

• *Trustworthy and true*

'These words are trustworthy and true', says Revelation 21:5b. Revelation 22:6–10 begins by repeating the point. ⁶*And he said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true.'* Then the revelation goes on to explain what is meant.

1. *God is faithful in sending His word when it is needed*

1. **God is faithful in sending his word when it is needed.** *And he said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true, and the Lord, the God of the prophetic utterances of the prophets, sent his angel to show to his servants the things that must soon happen.'* The Greek says literally 'the God of the spirits of the prophets' but 'spirits' here has the idea of prophetic utterances (as in 2 Thessalonians 2:2). The point is that God sovereignly controls the content and the timing of the revelations he sends to his people. When he sees his people being persecuted and knows that they need a special word of encouragement, he is faithful in sending to them the word that they need. So the revelations that we find in this 'book of Revelation' were sent to the people of Roman Asia Minor just at the time when they needed them. God is faithful in sending his word.

• *God controls the content and timing of revelations*

2. *God is faithful in sending Jesus at the right time and in the right way*

2. **God is faithful in sending Jesus at the right time and in the right way.** The central content of the message that was sent to the churches (and now to us) is that Jesus is coming at any moment. ⁷*'And behold, I come quickly'*, says our Lord Jesus Christ. It is always true. Even if Jesus does not 'come quickly' in the strict measurement of time (and Jesus has delayed his physical coming for thousands of years), yet he has other ways of coming. If we look for his intervention he answers our prayers; he acts in a way that overthrows our enemies; he pours out irresistible blessing upon us; he takes an oath in which he lets us know that a victory has been achieved. It is in the sure and certain knowledge that in one way or another Jesus will intervene in our situation that we keep the words of the book of Revelation. Jesus says: *'And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is the person who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.'* If Jesus is faithful in coming to us just when we need him, then he asks for readiness and responsiveness on our part. He asks that we should take seriously the symbolic descriptions, the threats and the promises that he has revealed – all of which centre upon himself. He has revealed himself to us in this 'book of Revelation'. Now he promises that a blessing will come, not upon mere knowledge but upon 'keeping' what he has said to us.

• *Jesus comes quickly – answers prayers, overthrows enemies and pours blessing upon us*

• *He asks us to be ready and responsive*

3. *God is faithful in making his word available to all the churches*

3. **God is faithful in making his word available to all the churches.** John must make this revelation known to Christians everywhere. At first, John himself is overwhelmed at the greatness of what is happening to him. He is meeting an angel! For a moment he almost worships the angel! ⁸*I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things, and when I heard them and saw them, I fell down to worship in front of the feet of the angel who showed me these things.* ⁹*But he said to me, 'See that you do not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you, and with your brothers the prophets, and with the people who keep the words of this book. Worship God!'* No matter how majestic and impressive are the angels they are never to be worshipped.

• *No angel should be worshipped*

• All worship belongs to God

• John must get on with telling the churches about his revelation

• This revelation – for now!

• Daniel's prophecies – for future generations (but now beginning to be fulfilled)

• We must be faithful in spreading God's word – the age of fulfilment is here

• A foretaste of His glorious return

The servants of God do not want to be worshipped. We should never give to any created being the honour that belongs to God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. No Christian leader, no angel, no great Christian – not even Mary the mother of Jesus – should ever take God's glory upon themselves. John must not waste time honouring an angel who does not want to be honoured. Rather he must get on with the work of telling about this revelation that he has for the churches. The angel speaks: ¹⁰And he said to me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.' He is told not to seal the book. It is for now! There is a contrast here between what is said to John and what was said to Daniel¹¹. Daniel knew that many of his predictions were for many years ahead. Some of his revelations were explicitly and clearly for later generations, and the people of Israel would be encouraged in seeing them work out and would know that they had long decades or centuries to wait before the Saviour would come. But John is told that now even Daniel's prophecies have begun to be fulfilled. And what is predicted in the book of Revelation will (he is told) be largely taking place immediately! (Interpretations that are too futuristic go astray here. The book of Revelation is not so irrelevant to our needs right now that it must be locked up for the future.)

If God has been faithful in giving his word, we must be faithful in spreading his word. The age of fulfilment is here. We are seeing right now the Lord Jesus Christ going out conquering and to conquer. We know what is happening in this world. Jesus is bringing his gospel to it. The forces of wickedness may often persecute us but they are doomed to failure. At any moment along the way Jesus is able to come to us in mercy and rescue. Every time he comes we experience a foretaste of what will happen when he comes visibly in majesty and glory.

¹¹ Daniel 8:26; 12:4, 9



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