

# A GOLDEN LAMPSTAND



## “The To and the Who”

*Revelation 1:4-8*

**Main Idea:** Revelation is a letter to the church from the eternal God who knows the beginning and the end.

### **Revelation is written to the church (4).**

John addressed the letter of Revelation to the seven churches, which are explicitly listed in chapters 2 and 3. The seven churches were literal churches in the New Testament period. They were groups of believers who were saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus, but they were also representative. As we’ll continue to see in this passage, Revelation repeatedly uses numbers in a symbolic way. Most of the symbolism of these numbers isn’t limited to or original to the book of Revelation, but the symbolism is important. As is often the case in prophecy in Scripture, there was a “then and there” truth as well as a “yet to come” truth that the words revealed. Seven is a number that is connected to perfection and fullness or completion. The seven churches were real churches, but they were also representative churches. They represent all churches past, present, and future. Revelation was to the seven churches then and to our church today!

1. If Revelation is written to the church, what does this mean about God’s desire that we read and hear this letter?
2. If Revelation is written to the church, what does this mean about our ability to apply and to understand this letter?

### **The church receives grace and peace from the One, Triune God (4-5).**

Many letters in the New Testament open with a similar greeting of grace and peace, but Revelation’s greeting contains an extended and rich theological greeting connected to that grace and peace, starting with the reminder of who God truly is. God is one God, who exists eternally in three-persons. We call this miracle and mystery the Trinity. God is Triune (three in one), and John’s greeting reveals this glorious truth. Grace and peace comes to the church through God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. John identified God the Father with his eternal nature. God is the one who was and is and is to come. John identified God the Holy Spirit as the seven spirits before the throne. God the Holy Spirit is fully and perfectly God. John identified God the Son as the faithful witness. The Greek word witness is the word from which we get the word martyr. God the Son was the faithful witness of God who sacrificed himself for our sin on the cross! Grace and peace only come from the one, true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

1. Discuss the eternal nature of God. What does it mean that God is the one who was and is and is to come?
2. Discuss the miracle and mystery of the Trinity. How would you explain the Trinity to someone who is trying to figure out what it means that God is one God, existing eternally as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Jesus is the Risen King who deserves all glory and power (5-6).**

- *He loves us (5).*
- *He freed us from sin (5).*
- *He made us a kingdom and priests of God (6).*

In considering God and the work of Christ, John burst out in praise and worship. Jesus died for our sins, but he was risen from the dead in victory over sin and death! He is the firstborn who deserves the throne and the right to receive all glory and power. He deserves all of our worship and faithfulness too. He is the God who loves us. Jesus is the proof of the depth of God's love for us, that he would send his only Son to die for our sins. He is the one who freed us from sin by paying the death penalty we deserved for sin. Jesus died in our place on the cross, receiving God's judgment for our sin, and Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures, in order to set us free from sin and death. He's made us a kingdom, and he is our King! He's cleansed us and set us apart to be priests of God so that we can serve in the very presence of our Holy God.

1. How did Jesus show his love for us? What did he do to free us from sin? How did he make us a kingdom and priests of God?
2. Are you giving Jesus all the praise and service he deserves? Why, or why not?

### **Jesus is coming in glory to bring judgment on the nations (7).**

What Jesus did is more than enough to reveal God's grace and peace to us, but John continued to praise and to worship the Lord by thinking about what Jesus was yet to do! Jesus is coming again, and when he returns, it will be with all the glory of God for all the world to see. There will be no doubt about the identity of Jesus when he returns, and the day of salvation will end when Jesus returns. The nations will weep, because all who have rejected Christ and refused to submit to Christ will realize the truth of the person of Jesus Christ when he comes in all his glory. Every nation on earth will be conquered by the King of kings, and every knee will bow, including those in victorious worship of their King and those in humble defeat by the King.

1. When you think about the return of Jesus, does it fill you with joy or fear? Why?
2. Why should believers have joy and not fear when it comes to Christ's return?
3. How does Christ's judgment motive our mission for Jesus today?

### **Trust the eternal and all-powerful God who knows the beginning and the end (8).**

John ends his greetings with the very words of God, which remind us of why we can trust the Word of God and the prophecy of the things yet to come in the letter of Revelation. God is the eternal God of all creation. He is the Alpha and the Omega. These are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. In other words, God is the beginning and the end. He has the first word and the last word. He is the God of creation, and he is the God of consummation. He knows the future because he is the eternal God of the past, present, and future, and he is the "Almighty." God is all-powerful. There's no power that can defeat him or thwart his plans and purposes. God and his Word can be trusted because he has all the power to do what he says he's going to do.

1. What does it mean that God's eternal? What does it mean that he's Almighty?
2. How do these truths affect your faith in him and your worship of him today?