

**07/18/21 “To Him Who Loves Us”
Revelation 1:4-8**

Welcome...

Last week we saw The Purposes of the Book of Revelation

1. To reveal Jesus Christ in His glory, honor and power.
2. To correct the moral and doctrinal problems that existed in the seven churches of Asia.
3. To give encouragement and hope to believers who are suffering and inform them of the ultimate triumph of true believers and the final victory of our Lord Jesus Christ as He comes to earth in judgment and glory.

According to early church historian Eusebius, the Roman emperor Domitian was second after Nero to authorize harsh persecution against Christians. Particularly offensive was emperor Domitian's insistence on being addressed as Dominus et Deus "Lord and God." The refusal of the Christians to obey his edict led to severe persecution.

The chapel of San Giovanni in Olio outside of Rome marks the supposed site where Domitian decided to martyr the apostle John by boiling him in oil. To make sure that John died, Domitian even had the oil set on fire before John was thrown in. However, John did not die when thrown in the vat but survived the ordeal unscathed. Since Domitian realized that God's hand was upon John and thus he didn't have the power to kill him, he had John exiled to the Island of Patmos. John tells us in Revelation 1:9 it was there on Patmos that he received the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

When we are in the midst of suffering, adversity, or persecution, we will be tempted to doubt God's love. Not only do we struggle with our own doubts, but others may even say, "If God loved you, He wouldn't have allowed this to happen." My own experience suggests that we are far more inclined to question God's love than we doubt either His sovereignty or His wisdom.

But Revelation 1:4-8 reveals to all true Christians, especially to those in the midst of painful trials, that Christ loves us and has secured for us a sure hope for the future.

Let's read Revelation 1:4-8...

In these verses we see a glorious Trinitarian greeting that focuses on Christ's love, His saving work and the promise of His return. In verses 4-8 we find three truths of God's gracious care of His children that assure you of Christ's love and security even in your darkest trials.

First, we will see first a Sovereign Power in verses 4-5a, where grace and peace are wished for us from the Father, the Holy Spirit and the Son.

Second, we will see a Supreme Provision in Christ's amazing love for us and His liberating us from enslavement and bondage to sin and His lifting us to be to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.

Third, we will see a Secure Promise in His return, our Lord's return that will be seen by all.

Whatever conflict and suffering you may be facing, the knowledge of Christ's love will sustain and strengthen you. To the One who loves us and the One who released us from our sins by His blood, the One who made us into a kingdom and made us priests before God, this book will give to Him the glory and the dominion that He deserves forever and ever. My prayer is that we each grasp God's amazing grace and have peace with God and experience the peace of God that comes from knowing, trusting and and following Jesus Christ. And knowing

how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, we will all reach a brand new and exalted level of capability to praise Christ and say with John, a hearty, “Amen.”

Let’s begin with:

I. A Sovereign Power

Verse 4a...

The seven churches are named in verse 11...

It is possible these seven churches were chosen because these cities lay on the major Roman roads through the province, and they were intended to be representative of the rest of the churches. We do know that there were more than seven churches in the Roman province of Asia (modern day Turkey). For instance, the churches in Collosae, Iconium, Antioch and Lystra were there but not mention in this verse.

We will see in chapters 2 and 3 that each letter addresses the historical situation and needs of each of the seven churches in turn. At the same time, they are intended to typify the problems of all churches. The seven churches are representative churches in that the church in every age can look at the warnings and exhortations given to these churches as being for our own edification.

Verse 4 a...

Grace is God’s unmerited favor; all that He does in redemption for underserved sinners and peace is first peace with God that comes through the reconciliation with God by faith in His Son that Adrian read in Romans 5:11, and the peace “of God” that guards our hearts and minds in Christ that Philippians 4:7 describes.

Revelation 1:4-5 describe all members of the Trinity as avenues, conduits, for the flow of grace and peace in our direction. John begins with the fountainhead, God the Father.

A. The Father is perfect in His person

Notice verse 4, “from Him who is and who was and who is to come.” The focus is on God’s perfection as He relates to time and eternity. God the Father is distinguished from God the Son who is described in verse 5.

This threefold description views God in time dimensions (past, present, and future), although He is timeless. The eternal God is the source of all the blessings of salvation, all grace, and all peace.

God is who was, who is and who is to come is just as much in control of our unknown future and unnerving present as He is of our unpleasant past. Robert Mounce says, “An uncertain future calls for one who by virtue of His eternal existence exercises sovereign control over the course of history” In other words, little things or big things, all things are under His rule and control – past, present and future.

So, this is the eternal God who is sending us grace and peace. Then John moves to the second member of the Trinity,

B. The Spirit is perfect in His presence

Grace and peace also run in our direction “from the seven Spirits before His throne.” The number “seven” signifies “completeness” and “perfection” in the Bible. In Genesis we see how that the first mention of the Lord’s

causing this number to have significance in the creation when He rested on the seventh day, and then decreed that the seventh day be set aside as holy unto the Lord. The number seven is used 49 times in Revelation (7 x7).

The seven spirits (capital S) is a reference to the Holy Spirit. This confirmed in Revelation 1:4 since this a Trinitarian greeting.

Look at Revelation 3:1; 4:5; 5:6 with me...

John tells us, the Holy Spirit who energizes and equips the churches for service is the Spirit who proceeds from the very throne of God. We are indeed made sufficient for every assignment, every challenge, for the God who lives in us is the God who is before the throne! The One who is in heaven is the One who also is in us!

C. The Son is perfect in His provision

Though it is unusual, John places the Son last in this greeting from the Trinity for emphasis. John will say more about the Son here than he does the Father and the Holy Spirit put together because the focus of Revelation is on Jesus! The entire book is a vision of Christ sent to the persecuted, disheartened Christians in Asia Minor who were suffering immensely.

Notice three tremendous truths about Jesus are highlighted and explained in verse 5a...

1. His Reliability – Verse 5a

Verse 5a says Jesus is “the faithful witness,” the trustworthy revealer of the Father (John 14:9). By His perfect, sinless life and by His words and works He showed us the character of God.

A faithful witness is one who always speaks the truth. And Christ always speaks the truth, always the faithful witness, never deviates from what is true. In fact, in Revelation 3:14 He is called “the Amen, the faithful and true Witness.” Jesus says in John 18:37, “For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”

Jesus is sending us His testimony here in this book, and He is a faithful witness.

Second, verse 5 says Jesus is the “firstborn from the dead.”

2. His resurrection - verse 5a

Jesus did what no person has ever done: He died, rose from the dead, and stayed alive. However, He is not the only one who will do this, He is the firstborn, the first of a new order, the pledge and promise of our resurrection!

Firstborn in from the Greek *prōtotokos*, which means “preeminent.” Off all who have ever been raised before or after, He is the preeminent one. In Psalm 89:27, God says “I shall make Him My firstborn,” – that is – “My inheritor.”

This book is the story of God exalting the *prōtotokos*, the chief of all who have ever been or ever will be raised from the dead.

Then he gives Him a third title: “The ruler of the kings of the earth.”

3. His Royalty –verse 5b

This is a recurring theme in Revelation (11:15; 17:15; 19:16). Note it is not He will be the ruler of the kings of the earth...He is the ruler of the kings of the earth! All authorities, spiritual and earthly, are under His dominion and rule. That is true now and it will be made crystal clear when He comes again.

All glory and dominion belong to the rightful king, Jesus Christ – all the more reason for the faithful to remain steadfast.

So, first we have an incredible blessing of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Grace and Peace from the awesome Sovereign Power, next we see:

II. A Supreme Provision

Look at the end of verse 5, “to Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood.”

A. Christ’s Love – verse 5c

Isn’t this the greatest marvel of all, that Jesus should love me, and that He should love you though we have been utterly unworthy of His love? Yet He loved us of free, rich, sovereign grace. Not because we were lovely, but because He is loving. Not because we were gracious, but because He is full of grace.

Notice verse 5 does not say that He cleansed us from our sin, he liberated us from bondage to sin and then loved us. It does not say that Jesus took away our sin, and then loved us when we were clean. No, it is not “released and loved,” it is, “loved and released us.”

Romans 5:8 says He loved us while we were still sinners and Romans 5:10 describes us as God’s enemies!

The love is first, and because He loved us in our sins, and in spite of them, He pays the ransom with his own life. It was His love for us that bound Him to the cross. Again Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

John wrote in 1 John 4:8 that God loves us because “God is love” and in 1 John 4:19 We love, because He first loved us.

So, Revelation 1 is an exalted hymn of praise. In verse 5 it is “to Him who loves us,” present tense, this is abiding love. Jesus did not finish His love by His death. He loves you still. When He was poor on earth, and despised and rejected of men, He loved you, and now exalted at God’s right hand, and all angels fall down and worship Him, He loves you still, and He will always love you.

Paul says in Romans 8:38 nothing will separate us from the love of Christ. God’s love is not a past experience, it is a present reality. And His love for us at this present moment is in as full a force as it was when Jesus died on the cross.

The Lord’s unfailing love for us is an objective fact affirmed over and over in the Scriptures. It is true whether you believe it or not. Your doubts do not destroy God’s love, nor does your faith create it. It originates in the very nature of God, who is love, and it flows to us through our union with His beloved Son.

But the experience of that love (and the comfort it is intended to bring) is dependent upon your believing the truth about God’s love as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures. Do you know the love of Christ? Do you believe it? Are you grateful for His love?

And as amazing as His love is, it is not just a sentiment but an action He takes, as verse 5 continues, “To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood.” Here we see His love that results in His liberating us from bondage to sin and the penalty of sin.

B. His Liberation – verse 5c

The KJV and NKJV read He “washed us” viewing sin as a stain, and that is certainly true. However the best manuscripts render the Greek text as He “loosed” or “set us free” where sin is viewed as a chain that keeps us in bondage.

Before God saved me, I was living for myself, my own desires, my own pleasures. I got into trouble and was arrested by the police and I remember being handcuffed to a ring in jail. I did not have the key and there was no way to free myself. It really is a vivid picture of our condition apart from Christ. Enslaved and in bondage to sin.

If you grew up in morally upright or Christian home it can be difficult to understand your own depravity and true condition. Because you were generally upright and morally decent compared to others. It is difficult for us to see ourselves as God saw us, as wretched, miserable, rebellious sinners.

Listen to Paul’s description in Ephesians 2:1-5...

Jesus freed us from sin’s penalty, our justification.
He is freeing us from sin’s power, our sanctification.
He will free us from sin’s presence, our glorification.

Revelation 1:5, “to Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood. “Blood” is a term referring to His entire atoning work. When you see the reference to the blood of Christ in Scripture, it is a reference to His full atonement. Blood signifies death; and in the case of Christ, sacrificial, substitutionary death for sin.

Through His death, His atoning work on the cross, He released us from our sins. My, what a great truth!

God could not remove our sins without an infinite cost to both Himself and His Son. And because of their great love for us, both were willing—yes more than merely willing—to pay that great cost, the Father in giving His one and only Son, and the Son in laying down His life for us.

As Romans 8:1 says, “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” As we just sang in the hymn, “Guilty, vile, and helpless we, Spotless Lamb of God was He; Full atonement! Can it be? Hallelujah, what a Savior!” Can I get an Amen?!

Listen friends, our greatest need is not freedom from adversity. All the possible tragedies that could occur in this life cannot in any way be compared with the absolute tragedy of eternal separation from God. Jesus said in Luke 10:20 no earthly joy could compare with the eternal joy of our names written in Heaven. In like manner, no earthly adversity can compare with that awful calamity of God’s eternal judgment in hell.

God showed His love by meeting our greatest need—a need so great that no other need can even come close to it in comparison. If you want proof of God’s love for you, then you must look first at the Cross where God offered up His Son as a sacrifice for our sins. Calvary is the one objective, absolute, irrefutable proof of God’s love for us.

He releases us from the chains of sin, that He may bind us with the bonds of love. If God loved me enough to give His Son to die for me when I was His enemy, surely He loves me enough to care for me now that I am His child. Having loved me to the ultimate extent at the Cross, He cannot possibly fail to love me in my times of adversity. Having given such a priceless gift as His Son, surely He will also give all else that is consistent with His glory and my good. Romans 8:32 says, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”

To be loved, forgiven, released from the penalty and the dominion of sin, adopted as a child of God and credited with the perfect righteousness of Christ is more than enough... but Jesus does even more.

C. His Legislation – verse 6

Verse 6...

Jesus didn't just save us, He “made us to be a kingdom.” What does John mean by that? We have a King, and we have common life under that King, under His authority. This is a collective designation for all believers. We who believe are all in this sphere of God's rule through Christ, and that kingdom is entered by faith in Jesus Christ.

He loves us. He loves us so much that He released us from our sins through His blood, through His atonement on the cross. He loves us so much that He made us into a community of saints forever, bound together in the confines of a kingdom over which He rules; and we enjoy His loving rule and His loving sovereign, almighty protection.

Furthermore, says John, “He made us priests to His God and Father.” A priest is one who had the right to enter God's presence. In Israel, the priest and the priest alone could go into the Holy Place; and once a year, the high priest into the Holy of Holies where God was.

The Old Testament priesthood sent a message that it wasn't easy to approach God. The ordinary Israelite could not offer his own sacrifices; he had to go through the priest who offered his sacrifice for him. The priest served as a go-between to bridge the gap between God and man.

But 1 Peter 2:5 says to New Testament believers, you are “a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

In the Old Testament, they had a priesthood.

In the New Testament, we are a priesthood.

Every believer is a priest. You and I are holy a priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices thru Jesus Christ.

There is another way to look at what it means to be a priest. The Latin word for priest is pontifex, which itself comes from two words means “to make” and “bridge.” A priest makes a bridge between God and man. We are Christ representative here on earth to be bridge-builders for him.

We do that when we offer our lives to the Lord.

We do that when we worship God.

We do that when we love one another.

We do that when we give.

We do that when we witness to the lost.

We do that when we pray.

Paul calls us ambassadors. Peter and John calls us priests.

We have seen the Sovereign Power of Father, Holy Spirit and Son. We have seen the Supreme Provision of Jesus Christ in His Love, His Liberation and His Legislation. Finally, John ends with:

III. A Secure Promise

Verses 7-8...

Having discussed Christ's work of redemption, John now draws attention to Christ's day of consummation when He will return in triumph and bring history to a close. He closes with a three-fold promise.

A. His Return will be Seen – verse 7a

Verse 7, “behold He coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him.”

During the incarnation, Christ's glory was veiled. Only Peter, James, and John caught a glimpse of it at the Transfiguration. But at His second coming every eye will see Him; His glory will be obvious to the entire human race.

B. His Return will be Sorrowful – verse 7b

Verse 7 continues, “behold He coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him.”

John now combines Daniel 7:13 with Zechariah 12:10 and notes the audience to this epiphany includes those “who pierced Him.” In that day Israel will see and understand that they (along with us) crucified their Messiah. And, “all the families of the earth will mourn over Him. This is certain. Amen.” Yes, Israel will mourn and the nations will mourn. But (as we will see in Revelation 5:9-10; 7:1-17) by God's grace, some will mourn in repentance and salvation, Jew and Gentile

Others, however, will mourn in remorse as the just and righteous judgment of God is poured out in the great day of wrath (6:16-17), what is called “the great tribulation” (7:14). Sadly, they will seek death not deliverance (6:16). Repentance will not be found in their hearts (9:21).

C. His Return is Sure – verse 8

Verse 8...

“Alpha and the Omega” emphasizes God's omniscience. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega is the last. All knowledge is conveyed through the letters of the alphabet; thus God's designation of Himself as the Alpha and the Omega affirms that He has all knowledge. He knows, therefore, the certainty of this promise.

The designation of God as the “Almighty” at the end of verse 8 affirms His omnipotence. Since He is all powerful, nothing can hinder Him from carrying out His sovereign will. No one or no one thing can possibly prevent Christ from returning in glory.

So, what are we to do with this information? What are we to do in light of His coming again? Let me close with three thoughts about what we should do with a message like this.

1. We should be sure that we are ready to meet Him when He comes. Are you ready? Is Jesus your Lord and Savior? Are living today as if He is returning tomorrow?

Jesus said in Matthew 24:44, “You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.”.

2. We should be in prayer for those who are not ready; and we should get busy and tell them how to be ready.
3. You need to understand and rest in Christ’s unfailing love for you.

In Psalm 13:1 David prayed, “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?”

David had his doubts, he struggled with them. In fact, in the next verse he continues his struggle as he asks, “How long must I wrestle with my thoughts?” He felt God had, at least for a time, forgotten him. But David, by the enabling power of God, won his struggle. He overcame his doubts. He could then say in Psalm 13:5-6, “But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.”

You and I, like David, must wrestle with our thoughts. With God’s help we, too, can come to the place, even in the midst of our adversities or struggles, where we will be able to say, “I trust in Your unfailing love.”

Friends, Jesus came the first time in humiliation; He will return in exaltation. He came the first time to be killed; He will return to kill His enemies. He came the first time to serve; He will return to be served. He came the first time as the suffering servant; He will return as the conquering king.

“To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Let’s pray...