
Until He Comes: New Year Reflections

Revelation 22:1-9

We are coming this morning to the Lord's Table in the view of the birth of Christ and the coming New Year.

The first coming of Jesus – to bring us our salvation ...

The second coming of Jesus – to bring us the final fulfillment...

In between, the expanding kingdom of Jesus as He gathers in His elect people...

Serving the Table

Let us share the table and then consider, as time allows, a text to lift our hearts.

Some Instructions

Be prepared to share testimonies...

All who have publicly professed Christ through baptism are invited...

We are worthy to eat of this table only by the mercy and grace of Christ...

We are sharing in this corporately as the body of Christ...

In preferring one another, we wait and partake together...

The Text - Matthew 26:26-29

For our salvation, Jesus “was broken and spilled out...”

The Bread

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”

His broken body signifies the bearing of our sins and the punishment He bore...

The Cup

²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

His outpoured blood signifies the giving of His own life that we might live...

The Anticipation

²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”

That newness began after the resurrection and will reach its culmination in the new heavens and new earth...

The Glory of What We Anticipate (Revelation 22:1-5)

¹ Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

What amazing imagery for the glory of a future reality. We must never forget that what we are moving toward in life and death can only be known in images and metaphors. If we turn these into brutal facts or literal things, we will lose the vivid brightness of the new creation.

Here is what we are to imagine and anticipate...

A throne, bright and shining with glory of God in the face of Christ...

A river of the Spirit's life-giving flow rushing down from the mountain of God and spreading into the hearts of the redeemed.

The city of living stones, the people of God and the chief cornerstone, the Lord Jesus, filled with the life-giving waters from God's throne.

A living, fruit-bearing tree nourished and sustained by the Spirit who brings spiritual healing to all the people groups.

All the curse is gone with all its chaos, decay, deadness and darkness. It is dispelled by the bright sun of Jesus' glory.

All of God's sons and servants will be known as His and will worship and serve and reign with Him, forever.

This is what the Lord has made possible through what we remember, reflect and respond to around Communion.

The Surety of What We Anticipate (v.6)

⁶ And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

Let us never think that just because we think of these things in pictures, images and metaphors that they are not real. We are not watching "Lord of the Rings". We are listening and looking behind the shimmering curtain of this present reality into the bright, sweet reality that exists even now.

But all this is true. The words are true. The revelation is trustworthy. It is our shame that we live lives so uninformed, so untransformed, so unenlivened by this anticipation...

The Privileges in the Light of What We Anticipate (v.7-9)

Two important privileges come to us because we are recipients of the revelation of the glorious things to come. They also have a sense of responsibility attached as well.

The Blessedness in Obeying the Scriptures (v.7)

⁷ "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

In obeying the Lord, we live in the realm of God's grace and blessedness. This is not just a bare, legal obedience. This is bending the trajectory of our obedience towards God's purposes.

It is the fascinating promise of obeying the words of a prophetic book. So, in our anticipation of the Lord's return, there are *attitudes* to adopt, as well as *actions* to do.

The Imperative in Worshiping the Lord (v.8-9)

⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, ⁹ but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

We have a wrong tendency. In an appropriate desire to honor God's messengers, whether angels or shepherds, we begin to worship them. Even heavenly beings bringing divine revelation are not to be worshipped.

We must follow the imperative of all the Scripture: *worship God...*

This is the heart of what we anticipate at the Lord's table. We look back at what He has done for us in His first coming. We live now in the already and not yet of the New Covenant. And we look forward to His return with all the final reality of what we look and long for.

As we prepare to worship the Lord in song,

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power, and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!

Let us sing with joy!!