

The Forgotten Master

Mark 16.20

Scripture reading: Revelation 3.14-22

Sometimes a child misunderstands the things he hears. He relates a new description to what little experience he has had in life, and comes up with an entirely wrong picture.

Let me give you an example from my childhood. You may be able to relate to this one. I noticed that people always end their prayers by saying “amen”. My dad did when he prayed for our dinner. My Sunday School teacher did when she prayed before class. And the pastor did when he prayed a massively long prayer in the church service. (More than once I prayed that he would say “amen” sooner than he actually did!)

But what did that word “amen” mean? I figured out that it must mean “The End” . . . either that or “it’s okay to open your eyes now”.

But that is not what “amen” means. Do you know what “amen” actually means?

As we come to the end of our five part sermon on the ascension of Jesus, we are left with a single word to contemplate: “Amen”. It is the last word on the Gospel of Mark.

Mark 16:19-20 (NKJV)

¹⁹So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. **Amen.**

Did you know that the word “amen” is the most universally understood word in the world? Though it was originally a Hebrew word, it has been transliterated directly into Greek, Latin, English and nearly every other modern language. You can say “amen” anywhere on the planet and people will think you are speaking their language. Not coincidentally, the word, in its origin, is almost identical to the Hebrew word for “believe” (amam).¹

Sermon in a Sentence: **Jesus ascended for us. Amen.**

In this series, we have learned that there are at least four benefits to the ascension:

1. Jesus reigns for us – salvation and sanctification. This is the posture of His authority.
2. Jesus defends for us – advocacy and intercession. This is the position of His accessibility.
3. Jesus delegates to us – commission and Comforter. This is the process of His expandability.
4. Jesus returns for us – Amen and amen. This is the permanence of His Excellency.

¹Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G281). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

This is what we are considering today. Jesus returns for us. Jesus said, ³ And **if I go and prepare a place** [ascension] for you, **I will come again** [second coming] and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. (John 14:3 NKJV)

Amen? Yes, amen.

I want to point out to you four dynamics of the word “amen” – each relate to the returning Christ, and the permanence of His Excellency.

1. A Sovereign Definition

What does the word Amen mean? I have discovered that it actually means far more than what I assumed when I was a child. Amen has two meanings – one applies if the word is used at the beginning of a sentence – in which case, it means “truly” or “assuredly”, and the other applies if it is used at the end – in which case, it means “so be it”.²

The word is used 182 times in the Bible: 30 times in the Old Testament, 101 times by Jesus in the gospels, and 51 times elsewhere in the New Testament. Interestingly, all 30 occurrences in the Old Testament, and 50 of the 51 occurrences in the New Testament are at the end of the sentence and, therefore, mean “so be it”. On the other side, Amen is found 101 times at the start of a sentence – and Jesus spoke all 101. That leaves one unaccounted for. That one was also spoken by Jesus . . . as a name for Himself.

Revelation 3:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says **the Amen, the Faithful** and **True Witness**, the Beginning of the creation of God:

Jesus is the embodiment of Amen . . . and there is no better or clearer definition than what we read here. Amen at its core means faithful. Amen in its expression means true witness.

Jesus is the Amen. Everything He is is faithful, trustworthy and pure. Everything He does is true, genuine and loving. Jesus is the Amen – the “truly, truly” and the “so be it”.

So this is what Amen means: Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God is unfailingly faithful and true.

Do you believe that? Amen?

A sovereign definition is the first dynamic – Sovereign because the best definition is a who, not a what. It is Jesus, the king of kings – coming again to reign. Depend on it.

The second dynamic is . . .

2. A Solemn Declaration

You’ve heard it said that there is nothing certain except death and taxes. I declare to you today that that statement is not true. In fact, I’ll go so far as to say that one thing that is absolutely certain is that death and taxes are not. How can I say that?

²IBID.

Because Jesus, the Amen, is certainly coming again and when He does, He will usher in a day in which there will be no death and there will be no taxes. Therefore, death and taxes are not certain. Only God is certain. Do I hear an Amen?

Earlier I said that Amen occurs at the beginning of a sentence 101 times in the Bible. All 101 are spoken by Jesus. In this context, the word means truly truly, assuredly assuredly or verily verily. I doubled up those words because that's what some translators do to communicate the absolute surety of the declaration.

To help you appreciate the force of this word Amen, let me put it this way: it is the same as taking an oath in the witness box saying, "On my honour" or "I do solemnly swear that I am telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." From the lips of Jesus it means even more: "on My holy honour" or "I solemnly swear as the One who alone is Truth . . ."

Listen to these examples of the word Amen used by Jesus at the start of sentences in Mark. See if you can feel the force of the Amen in these verses.

Mark 3:28-29 (NKJV)

²⁸ "Assuredly [On my holy honour], I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; ²⁹ but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation" —

Imagine for a moment that I were to say something like this to you. How would you interpret it? You would size me up, understand that I am only a mortal man, and conclude that I am projecting into the future and saying what I sincerely think will be the outcome for someone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit. But I might be wrong.

The same is not true of Jesus. When He speaks this, He speaks it not as a mortal man, but as the God of Heaven who alone judges all things. This statement – and all others that Jesus begins with Amen – is not predictive, it is declarative. It is authoritative. The ruling has already been made, and cannot be appealed. Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13.8), will not change His mind. Blaspheme the Holy Spirit and you are eternally condemned. Amen? Amen.

Mark 9:1 (NKJV)

¹ And He said to them, "Assuredly [On my holy honour], I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power."

A short time later, Peter, James and John saw Jesus transfigured before their eyes. Jesus declared some would see the power of the kingdom before they died . . . and they did.

Mark 10:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ Assuredly [On my holy honour], I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

How sobering is this one! There are a great many people who think they'll take their chances with God. "I'm basically a good person," they think, "Surely God will let me in."

But the ruling has already been made. There is nothing negotiable. Receive the kingdom with childlike faith now or miss it entirely then. Amen? Amen.

Mark 14:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, “Assuredly [On my holy honour], I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.” Imagine saying “amen” to that! Yet moments later, Judas did as Jesus said.

Mark 14:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ Jesus said to him, “Assuredly [On my holy honour], I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And moments later, Peter did.

I want you to hear a few more from the Gospel of John. Each of these has to do with salvation, and the Amen is spoken twice. If you have not yet publicly professed your faith in Jesus Christ, you should listen carefully to these verses. The solemn declaration has already been made!

John 3:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Jesus answered, “Most assuredly [Amen, Amen], I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

John 5:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ “Most assuredly [Amen, Amen], I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

John 6:47 (NKJV)

⁴⁷ Most assuredly [Amen, Amen], I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.

We have seen two dynamics to Amen: a sovereign definition – Jesus who is Faithful and True – and a solemn declaration – whenever Jesus said Amen at the beginning of a sentence, He was stating something that has already been firmly decided . . . and it will never change.

Now we come to the third dynamic.

3. A Solid Decision

Here we are thinking about the 80 times in the Old and New Testaments when the Amen is spoken at the end of a sentence. These examples originate with humans like us – albeit under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In this case, Amen means “so be it” – not as a wishful thought, but as a certainty that the speaker has solidly decided to embrace.

Look at these examples. You will notice that nearly all of them are used as affirmations of the character of God, rather than as exclamations to prophecies.

Romans 11:36 (NKJV)

³⁶ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen [so be it].

Philippians 4:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Now to our God and Father *be* glory forever and ever. Amen [so be it].

1 Timothy 1:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, *be* honour and glory forever and ever. Amen [so be it].

1 Timothy 6:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honour and everlasting power. Amen [so be it].

Now we come to the book of the Bible where the word “amen” is found frequently – Revelation. Here the word is connected to the return of Jesus.

Revelation 1:6-7 (NKJV)

⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen [so be it].

Revelation 22:20-21 (NKJV)

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “**Surely I am coming quickly.**” Amen [so be it]. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! ²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen [so be it].

In each of these cases, Amen is the last word. So when we see, as above, that the Bible concludes with Amen, it means that everything that we have read in the whole of the Bible is unfaillingly true – and we must accept our accountability for it. Amen? Amen.

So be it. God has spoken. Have you heard it? Are you listening? Are you accepting?

Don’t get caught on the wrong side of Amen! Agree with God with all urgency, because Jesus, the great Amen, is returning soon.

A sovereign definition. A solemn declaration. A solid decision. Lastly, we notice the dynamic of ...

4. A Submissive Desire

We have seen how Jesus used the word Amen – at the beginning of sentences. We have seen how the inspired writers of the Bible used the word Amen – at the end of sentences. Now we think about how we should use the word Amen.

In Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, we read this note:

“The early Christian churches followed the example of Israel in associating themselves audibly with the prayers and thanksgivings offered on their behalf. Thus ‘Amen’ said by men [today means], ‘so let it be.’”³

Have you ever heard someone quietly saying “amen” while someone else is praying publicly? Have you ever heard someone quietly saying “amen” to a point in a sermon, or after a musical item of praise has been given? Have you ever done this?

That is a good, healthy and biblical practice . . . so long as it doesn’t distract attention from what is going on in the service. We should all participate . . . even when we are listening. And saying “amen” is the way to do so.

This is why Paul discouraged speaking in tongues in the public gathering of the early church. How can people say “amen” to something they do not comprehend?

1 Corinthians 14:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?

Likewise, in heaven, listening is a “participation activity”. God speaks . . . and the audible response from the hearers is Amen.

Revelation 5:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

Revelation 7:11-12 (NKJV)

¹¹All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honour and power and might, *Be* to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

So let me sum up this message and give you opportunity to respond.

Today we celebrate the permanence of Jesus’ Excellency. Amen?

Jesus is the Amen – the Faithful and True Witness. Amen?

Jesus alone is the Saviour. Amen?

Jesus died in our place on the cross. Amen?

Jesus rose again the third day. Amen?

Jesus ascended for us. Amen?

And Jesus is coming again. Amen? Amen!

³Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W. (1996). *Vine’s complete expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words* (2:25). Nashville: T. Nelson.