

Text: Rev. 22:18-21

Title: "The right response to Revelation"

Time: 1/27/2019 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Emergency response is a blessing to our lives that often goes unnoticed to us because we do not experience many real emergencies. The readiness of first-responders in our community first came to light to me when we were burning the bacon at our men's prayer meeting at 5am on a Monday morning and our alarms went off at church. Our fire chief and some of his men were there to help.

In the middle of our prayer meeting a couple of weeks ago, Brother Mike's alarm went off on his radio and so he had to respond to help. It has been a blessing to me to see how some are willing to do that for our community. Our lives are blessed with the way these neighbors are willing to respond to our emergencies.

Having read the Book of Revelation together now for many months, one thing is certain, and that is that we have read about a future filled with emergencies that people are going to have to endure under the judgment of God. We have also read of many blessings for those who escape this great tribulation period.

These future emergencies and opportunities for blessing all demand a response, and the final verses of the book describe for us a right response to Revelation. That is the title of the message this morning, and I want us to notice three very practical ways to respond correctly to all that we have learned from this book together.

I. Respond by faithfulness to the local church (v. 16).

Illustration: First-responders are part of an emergency response team of some kind. The New Boston Fire Department is a team like that. It is a unique organization, designed specifically to deal with emergencies. They have special equipment, special procedures, special training, and a special command structure to ensure that they are able to meet the challenges of future emergencies.

Application: The book of Revelation describes the coming emergency – God’s judgments upon a sinful world – but it also is clear that Jesus has set up a specialized organization that He desires to use to help prepare people for these coming emergencies – the local church. From start to finish, Revelation is a book addressed to seven local churches (Rev. 1:4, 11; 22:16). The word *church* appears 19 times in Revelation (KJV). Only Acts (22) and 1 Corinthians (21) mention it more. As it describes these many coming emergencies of judgment and opportunities of blessing, it is clear that Jesus expects church members to be the His first responders to help people survive what is coming.

Illustration: If there is a fire in New Boston, and I follow all the fire trucks to that fire, and then want to jump into the building and start putting out the flames, what are the fire-fighters going to tell me? They are going to say, “Get back!” I am not helping a situation like that, because I am not prepared as a member of the fire-fighting force to deal with this kind of thing effectively.

The same is true for the spiritual work of Jesus’s church. Believers who try to help others without true love for the local church can do more harm than good. The message they proclaim is contradicted by the life that they live, and so

it is easily silenced. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). The testimony of the Dean family bore this fruit at our farewell fellowship. Why? Because they are believers who are committed to faithfulness to the assembly, the local church.

Will we be more faithful as local church members because we have studied the book of Revelation together? This is a right response to Revelation.

II. Respond by submitting to the Scripture (vv. 18-19).

Illustration: In 1521 at the Diet of Worms, a 38-year-old Martin Luther appeared before the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and was asked to recant his teachings, which were from his study of the Scriptures. He responded by submitting his conscience to the Scriptures alone: "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures or by evident reason-for I can believe neither pope nor councils alone, as it is clear that they have erred repeatedly and contradicted themselves-I consider myself convicted by the testimony of Holy Scripture, which is my basis; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. Thus I cannot and will not recant, because acting against one's conscience is neither safe nor sound. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me."

Application: The whole world expected Luther in that moment to do what Jesus here tells us not to do - to accept additions and deletions to the teaching of Scripture as the truth from God for his life and work. Luther feared Jesus's warning more than the threats of the emperor. What about you and I? The world tells us that we need to add or subtract from the word of God and insert instead Catholic dog-

ma, worldly philosophies, science falsely so-called, and perhaps above all, personal opinion as the sacred truth that will control our lives. Will we fear Jesus's warning more than the ridicule we get for rejecting these other things?

Illustration: This past Wednesday the *New York Times* published an article titled, "Karen Pence Is Teaching at Christian School That Bars L.G.B.T. Students and Teachers." The article noted that the wife of our Vice President taught art at Immanuel Christian School for 13 years, and that she has returned there to teach art twice a week. The press has attacked Mrs. Pence for accepting a job at the school because their employment policies forbid teachers from engaging in sexual sin, including homosexuality.

The article quoted criticism from Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, a professor of politics and religion at Northwestern University, who said, "Given the exclusionary nationalism in this administration and sorts of politics taken on various things, it would not be at all surprising for the second lady to associate herself [in] some prominent fashion with an institution like this. . . .It raises important issues about education and diversity, and what kind of forward-facing public officials we want representing our country at home and abroad."

Application: It also raises the question, "Will a school and a teacher recant?" It is the same question Martin Luther had to answer in 1521. We need to pray for our brothers and sisters that their answer will be, "I fear Jesus's warning more than the threats of a liberal press or an angry political mob. My conscience is captive to the Word of God. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me."

Illustration: The *NYT* article also leveled this criticism against the school: "Immanuel Christian School does not state its views on evolution on its website, but it contains

clues. A middle-school science teacher asked parents this month to pray for students who were about to study the topic. 'We will also study the importance of origins and why having an intelligent, loving Designer is crucial to our world view,' the teacher wrote.

"The students, the teacher wrote, were expected to travel in March on a field trip to the Creation Museum in Kentucky, which portrays the Bible as a book of history, asserts that the universe is 6,000 years old and claims that humans co-existed with dinosaurs. Science, on the other hand, has established that the universe is billions of years old – dinosaurs became extinct about 66 million years ago – and humans did not roam the earth with T-rex."

That is how the article ends. Well, no *NYT* article can change the fact that Revelation is true, and Genesis is true, and everything in between is true, both religiously, scientifically, and historically, and to add to or delete from the Scripture as the absolute final authority for our conscience and life is nether safe nor sound. Is that where you stand?

Deut. 4:2, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."

Deut. 12:32, "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

Prov. 30:5-6, "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

All who add to or subtract from the Scriptures will be found to be liars. God will add to them the plagues of the

book and subtract from them access to the tree of life and entrance into the city of God. Damnation awaits those who substitute for Scripture. Respond by submitting to them.

III. Respond by looking for Jesus's imminent return (v. 20).

Illustration: *Imminent* means that when we speak of the return of Jesus, we speak of something that we look for as though it could happen at any moment. Ladies, if Maureen and I were to call your home and say "We are coming over to your house quickly," and then hang up, how would you feel? Well, you would perhaps like a bit more detail than that, but lacking it, you would do your best to be ready. And if you love us, you would look forward to our coming.

Application: That is the spirit of the response of the faithful believer to Jesus's promise to come quickly, "Amen. Even so, Come Lord Jesus!" He looks forward to Jesus's return, and he wants to be ready. We find this response throughout the pages of the New Testament:

Rom. 13:12, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light."

Phil. 4:5, "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand."

1 Pet. 4:7, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

Rev. 1:3, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

Rev. 22:10, "And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand."

Archer Butler: "To seek to penetrate more closely into these awful secrets is vain. A sacred obscurity envelops them. The cloud that shrouded the actual presence of God on the mercy-seat, shrouds still his expected presence on the throne of judgment. It is a purposed obscurity, and [a] most salutary and useful obscurity, a wise and merciful denial of knowledge. In this matter it is his gracious will to be the perpetual subject of watchfulness, expectation, conjecture, fear, desire, — but no more. To cherish anticipation, he has permitted gleams of light to cross the darkness; to baffle presumption, he has made them only gleams. He has harmonized with consummate skill, every part of his revelation to produce this general result; — now speaking as if a few seasons more were to herald the new heaven and new earth, now as if his days were thousands of years; at one moment whispering into the ear of his disciple, as if ready to be revealed, at another retreating into the depth of infinite ages. It is his purpose thus to live in our faith and hope, remote yet near, pledged to no moment, possible at any; worshipped not with consternation of a near, or indifference of a distant certainty, but with the anxious vigilance that awaits a contingency ever at hand."

Do you find in your heart this morning that prayer, "Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus"? Will the truth that the Lord is at hand encourage good and discourage evil in your life today? Only this is a right response to Revelation.

Conclusion: In the end, God's grace is the only way we can respond correctly to the book of Revelation (v. 21). By nature, we do not want to be bothered with local church faithfulness; we trust other authorities instead of the Scriptures alone; and we are earthbound in our loves and desires, rather than looking forward with loving desire for the Lord who is at hand. But then comes God's grace, which can

change all that. He forgives our sin by His grace. He changes our lives by the power of that gracious forgiveness. We only need receive that in repentance by faith. How will you respond to the book of Revelation?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching