

To God Be The Glory – Rev 1:4-8

Rev 1:4-8. We just started a series on the book of Revelation, under the theme *Hold Fast: Until I Come*. Persevere in your faith until he returns. It's one of the main reasons God gave us this revelation. To pay attention, be ready, and *hold fast*.

And having talked about the apocalyptic and prophetic nature of Revelation *last* week, and the blessing it is, John gets at it with a standard Greco-Roman, 1st century greeting. V4.

[4] John [he writes] *to the seven churches that are in Asia*: John's the author, or recorder, and *the seven churches that are in Asia* (**Map of Revelation Churches**) are the intended recipients. At least initially. Referring to the first century Roman province of Asia. Since that's where the 7 churches were located; listed in v11.

Why he chose *these* particular churches, we can't be sure. But it's likely they were representative of the problems in *all* churches; then *and* now. Supported by the number 7. *To the seven churches that are in Asia*. A common apocalyptic number indicating completeness, fullness, or perfection. Here it's completeness. Because they certainly weren't perfect.

➤ Then, still in v4, he conveys the actual greeting. *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, [5] and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.*

It's an offer of grace and peace. V4 – *Grace to you and peace* John says. But it's not from him, it's from God. And because of the *attributes* of God John cites, it's still offered.

God still offers grace and peace (v4-5a)

It wasn't just for them, it's for us. He still *offers* favor and rest. He still offers goodwill and wellbeing. He, meaning the *triune* God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Because that's how John describes him.

Starting with God the Father. *Grace to you and peace* [v4] from him who is and who was and who is to come. It's a paraphrase of the name God, first spoke to Moses all the way back in Ex 3:14. When Moses asked God's name, he said, *I Am* three different ways. Each of them describing different aspects of his existence: I am, I was, and I will be. Denoting his eternal nature. And by using that same description, *him who is and who was and who is to come*, John's referring to God the Father. Who extends grace and peace to us.

➤ As does the Holy Spirit. *Grace to you and peace . . . from the seven spirits who are before his throne*; before God the Father's throne. It's the first apocalyptic symbol. And given the fact that it's sandwiched between the Father and the Son, it's most likely it's a reference to the Holy Spirit. In all his perfection. Described as *seven* spirits.

In fact, we find a 7-fold description of the Holy Spirit in **Is 11:2** – *The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him* [the Messiah], *the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD*. The Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and *fear* of the Lord. It's a 7-fold description. So John's probably speaking of God the Holy Spirit. Who *also* offers grace and peace.

Then of course, there's Jesus. *Grace to you and peace* [v5] . . . from *Jesus Christ*. He names *him* explicitly. Fulfilling John's promise of a blessing right away. Having said in v3 that this book is a blessing, John starts with an offer of grace and peace. From no less than the triune God; 3 in 1. And it's still offered, because first of all . . .

• He's eternal (4b)

God still offers grace and peace because he is, and was, and always will be. He's eternal, so he can. He *can* still bless us. He *can* still grant the grace of eternal life and the peace of his presence.

Second, God still offers grace and peace because . . .

• He's perfect (4c)

Described as *seven* spirits. Perfectly knowledgeable and perfectly at work. Always doing what's best. Like constantly offering grace and peace; perfect peace. Because he's perfect.

Third . . .

• He's reliable (5a)

Referring to God the Son. V5. *Grace to you and peace . . . from Jesus Christ the faithful witness*. When Jesus walked the earth, he faithfully testified to the work of God, even unto death. Which makes him a reliable conduit of God's grace and peace *now*. All the grace and peace we *need* for life and godliness. All the grace and peace we could ever want.

4th . . .

• He's victorious (5a)

That's the idea of Jesus as *the firstborn of the dead*; also in v5. He's victorious over sin and death, and therefore the rightful heir of God's kingdom. Just like an *earthly* firstborn in John's day. Which enables him to offer grace and peace to the *citizens* of God's kingdom; his followers. Including the grace of victory over death ourselves. The triune God still offers grace and peace because he's victorious.

And 5th . . .

• He's powerful (5a)

Jesus, second person of the Trinity, is *the ruler* [v5] *of kings on earth*. Making him all-powerful. And therefore *capable* of offering grace to those he rules. *Capable* of offering rest. So he does. Powerful and good that he is, God still *offers* grace and peace.

➤ The question is, do you have it? Have you received it? Because you need to. Just because God offers grace and peace, doesn't mean it's yours. Not his *special* grace; his *saving* grace; and sanctifying grace. You have to embrace it. You have to receive it.

And continue to do so throughout your life. As you walk with him, and talk with him; live for him, and worship him. The triune God still *offers* grace and peace, but you have to want it and receive it.

Second, the second part of this greeting that still applies, is that . . .

Jesus still deserves our worship and devotion (v5b-6)

After extending grace and peace to *us*, John turns his attention to the Lord. V5b. *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood [6] and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. As*

in, “may it be.”

It’s an expression of worship, this sentence. To Jesus be *glory*. Praise. Exaltation. Renown. Fame. And not just now, but forever. *Forever and ever*; eons multiplied by eons. Without stopping or waning. Jesus deserves our passionate, continuous, *endless* worship. I hope you not only remember that when we *sing*, but as you live.

➤ It’s an expression of worship, and devotion. To Jesus be *dominion* it says. As in, power, authority, control. An expression of devotion because it’s only when he has dominion over us that his kingdom is complete. It’s only when he reigns over *all* that his realm is final. So we devote ourselves to him to bring it about. To give him exactly what he deserves, ruler of all that he is. Jesus deserves our worship and devotion.

And once again, we find several reasons for it in v5-6. The first, is that . . .

- **He loves us (5b)**

To him who loves us . . . be glory and dominion (5b). That’s the first reason he deserves our worship and devotion. Jesus loves me. Jesus loves you. So much, that he left the glories of heaven, came to a broken earth, *became* like us, lived *among* us, and endured the cross for our sin. And then rose again so we could too, gave us the Holy Spirit, and intercedes for us before the Father. If that’s not love, what is? If that doesn’t deserve our worship and devotion, what does?

Second . . .

- **He redeemed us (5b)**

Jesus deserves our worship and devotion because he redeemed us. *To him who . . . has freed us from our sins by his blood . . . be glory and dominion* (5b). That’s redemption. The paid release from the bondage of sin. Paid by the blood of Jesus; his life; his death. When we believe in him, when we put our faith in who he is and what he did, he *frees* us from our sins. From the *bondage* of our sin, and the *consequences* of our sin.

The bondage, because apart from Christ, we can’t *help* but sin. Even the *good* things we do are like filthy rags the Bible says (Is 64:6). Because they’re done for ourselves or others, but not for God. Not for *his* glory. But praise God, the death of Jesus *frees* us from that; breaks the bondage of our sin; even our well-meaning sin.

As well as the *consequences* of our sin. Suffering now and suffering later. When we believe and repent, when we put our faith in Jesus to save us, and turn from our sin, he frees us from the bondage and consequences of our sin. How? By applying his shed blood, to our account; our life. And for that, he deserves all the worship and devotion we can muster.

Third, Jesus deserves our worship and devotion because . . .

- **He empowers us (6a)**

V6 – He *made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father*. He made us a kingdom, and priests. And a kingdom *of* priests. Meaning that Jesus formed us as the people of God, he *made us a kingdom*; and he empowers us to act as *priests* in that kingdom. Mediators. Ministers. Ambassadors. Worshipers. Every single one of us. We are a priesthood of believers.

And as such, we’ve been empowered with 2 main privileges, and 3 responsibilities. Just

like the priests in the Old Testament.

We are *privileged*, to approach him directly, in prayer; and worship him continually. Again, just like the priests of old. And we are *responsible*, to proclaim him constantly, serve him faithfully, and intercede graciously; for others. Jesus *empowers* us that way.

➤ It started with God’s promise to the Israelites back in **Ex 19:5-6** – *If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant . . . you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*. And even though they failed, failed to be obedient, God *reiterated* the promise through Isaiah the prophet. Saying that a day would come when his people would once again be called *the priests of the LORD* . . . and *ministers of our God* (Is 61:6).

And lo and behold, on this side of the cross, the Apostle Peter said it’s happening. **1 Pet 2:5**. Speaking to the church, us, he said – *You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*. Sacrifices like worship, and prayer, and service.

And then, in **1 Pet 2:9**, he uses the very words of Ex 19 to describe us. *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*.

The *church* is the fulfillment of God’s promise, to make for himself a *kingdom of priests*. First spoken to Moses, then reiterated through Isaiah, confirmed by Peter, affirmed by John, and accomplished by Jesus. He made us a kingdom. He made us priests (Rev 1:6).

And in doing so, he *empowers* us to approach God directly, worship him continually, proclaim him constantly, serve him faithfully, and intercede graciously. Talk about deserving our worship and devotion. To God be the glory. *Forever*.

Last, the last part of this greeting that still applies, is that . . .

Jesus is still coming to judge the world (v7-8)

That’s the idea of v7. *Behold* [pay attention], *he is coming with the clouds*. Meaning, with all the glory of heaven. Because clouds are often *associated* with God’s glorious presence in the Bible (Ex 13:21; 19:16; Mt 17:5; Acts 1:9).

And every eye will see him. Don’t miss that. When Jesus returns there will be no hiding, and no secret rapture; every single person alive will *see* him; it doesn’t get any clearer. *Even those who pierced him*. Those who nailed him to the cross, literally *and* figuratively, and haven’t repented. Even those who don’t *want* to see him will see him.

And all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Because the coming of Jesus means judgment. *Even so. Amen*. As in, let it be and make it so. An affirmation of the *righteousness* of such judgment.

And while we can see that from the verse itself, it’s even more apparent when you see the *prophecies* from which it comes. 3 of them.

➤ The first is **Dan 7:13-14**. *“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. [14] And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that*

all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Almost 600 years *before* Christ, Daniel saw that he would eventually come *with the clouds* to establish his kingdom over all the earth. And John reiterates it here in Rev 1:7.

Not only that, but he references **Zech 12:10**, to say it's not going to be pretty. [10] *"I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem [God says] a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.*

When Jesus *first* came, and died at the hands of his accusers, there was *some* mourning; by a few. But according to John, the ultimate fulfillment will happen at his *second* coming. When *all* people will mourn. Not with sadness, but wailing; with pleas for grace and mercy. Because didn't believe, and know they're in trouble.

Which Jesus *himself* reiterated in a *third* prophecy. Found in **Mt 24:30**. After The Great Tribulation it says – *Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man* [the coming of Jesus with the clouds; the glory of God], *and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

John combines three prophecies here in v7, to shed light on their ultimate fulfillment. That Jesus is coming to judge the world, and . . .

- **No one is exempt (7a)**

Every eye will see him. Even those who don't *want* to; those who reject him. Which means if you don't turn to him now, if you don't acknowledge him now, you're in trouble.

Second . . .

- **Many will despair (7b)**

They will wail *on account of him*. People from every tribe, tongue, and nation who refused to believe in him. This isn't talking about *believers*; *we're* not going to be judged at his coming. Our names are written in the book of life. This is talking about *unbelievers*. Those who *refused* his offer of grace and peace. Those who *rejected* the good news of Jesus. They're going wail; despair. Because at that point there's no second chance. Their end is certain and their judgement near.

And last, Jesus is coming to judge the world . . .

- **Because God is sovereign (8)**

Firmly and rightly in control. V8 – *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God* [the beginning and the end], *who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty* [all-powerful]. He started it all, he's in charge of it all, and he's going to end it all. You know what that spells? Sovereignty. Control. Authority. Power. Jesus is coming to judge the world, because the world *answers* to him. Including you and me. So whatever you do, make sure you're on the right side of that judgment, and hold fast.

Prayer – Father, thank you for your grace, peace, love, and redemption. All because of Jesus. Whom we worship and live for.

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

You Are Loved