mattathias Maccabee, and he and his 5 sons begin a rebellion against the brutal Syrian Greeks and their leader Antiochus Epiphanes. They drove them from Jerusalem and they whipped them by guerrilla war tactics. On December 25th, the temple was cleansed in 165 B.C and it was rededicated by one of Mattathias' son, Judas. The old man had died and Judas had taken over the campaign, and Judas Maccabeus in 165 B.C. cleansed the temple.

They had only enough of the holy oil, the story goes, to burn the 7 branched candelabra in the Holy Place for one day, but miraculously it continued for a whole week. Out of that came this pattern of burning a candle for 8 days, the day that it started and 7 more days. Today the Jews celebrate this Maccabean victory as Hanukkah by lighting candles one day, starting with December the 25th. It is sort of the Jewish substitute for the Christian celebration of Christmas, you see. Well, this was not a holiday that God instituted as one of the sacred feasts and one of the sacred holidays of the Jewish people. But it was one that they instituted themselves and God had no objection to it in recognition of the great victories that He had given them over this terrible bestial ruler who would try to destroy them, Antiochus Epiphanes. So when this Feast of Dedication, the rededication of the altar in the temple came about, Jerusalem was filled with thousands of people.

And it was the occasion of this dedication feast that Jesus took to speak to those about Him, about the certainty of the glorification of a believer. Verse 23 says, "It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon."

The portico was a covered walkway with a colonnade on the east side of the temple. It was quite a spacious place because the columns were something like 38 to 40 feet tall. These walls here in this room are 14 feet in height. So, you can see that they were at least twice this size. So, it was quite a structure and it was covered and was spacious and it was a place where you could gather a crowd.

And that's exactly what happened. Verse 24 says that "The Jews therefore gathered around Him and were saying to Him, 'How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.'" Repeatedly, the crowd that surrounded Jesus asked Him to tell them whether He was the Messiah King. Jesus had been quite explicit in His claims of deity and Messiahship, and He had confirmed that claim with miracles that He performed by God's power. So, the Lord's interrogators were His enemies and they were not seeking truth, but they were seeking some means of discrediting Him. But Jesus had poise and stability because His soul functioned on Doctrine: He knew the Word of God and He was not flapped and not distraught by these ignorant attacks upon Him. So, He kept His cool in the face of the asininity, the insolence and the contempt of the Jews. He did not take them personally. He knew that their attack was against His Father. So, He had poise and He was stable.

In verses 25 to 30, Jesus answers them. In verse 25, "Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me;'" Jesus had already declared His divine messiahship. But the Jews dismissed His claim. Jesus therefore points to the works of miracles which confirm His claim. The reason He could do this is because the Old Testament prophets indicated that when the Messiah comes, one of the ways you'll identify Him is His ability to perform miracles. He'll make the lame walk. He'll make blind eyes see. He'll do what no one else can do except He who is functioning on the power of God. They had no reason seeing what He did to ask Him this question. The miracles done by Christ were done of course in His humanity, not His deity. They were done in His humanity by the power of God the Father, they were done in the Father's name. Therefore, because He says, "I do them in the Father's name, these bear witness to Me," it was a confirmation that He was whom He claimed to be. The Jews who recognized Christ's miracles and God's confirmation readily did believe in Him.

Then in verse 26, Jesus says, "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep." The Jews challenging Jesus did not believe His claim because they were not born again, and therefore they were not His sheep. "Sheep" referred to the saved Jews, those who feed in Christ's pasture. These unbelieving Jews that were surrounding Him and attacking Him were spiritually blinded and they were feeding in Satan's pasture as his sheep. They were quite confident, because they were religious people, that they were feeding in the true pasture. What they were feeding in was the deceit of Satan. They were feeding on poison doctrines. Jesus said, because you are feeding out there in Satan's pasture, whose children you are, you do not understand, and you have no taste for good food. Unless you are a believer in temporal fellowship, I guarantee you, you're not going to be interested in coming to church. You'll find all kinds of reasons to stay at home and there's no end of them. Why is that? Because you have no taste for the food of the Word of God. The reason for it is because you're out of fellowship as a Christian or you're not born again in the first place.

Those who were the sheep of Jesus had no problem in recognizing Him as the Messiah that He claimed to be. In verse 27, Jesus says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." The saved Jews listened to the voice of Jesus as their true shepherd. The miracles and signs which are performed by Christ speaks very plainly to them. God the Holy Spirit illuminates the understanding of the believer about the Scriptures so he hears God's voice. And the Lord Jesus knows each one of us personally as one of His sheep. The Christian sheep follow their shepherd, Jesus Christ, who guides them by means of the Word of God.

**Once Gained, Salvation Cannot Be Lost!**

Then in verses 28 and 29, Jesus continues, "and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand." Jesus continually gives his eternal life to the believer. Because God gives salvation on the basis of His own integrity, that is that He has really covered the sin for us, we, His sheep, can never lose our salvation. Verse 28 says, "And I give eternal life to them and they shall never perish." In the Greek language, this is our old double negative "ou me'." And when the Greek Bible says, "ou me'", it means absolutely under no condition. How anyone can read this verse, and still believe, as vast numbers of denominations do, that you can lose your salvation, is beyond me. They are obviously unaware of what the Scripture says; "ou me'" in itself, once you know that's in there, that's it. There can be no dropping out of salvation on the part of anybody, because that's exactly what the Bible says. Whatever other problems you may have with how can God be just, how can God be fair, how can God tolerate your sin, how can God deal with evil; all of those are other questions. God does have a way of dealing with those. There are answers to that. But the issue is, can you be lost again once you're born? No, nobody can reverse a birth; and you cannot reverse a spiritual birth either. Jesus says 'I give them eternal life, it comes as a free grace gift, and they will never perish. No one shall snatch them out of My hands. Because it is a grace gift from God and because salvation is entirely an act of God, nobody can cancel out what God has done.' You see, it is an act of God and nobody can cancel out the believer's salvation. Nobody can take the Christian from Christ at any point in time, or in eternity. So, there can be no loss of salvation. No violent act on the part of Satan can snatch away a Christian from the hand of Christ. No one can snatch a believer from the hand of the omnipotent God.

In verse 29, Jesus says "My Father, who has given them to Me." The reason you are one of Christ's sheep is because God chose you. He gave you to the Son and He gave you faith to believe the Gospel. The Father who gave you "to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." So, here you have in verse 28 Jesus Christ saying, 'Here is My hand, and in My hand you rest as a believer and I close My hand over you in a protective covering. Then just to give you further reassurance, here is the hand of My Father and it comes down and it covers over My hand.' Now, how are you going to get out of that kind of protective custody? You won't, because God has covered all the bases.

So, first of all, that salvation, which is so essential to our glorification, is a sure thing. You'll never have to worry about that. Once you have genuinely trusted in Christ as Savior, you're home free; and whatever may happen along the way, you will never end up anywhere but in the glory land. The Father is more powerful than Satan and all of his demons who indeed would like to snatch you from God, but they cannot do it. Believers have eternal life, and that's what it is, eternal life. It's not six months. It's not five minutes. It's not two seconds. It is eternal. It can never therefore end; it can't be terminated at any point.

And one more thing: this word "given," "My Father, who has given them to Me," these sheep, this is in the Greek perfect tense. The perfect tense means that a thing happens here and then it goes on forever. So, you even have this word given that says, once salvation happens, it is the Father giving a human being as a sheep to His Son, that has to go on forever. You can't ever change it. So that when you read this in the Greek language, those two things jump out at you that forever perfect tense and that ou me', absolutely not.

Verse 30: "I and My Father are One." Up to this point, Jesus hadn't come to the big blow. He hadn't really belted these Pharisees and Sadducees, and people surrounding Him who were trying to discredit Him. With this statement, He came to the climax. Jesus identifies Himself as more than a mere man, as His rejecters were claiming that He was. Jesus declared that He and God the Father share the same divine essence, and so they were one. In the Greek language, here again, the word one is in the neuter. Therefore, it is one thing. What is that one thing? It is the essence of God. Jesus is saying 'I and the Father have one essence.' If that is true, then Jesus is as much God as the Father is. Together the Father and the Son in their deity hold the believer safe in salvation, and thus to his destiny of glorification. The rebellious, spiritually minded Jews had no trouble understanding Jesus, and we know that from verse 31. The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. I mean, they're standing in this magnificent colonnade on the east side of the temple, a crowd has gathered and Jesus says, the simple little words, "I and My Father are one," and they recoil. The crowd breaks up, they run out, grabbing rocks, come back ready to stone Him to death because that would be an act of blasphemy. He's claiming to be God. The Jews of that day did not have any problem understanding what the liberals today in the religious realm try to dismiss, that Jesus claimed to be deity. He claim it, He proved it, and He was indeed God incarnate. The obvious confirmation of the claim of Jesus was His sinless life and the miracles; but none of this phased the Jews.

So, the believer’s glorification is thus declared by Jesus to be a sure thing beyond any possible acts to frustrate God's purpose for him because his salvation is a sure thing. You see? And if your salvation is a sure thing, then folks, your glorification is a sure thing. You are going to get a resurrected, perfect body and you are going to live with God forever. The world today is more openly the enemy of God than at any time in the history of humanity and the born again children of God are under great attack. From the government in our country on down, all the opinion making institutions are dismissing the Bible, ridiculing Christian morality, and portraying Christians as a threat to our society. We are the fundamentalists. That's right. We believe the fundamentals of the Bible. We are the extreme right. That's right. We are extremely right. The reason for that is because we know the doctrines of the Word of God. We're not going to apologize to you for that. We're not going to apologize to you that we are not ignorant dolts, that we are the people who are in the know, and consequently, we are the people upon whom God's favor and grace is shown. He is the one who has informed us and we believe Him. So, do not be intimidated by the fact of all the terrible things that are being said about us. While our lot in this world may be in doubt, our glorification is not. This is our comfort in view of the terror which is to come upon this world.

**The Time Is Near, The Warning Is for Now!**

So, we come to Revelation 22:10. On that background, the book is being summed up and giving perspectives to the believers because of the terrible things that they have now learned. In verse 10, we read, "And he [the angel who is guiding John] said to me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.'" John is told not to seal up this book. This word refers to keeping something secret. John, this book is not to be a secret. John's vision about the future was to be public knowledge. From the point that he was writing the book, this which is his personal testimony, he could potentially keep it secret; but he is told 'don't keep it a secret.' That happens to be that in the Greek Bible, this particular word is in a grammatical structure with the "not," which means "do not begin to seal it up." John had not made the book a secret; and very specifically, the angel is saying, 'don't even try to do it. Don't set this book aside and keep it a secret. Let the people know about it.' He had not kept his vision secret and he was not supposed to do that.

We need to know what is ahead in history. And like God's revelation to Abraham when He was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for their homosexuality, the warning was for that immediate point in time. Abraham had to act upon it and he had to tell his family and tell everybody who would listen to him, 'get out of the way. God is ready to move.' So, here John is told, 'I'm taking you into my confidence John. You must not keep this vision a secret. Write it down and let the believers know about it. And let them know particularly what!' "He said to me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy.'" Here we have again the very words of the prophecy of this book, the Book of the Revelation, the words are what is important. This refers to the divinely inspired Book of the Revelation, which closes the New Testament Canon of Scripture. The book is indeed a record of future events and therefore it's a prophecy from God. That prophecy is conveyed to us in words which have meaning so that it can be understood. I think it's significant that he said, don't mess up the words. The words are what's important. Read the words and the words have meaning and what the words say. That's the meaning of this book.

Now it was the Holy Spirit anticipating that people were going to try to keep this Book under a shroud. They didn't want people to know what was in Revelation because it messed up their theology or it messed up their humanistic view of man's eternal progression. So, here the emphasis is upon the Word of God, which is what expository preaching is about. Any preaching that you listen to that does not pick up and deal with the words of Scripture is preaching you should be suspicious of. You know that the preacher is roaming here and there on his own opinions and his own point of view. You cannot leave that service and say, 'this is what God has said.' You may kind of think that that's what he meant; but if he has not dealt with the words, you don't know that! It is the words of Scripture itself, and what those words mean, and how they are associated in the background of the times and all the other grammatical factors; then you know what God has said.

**The Warning is Real!**

So, if the Book of the Revelation is not treated as literal meaning, (and this is the sacred duty of the pastor-teacher, to expound the book to the people of God,) if he does not explain it, as for what the words are saying, then he has not given us a message of revelation. And if the revelation, the words of the Book of the Revelation, are given symbolic meaning, then the true message is sealed up, the very thing that John is told not to do. If you say these words are symbols, not actual what they say, you have sealed up the real meaning of this book. The book then becomes meaningless and off they go into human conjecture and speculation. Now, if you have the time to read the hundreds of books which are written explaining the Book of the Revelation which operate on the non-literal basis, you would be appalled. You cannot believe the crazy things that are said as explaining what this book is saying and how far everybody disagrees with everybody else because it's human speculation. There is no anchor point in the Spirit of God having said or written anything. So, the mind of the Holy Spirit is conveyed through the normal meaning of words.

That's true about the whole Bible. Revelation, however, you know very well is a sealed book for most Christians because of the neglect, the incompetence, the indifference, and the prejudice of their pastors. Remember that God always speaks in plain language, but the religious leaders having their own agenda and their own theology speak with forked tongues when it comes to the Book of the Revelation. God always speaks in plain language. That's why we know the Charismatics are not speaking in tongues; because they speak gibberish and gibberish cannot be understood. The Gifts of Tongues was the gift of known languages. They are always languages that somebody in the world spoke and somebody could understand them; but nobody can understand what is gibberish. You can stand up and sound off in a charismatic meeting and somebody else will stand up and say, 'I have the interpretation.' And they will go off talking, a lot of interpretation in the King James language. And everybody will say, 'gee, that's wonderful.'

One Dallas Seminary student at one time, had the audacity to go into a meeting, and he sounded off something from his Hebrew Bible. And somebody else got up and gave the interpretation of what he had said. And it had nothing to do with it at all. Then he stood up and said, 'I'm sorry, I just quoted [and he named the passage from the Hebrew Bible,], and it says....' But did it change their minds? No. [They said] 'How dare you come in here with such a sad case to make us look like fools? We want to be able to act like fools without you calling attention to it. Beat it, Buddy!'

They never learn. They get what they want, but God never speaks in gibberish. Once you get that principle, you'll be nobody's fool. You always know that God speaks in understandable language.

Therefore, when the pastor-teacher is admonished in 2 Timothy 4:2, the verse of Dallas Seminary, 2 Timothy 4:2 says, "Preach the word." And when it says, "Preach the word," it means explain what the text of Scripture says. Treat the words with respect for they are the words of the Holy Spirit. And the rest of that verse in 2 Timothy 4:2 says that the Pastor/Teacher is to do this whether the people say, 'gee, that's wonderful, I want to hear more,' whether they're willing to listen to it, whether they're willing to accept it or not. His job is to give them the information. Their job is to believe it. He is not to lay on his own shoulders their negative volition, but he is certainly to lay on his own shoulders the failure to inform them of what God has said. So, it is sinful and tragic to keep Church Age believers in the dark about the content of God's great prophecy here in the Book of the Revelation.

**The End is At Hand**

Now in contrast to John's warning and direction not to seal up the book, Daniel, when he wrote his Great Prophecy, (which is an anchor point for us to understand the Book of the Revelation, we have our timetable from Daniel,) Daniel was told to seal up the meaning of his book until the end times. In the book of Daniel 12, near the end of the book, Daniel 12:4: "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words, and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."

The end of time is the period of the Church Age, and the end of time specifically is near the very end of it. It is interesting notice that people will be "going back and forth." In Heaven's name, is there anything that's more true of our society today than people running back and forth? You can't even keep mothers in the home to care for their children, let alone anything else in our society. They run "back and forth, and knowledge will increase." If there's anything true of our age, it's the explosion of knowledge, and with the computer, the accessibility to that knowledge. But Daniel is told that there'll be a time when there'll be great knowledge and great means of transmitting it and great activity on the part of people. That's when you're going to tell these things. Why? Well, this indicated that it a considerable period of time would elapse before the things that were revealed to Daniel would be fulfilled. That was the first point. The book was for a distant generation when historical events would clarify the meaning of the prophecy, especially relative to the Tribulation. So, Daniel was told you have been given a revelation, but it is not for now, it's down the line. So, just keep the book sealed up. People won't understand it, but as time goes by, they will understand it. So, the centuries were to roll by before Daniel's prophecy could be fulfilled. But the events of Revelation were always imminent because they only depend on the Rapture of the Church.

Once the Church is gone, everything in Revelation breaks loose. So, these people need to know that if you want to hang around on this earth after God removes the church, then this is what's in store for you. Therefore, when people learn about what's in Revelation, what are they doing? They're saying, 'oh, if that's the situation, I don't want to be here. I'm turning to Christ. That's the smart thing to do.' Or they say 'that's a bunch of baloney. You've made it up. I don't care. And I thumb my nose at God, I'm quite happy the way I am. I want nothing to do with Christ.' Fine, you will stay where you are and you'll be here in the Tribulation.

And therefore, Daniel's prophecy, which was in the distance, could wait, time to be understood. But Revelation can't wait because it's for now! So, Daniel's book is closed to those in his day, but it is open to us in our day.

One of the things that became very clear from the Book of Daniel is the progression of world empires. He lived in the Babylonian empire. Who would have thought that a great Medo-Persian Empire would replace the powerful empire of Babylon? Who would have thought that the Greeks would come along and conquer and replace the Medo-Persians? And who would have thought that the Roman Empire, which to this very day, the Roman Empire is still in existence to this day, but fractured into nations, would overcome the great Greek culture? Well, we didn't know that by reading Daniel. But now when we read back, we say, 'aha, that's what's the meaning of the different metals in the statue. That's the meaning of those different animals representing different eras of time. Now it comes into focus and now we understand the timetable of Daniel for the end of time and the finishing of God's promises to the Jewish people. All that comes into perspective. But Daniel was closed to his day, but it is clear to our day and Revelation is for now.

[Back in Revelation 22:10] "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, [Why?] for the time is near." And the word time is the Greek word kairos. And the word kairos looks like this, k a i r o s. Kairos is a word that does not mean time as 'this hour, this minute, this moment.' It means 'time in a vast period, an era.' So, therefore it is a season. It refers to a season of time rather than the specific hour. The season is that following the Rapture of the Church. He says, 'There is a season now.

People need to know this because the season is "near."' And here we have this word "Eggus," e g g u s, and this word literally means 'at hand.' Here again, we have to understand specifically what is being said. Are the things of the Book of the Revelation going to be soon, right after it was written, or is it going to be in proximity, that is, the next thing that's going to take place at the right time in God's order? The time factor in this word does not mean soon always. It does not mean that it's immediately within grasp.

**The End is Near, Not Necessarily Soon**

Here's an example to show you that, Matthew 4:17. And I stress this because those who reject the Book of the Revelation as having any merit now, saying it's often fulfilled by 70 A.D., do so on the basis of this word, that it's soon, meaning "immediate." Matthew 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" Here you have the verb form of this word. It looks like this, e g g i z o, eggizo. So it has the same meaning, that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This is a reference to the earthly messianic kingdom proclaimed in the Davidic Covenant. It is the millennial kingdom of Christ. It is not referring to God's spiritual kingdom, which always exists. This was a kingdom which was to come. That was the rule of Christ here upon this earth. Here "at hand," means in close proximity because the Jews could have accepted Jesus Christ as their promised Messiah. They could have welcomed Him as their king and the earthly kingdom would have been established right then 2,000 years ago. They could have accepted Him, and God would have made some other provision for the death of Christ to cover the sins of the world. But they did not accept Him, though it was in close proximity to them in the person of the King, Jesus Christ, who is at hand.

What Israel did, as you know, was rejected Christ as their Messiah from God. So, the establishment of the kingdom was postponed. Please do not make the mistake that amillennialists make of saying that the Kingdom of David was canceled and the Church was substituted for it. That is not what the Bible teaches and you get into a lot of confusion with Scripture because of that. And it dulls your sense of who you are as a member of the royal family of God. Israel had his promises postponed, that's all.

And Israel rejected Christ as the Messiah, so, the kingdom was postponed because they had to do two things for the kingdom to come in. The individual Jew was told that he had to repent of his sin and to be baptized by immersion with water in order to demonstrate his repentance, that he was recognizing that he was a sinner and that he was subjecting himself to the authority of the king and the rule of righteousness represented by God's kingdom on this earth. Matthew 3:7-12, "But [John the Baptist,] when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, [these religious hypocrites,] he said to them, 'You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'" You see, John the Baptist had taken the Seminary Course 101 "Socking it to 'em," and he knew how to sock it to 'em. He called these magnificently dressed men who were the religious leaders, a bunch of vipers, snakes. What do vipers do? They kill you! They give you poison. He says, 'Who in the world gave you the sense to flee from the wrath to come? You don't have enough sense to do that even. Here you're coming to me to demonstrate your repentance by my baptism?'

[continuing in Matthew 3:8] "Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance." [He said if you were truly repentant, your lives would show that, your lives don't show it!] and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father;' for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up the children to Abraham. [They were counting on the fact that they were Jews and that as Jews, they are going to heaven. This is the mistake the Jews make today. John the Baptizer said, 'hey, God can make stone heads out of these rocks just like you. That doesn't mean anything.] And the ax is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. [referring to them.] As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, [as a sign of repentance,] but He who is coming after me [Christ] is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." He's going to throw the grain in the air and the chaff is going to blow away. And the grain that falls, the believers, He is going to care for in His kingdom; but the rest of you are going to be burned up in the Lake of Fire. So, Israel individually had to repent, but they also had to do this as a nation officially.

Israel as a nation, with its leaders, had to repent, for the kingdom of God was at hand. It was in proximity and it was ready to be instituted. This is what John preached. This is what the apostles preached. This is what Jesus preached. Notice in Matthew 11, beginning at verse 20, Then He [Jesus] began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you." Here's one of the evidences that there is different levels of suffering in Hell. There are varying levels depending on how much negative volition, how much sin, and how much human good you produce, and how much you ignored information you had. Verse 23, "And you Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. [Now that's something, that a city like Sodom with the obsession of the sexual perversion of homosexuality, that they could break loose from that, had they seen the evidences that these people saw from the hand of Jesus.] Nevertheless I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you." Things are going to be easier for the people who lives in Sodom than these who lived in Capernaum that had such access to the Word of God.

Then in Matthew 12:41 we may add, "The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here." Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, and here, Christ is here, the very Messiah King, and you don't believe Him! Something greater is here. What is that greater? The Kingdom of God is eggus, is near, is in proximity. Now, to show you the meaning of these words, because the nation did not repent of its evil individually, and because they did not repent officially, but instead they crucified their Messiah, the kingdom, which was in close proximity, was not established. Jesus returned to Heaven, and the kingdom that had been at hand was now postponed. The at hand kingdom will finally be established after the Tribulation judgments. That kingdom has not been canceled. It has only been postponed.

Luke 21:31, "Even so you, too, when you see these things happening, [the things of the Tribulation,] recognize that the kingdom of God is near." The kingdom of God again, eggus, is going to be in close proximity.

So, the time will come when the kingdom that is at hand even now will be established; but that doesn't mean soon. This word does not mean soon. You can see how at the time of Jesus, while He said the kingdom is here, it is at hand soon, it was not soon because they did not rise to the repentance. Therefore, it was postponed. It simply meant that in God's order, it was ready to go. This is what it means here. When all is in place, this kingdom will come about. The Rapture of the Church is the trigger which sets off the Book of the Revelation events. The Rapture is imminent. Nothing has to be done for that event to take place. That means that the fulfillment of the Book of the Revelation, which follows immediately upon the departure of the Church, is also imminent. Everything in Revelation is really imminent. It's just waiting for the Church to go; once the Church is gone, Revelation begins. You cannot say of the Book of the Revelation therefore, that it was all fulfilled by 70 A.D., and then in 96 A.D., when the book was written, speak about proximity to fulfillment. That's what this word means. It is near, it is not soon.

The time for the consummation of God's plan of the ages has been imminent all during the Church phase. So, we thank God for the fact that we have been informed from this book how we should conduct ourselves, what we may anticipate, and the fact that we have a Bible which is not sealed up. It is open to our understanding. And the book of prophecy, the prophetic Scriptures, give us great orientations to give us stability and to give us poise in a world of unpleasant people and of unpleasant events.

The time of our joy with Christ is near indeed. Soon? I can't say that, but it is the next thing. When that happens, then the world will find out how true this Book of the Revelation really is. Thank God that you have had the perception given to you by Him to know that that is true.

Our father, we want to thank thee for this time in the Word of God, and we ask you to help us.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1989

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