



Sermon Growth Guide

July 4, 2021

Future Jesus - Jesus the Morning Star

Revelation 22:12-21

Key Verse: Revelation 22:16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”

Big Idea: Jesus is our bright Morning Star, our sure and steady hope.

Foundations

Happy Independence Day! What a gift to be governed by elected civil servants who are charged with faithfully representing the people. The signers of the Declaration of Independence believed with utmost resolution that King George had not only abdicated his responsibilities as King, but was also causing great harm by crushing liberty. What are you most thankful for in our nation today?

Our Scripture this week contains its own strong tones of allegiance. Indeed, the book of Revelation as a whole could rightly be seen as a declaration of independence, a breaking from the tyranny of darkness and an affirmation of total allegiance to the Kingdom that will never spoil, perish or fade. Through the book of Revelation, God’s people are called to faithfully follow the Worthy Lamb to whatever end, walking as clear witnesses to the Lamb’s free gift of life to all who come.

Celebrate this special land, America, that the Lord has strategically placed you in to be His salt and light. Dig deeply into what it means to be a citizen of America, but one who has given ultimate allegiance to Christ and His Kingdom. Finally, pray that God will guide and guard your Life Group, growing you each this week into an even greater reflection of the beloved Son.

Understanding God’s Word

Reading through the passage in its entirety, identify how many times Jesus speaks.

According to verse 17, who is invited to “come” and how much does the water of life (salvation) cost?

Where do we find the declaration, “Come, Lord Jesus”? Discuss the richness of this concise prayer.

Applying God’s Word

Jesus declares that He is our bright Morning Star. The Morning Star represents the last star in the sky before daybreak; it is a sure and steady hope that day is coming. The hope of Jesus is not a “shot in the dark” kind of hope. Rather, the hope of Jesus is anchored in His life and resurrection. Jesus is coming soon. That’s not one possibility, that’s a soon reality as sure as the sun rose this morning. How might thinking about Christian Hope in this way change the way you live your life?

Witnessing God’s Word

Identify and pray for those around you who God is placing on your heart to see and respond to Jesus, our bright Morning Star. Discern with your group how you can shine the hope of the gospel into their life.

Happy July 4th! America has so much to offer, doesn't it? I have so many fond memories in this land. On Friday I had the chance to visit the new Pike's Peak Summit House visitor's center. Wow! I was there with my family and mom and dad who are visiting over the holiday weekend. The weather was perfect and I even ran into our own Stan Stevens at the top, one of the Mountain Rangers on the summit. America! And just this past week I returned from my first visit to the Sand Dunes. Who's been to the Sand Dunes? Stunning! Wild! America has so much to offer, doesn't it?

More so, I appreciate what the American Constitution stands for: representative, democratic governance, equality, opportunity, liberty and religious freedom. I believe that it was for these ideals that both my grandfathers fought in World War II. I keep a flag in my office to remember their service and to bring to bear on my mind all that it means for God to have me right here, in America, for such a time as this. I am one of His ambassadors in this great and beautiful nation that has great and beautiful potential.

So, yes, I deeply appreciate America, but my ultimate affection and, yes, allegiance, is to a Kingdom not of this world. It is of this other place, this other Kingdom and its King, that I have been called to proclaim to you today. With this in mind, please open your Scripture to the very last chapter, Revelation 22. We walked through the beginning of chapter 22 last Sunday and today we're moving through the final 10 verses. LET'S PRAY: Father God, on this Independence Day we remember that you strategically place each of your people in a time and a place as oaks of righteousness to declare your excellencies that more may believe in your name and there find true and lasting life. We thank you for blessing us with the opportunity to be your ambassadors in The United States of

America and we beseech you—that by your mercy you would call more and more, that the next Great Awakening may be now, that the coming years in America would be recorded in history as a time of great harvest, for your name's sake, Savior of the universe, our bright Morning Star, amen.

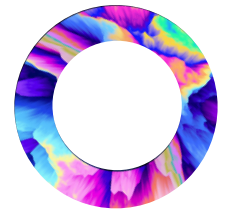
Our (Revelation 22:12-21) text states what we must do so clearly, our hearts must cry out in sincerity, "Come, Lord Jesus." That's it! It may sound simple at first, but, actually, it is impossible to say those three words in full sincerity without the grace of God being poured into your heart.

COME. A word of invitation. Here, a word of unlimited invitation for Christ to rule and reign unmitigated in your heart.

LORD. A word of allegiance. A word that beckons, no, requires, you to place yourself in full, unreserved submission to Christ. **JESUS.** The name that is above every name. The name at which every person on heaven and earth will bow. Nuance. Specificity. Not a fill in the blank. Salvation through Christ alone.

COME LORD JESUS. Surely one could not do better to sum up the entire Lord's Prayer than with these three words. For the child of God, these three words are our deepest and most constant prayer, Come Lord Jesus.

Friends, let me assure you that there is no way you can truly say and walk out these three words, "Come, Lord Jesus," on your own will. If you're outside of Christ at this moment, you can't do it on your own! Saying these words requires that you know that there is a God and that He has called you to Himself and that a part of that call is a call to holiness and purity. Look at verses 14 & 15: "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.” The book of Revelation discloses that there is a Kingdom breaking into this world that is unstoppable and permanent. Here is a pronouncement of blessing for all who “wash their robes.” That is, blessed are those who abstain from the ways of the beast by following the lamb; they will “go through the gates into the city.” That is, they will enter into the Kingdom of God. Sounds like the way to go, doesn’t it?

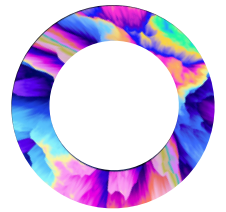
What are the ways of the beast? How might you excel in following the patterns of the world that leave you outside the city gates? Practice the magic arts. Here is a clear recognition that the spiritually demonic is real and present. You can embrace the demonic realm through alliance with the occult. Scripture says avoid it; it’s a mark of the beast. Practice sexual immorality. This one feels a little more culturally relevant than the magic arts one above. Sleep around. Join the sexual revolution that says that sexuality is mere biology and preference. Recently, culture is more interested in the preference piece than the biology piece. Scripture calls us away from this crushingly low view of sexuality; it’s a mark of the beast. Practice murder. Advocate for increased funding for women and men to “plan” their parenthood by choosing which heartbeats are worth preserving. Cast a vote in favor of “medical aid in dying” laws. See where that slope goes. Ignore unjust wars. Do anything that disregards the sacredness of human life from conception to final breath. Scripture says avoid it; it’s a mark of the beast. Practice idolatry. Fail to put God first. Break the Sabbath. Kill your prayer life. Presume to be your own god. Define “freedom” for yourself. Declare independence from God. Scripture says avoid it; it’s a mark of the beast. Finally, if you want to follow the patterns of the world, don’t forget to love and practice falsehood. To love and practice falsehood is to hate the truth. Jesus is the truth. To propagate lies is to

join Satan in “leading the whole world astray” (Revelation 12:9). Scripture says avoid it; it’s a mark of the beast.

Your default, pre-Christ posture, and mine, includes a preference for all of the above categories-to-be-avoided. In our own nation, in our nation’s rightly guided desire to let people take ownership of themselves and pursue their own convictions, we call this liberty; all of these vices are not only possible, but very much lawful and present in our nation. In our own strength, you and I will always error toward the ways and patterns of the world, which is why we are also given the warnings in verses 18 & 19: “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.”

This is the strongest place in Scripture where such a clear warning and assurance of curse occurs for the person who would be tempted to alter the Spirit-inspired and guided words of Scripture. Why is it that you and I are constantly tempted to take what God says and revise it, even if ever so slightly, to fit our preferences for how we think things are and should be? Why is it that we are so constantly pressured to kick Christ off the throne, declare revolution, and jump onto that ultimate seat of authority ourselves?

In his work on Revelation, Michael Gorman reminds us that “Revelation is not about the antichrist, but about the living Christ. It is not about a rapture out of this world, but about faithful discipleship in this world.” (Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, XV). We are called not to escapism, nor to assimilation, rather you and I are called



to faithful witness of the worthy Lamb! If all we have is our own will and our own best effort, we will always choose the patterns of this world, but in Christ we have a living hope, a visible Savior who guides us into the future.

Today we conclude our series on **Future Jesus**. The particularities of our own futures are unknown to us, but we rest in peace in the sure hope that Jesus is there. Therefore, come what may, our hope is that we belong fully and forever to Jesus. “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Revelation 22:12-13). This is the first of three times in our passage today that Jesus speaks in the first person, Jesus talking directly to us. Jesus, the real flesh and blood Christ, resurrected Messiah, is coming soon. His coming again soon is our hope.

Christian hope is not like hope of the world. Christian hope is anchored in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, a historical reality. Jesus, the Son, rose from the dead by the will of the Father and in the power of the Spirit; the Triune God conquers death. Jesus tramples down death and declares that He is coming again soon! At His resurrection, Jesus inaugurates the greatest Kingdom revolution of all time, a Kingdom that will never “perish, spoil or fade.”

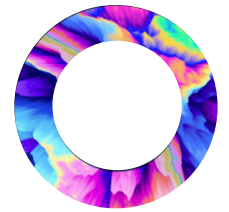
God is the creator of time and is, therefore, naturally beyond time. **Future Jesus** reaches into our hearts today, lays claim on our allegiance, and calls us to follow Him, the worthy Lamb, by faithfully witnessing to His total Lordship over the entire cosmos. Tim Keller, in his new book *Hope in Times of Fear*, writes, “The resurrection means not merely that Christians have a hope for the future but that they have a hope that comes from the future. The Bible’s startling message is that when Jesus rose, he brought

the future kingdom of God into the present... In the resurrection we have the presence of the future” (Keller, *Hope in Times of Fear*, 24, 31).

Verse 13: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” Jesus is utterly unique! He is the beginning and the end. There was not a time before Christ since “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:1-5).

Jesus speaks for the second time in our passage in Verse 16: “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” Listen, friends, when Jesus gets this repetitious with us you better lean in. Jesus’ final words of Scripture are that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End—Jesus encompasses all of time, He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings. And here Jesus is the Root and the Offspring of David. Jesus makes way for David and then follows David. Jesus gives life to His people, undergirds His people, and leads His people into their forever. Future Jesus is the Great I Am who was and is and who is to come! Then Jesus sums up this whole list of self-descriptors with this one image—Jesus is the bright Morning Star.

The bright morning star, Venus, not a star, but a planet, is often the last “star” to be seen in the dawning new day before the sun appears in its fullness. The dawn is breaking, but the sun is not yet directly visible. The bright Morning Star represents the kind of hope of Christianity—O, I hope you catch this,



this will change each and every day of your life. Christian Hope is not a shot-in-the-dark kind of hope, a hope that has no reasonable foundation, a “I see dark clouds everywhere and ‘I hope’ that I don’t get rained on.” Rather, Christianity says, “I see the dawning light, I see the final star in the sky, I know that the sun is about to appear in its fullness!”

I mentioned earlier that I visited the Sand Dunes last week. Well, I also visited Zapata Falls, which is very near the Sand Dunes. Zapata Falls is a stunning waterfall that takes some effort to see—the trail ends and you have to get in the creek (creek is an understatement—it’s a rushing mountain creek that can kill you if you’re not careful!). You have to enter a crevasse, unclimbable jagged rock walls. You have to keep working upward and inward. You have to turn a corner. It gets darker and more dangerous. Now, let me tell you, I thought this was a “normal” family waterfall hike. You know, where you hike up to a waterfall, take a picture and then hike back to your car. I had no idea I would be climbing through slippery, rushing, freezing water—not until the trail ended and I couldn’t yet see the waterfall! And I had to keep going because I told my 3-year old that we were hiking to a waterfall and to not actually see the waterfall would be like breaking a promise to my son. So when we got to the end of the trail and couldn’t see the waterfall, only one reasonable course of action occurred to me—put my son on my back and keep going.

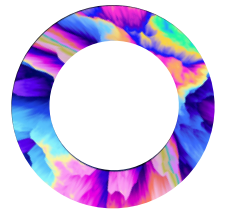
As it turns out, approaching a waterfall is a great metaphor for Christian Hope and helps us to understand Jesus as our bright Morning Star. At the trailhead there was a sign, “waterfall this way.” The Scriptures are a thousand arrows written across the generations with greater intertextuality astonishment than any document in human history, all pointing straight to Jesus Christ. My wife stopped us as we turned a corner on the

trail, still a far way off from the falls. “Do you hear that? I can hear the waterfall!” When we gather in this place week after week, we begin to hear the approach of the King who is coming soon.

When we arrived at the water’s edge, the sound was no longer quiet, but loud. Everything is telling me that I’m close. Some of you have entered your 90s. The number one age group I first noticed returning to the church most quickly when we reopened for in-person worship was our oldest generation. Hear my heart here: what I realized is that our oldest brothers and sisters are often the ones who know most deeply that they are about to see the bright Morning Star. When your senses tell you that you are about to come face-to-face with a rushing waterfall, you cannot help but feel excited. I will never forget one testimony from the first Sunday of re-opening, “Of course I’m here, where else could I be, I’m in my 90s now and I’m about to meet Jesus face-to-face.” O, that every one of us would live each and every day of our lives with that kind of expectancy! Everything is telling me that I’m close.

And as I’m walking upstream, little by little, I take heart knowing that I will soon see the waterfall. It’s getting darker and more dangerous. I am recognizing that I am fragile. The noise soon became so loud that I had to shout to my son who was on my back so he could hear me. But we didn’t see the waterfall until a final turn, a final bend around the cliffs and we were right up on Zapata Falls.

The noise of the waterfall is like the bright Morning Star. Christian Hope does not disappoint. Christian Hope is anchored in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, who says, “Look, I am coming soon!” Will you believe Him who stands at the door of your heart and knocks? Him who has demonstrated His love for you by giving His life for you? Him who was prophesied through



the ages? Him who is coming again soon? Will you take faith? Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1). Christian Hope is the assurance of what is soon to take place, not a shot in the dark, but a “I can hear the rushing water,” and “I see that there is but one star left in the sky. The sun in its fullness is just a minute away.” The life of Jesus is the sound of a rushing waterfall soon to be in plain view. Jesus is the bright Morning Star, holding together your past, present and future, pointing to the culmination and consolation of human history as we know it.

Today’s passage contains the final verses of the Bible. The Bible concludes with these words. The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life... Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen. God’s Holy Spirit breaths faith into our hearts. Faith is the confidence of what we hope for. We hope for eternal life in Christ. That hope is not baseless; it’s anchored in the resurrection of Jesus. Christian Hope is the sound of an approaching waterfall; the bright Morning Star that guarantees that the Sun is almost here, only hold on a moment longer; remain faithful. I don’t know the particularities of your life, but I do know that each one of us has cause to doubt. But I stand before you now and declare to you that in Christ you have greater cause to hope, to hold on to your bright Morning Star. Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life... Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The gift of God is a free gift available to all. It’s available to you right now. Only believe. Hear the sound of heaven; let it be all the courage you need to turn the corner.

Hear and respond to the sound of

heaven coming near you this day. Imagine your life fully surrendered to Jesus Christ, the bright Morning Star, your Hope. The Bright Morning Star tells us that “the night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light” (Romans 13:12). Are you living with the armor of God’s light fastened tightly to your chest? How else will we as God’s people be Light and Life for this City? Are you living the life God has called you to? Have you exercised your independence or by faith become fully dependent upon God alone? On this great Independence Day, where does your ultimate allegiance really lie? O, that you would appreciate this nation in which God has called you to live and move and have your being. But above all, live a life worthy of being called as an ambassador of heaven for such a time as this.

Allow me to close with this exhortation from 1 Peter 2: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light... Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

Let’s pray: Lord Jesus, you are our bright Morning Star, our Hope. In you we know the dawn will turn to day in just a moment’s time. On this Independence Day, we thank you for strategically placing us in this time and place as Your Chosen People. Though we be foreigners and exiles, empower us by your Spirit to declare your praises all the days of our lives, until you come again. We know you are coming soon. And so we join together with one heart’s cry, “Come, Lord Jesus.” Amen.

