

*As I watched,  
thrones were set in place,  
and an Ancient One took his throne;  
his clothing was white as snow  
and the hair of his head like pure wool;  
his throne was fiery flames,  
and its wheels were burning fire.  
A stream of fire issued  
and flowed out from his presence.  
A thousand thousands served him,  
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.  
The court sat in judgment,  
and the books were opened.*

*As I watched in the night visions,  
I saw one like a human being  
coming with the clouds of heaven.  
And he came to the Ancient One  
and was presented before him.  
To him was given dominion  
and glory and kingship,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him.  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
that shall not pass away,  
and his kingship is one  
that shall never be destroyed.*

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

*Look! He is coming with the clouds;  
every eye will see him,  
even those who pierced him,  
and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.  
So it is to be. Amen.*

and we ought to want to know not only that these things will take place in one way or another, but when they will take place.

Is the last day tomorrow or 10 years from now, or 1000, or is it light years away?

Will it happen in an instant or will it unfold over time, or will we not even know since time itself will have ceased?

And the answer is: we don't know.

As we heard Jesus say in last week's Gospel, "of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

My friends, such unknowing should not immobilize us or leave us feeling entirely impotent.

In fact, let it fire the engines of our hope, deepen our longing,

make us stand on our tiptoes, so to speak.

Even though we Christians are to live our lives in the here and now, embracing each day – each moment – as grace, as gift from God,

our orientation should also be to what is to come

as we look beyond the now to what will be:

to the culmination of the created order and the Second Coming of Christ.

That means that there's always going to be a certain tension in our lives, or there should be – a tension between the now and what is to come.

As someone once put it,

we must not be so heavenly-minded as to be no earthly good –

but neither can we be so wedded to this world

that we give little or no thought to what is to come.

You know, I'm sure, that the last words of the entire Bible – the conclusion of the Book of Revelation are

"Come, Lord Jesus!"

Those words were the frequent prayer –

a kind of mantra –

of the earliest Christians,

the expression of their constant awareness

and their deepest longing.

Let them be for us as, as well:

"Come, Lord Jesus."

We get an echo of them every time we pray

"your kingdom come" in the Lord's Prayer.

Yes, AMEN!

"Come, Lord Jesus."