

"REVELATION MADE RELEVANT"

A verse by verse exposition of the Bible's most controversial book

Notes are Fr. Ward's personal observations.

III. John's Greeting and Doxology (Rev. 1:4-8)

"John to the seven churches that are in Asia: 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 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." 7BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, (capital letters denotes a quoting of the Old Testament – in this case Dan. 7:13) and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.

8"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

A. An epistolary address - After the prologue, John greets the recipients of his book with an epistolary address (like those of the Pauline Epistles). This style of address sets Revelation apart from all other Jewish pseudepigraphical (non-biblical) apocalyptic works. Unlike such writings, Revelation focuses on what God has already done (in Christ) in addition to what He will do before, during, and after Christ's Return. Moreover, John is writing to real churches – seven in the Roman province of Asia.

B. Why seven churches? Seven is the number of completion in the Bible. We will find that Revelation is full of a series of sevens. The seven churches could very well be the ones under John's care and/or they represent the entire church. In other words, the messages to all seven are also meant for the entire Body of Christ until Christ returns.

C. A common New Testament greeting – "*grace and peace*" reflect the heart of Christ's work of the New Covenant and is used as a greeting in many of the epistles of the NT.

D. The Triune source of the greeting

1. God, the Father – "*Him who is and who was and who is to come.*" God is outside of time. He just is. He encompasses all time and space. This title appears only in Revelation (4:8; cf. 11:17; 16:5) but is directly related to the divine name of Yahweh, which comes from God's statement to Moses to tell the people that "I AM Who I AM" sent him (Ex. 3:14).

2. God, the Holy Spirit – "*the seven Spirits who are before His throne*" - This statement refers to the Holy Spirit for a number of reasons. First, it is within the context of the divine greeting. Angels/demons and people are not of the same order as God! They are created beings. (cf. Rev. 3:1 as a distinction is made between "stars" (angels) and "spirits"). Second, seven is the biblical number of completion and therefore signifies the unifying and complete work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the whole or "seven" churches. Third, the number seven could also highlight the sevenfold work of the Holy Spirit as set forth in Is. 11:2-3 or Romans 12:6-8. Fourth, we see the "seven spirits" are identified as "*seven lamps of fire*" in Rev. 4:5, and "*seven eyes*" in Rev. 6:5, both conveying the omniscience and omnipresence of God.

3. God, the Son – "*And Jesus Christ*" – Normally, Christ would be second in the order of the divine trinity but because of His special work already completed and yet to come He is mentioned last to highlight such things. There is a reason why this book is called "The Revelation of Jesus Christ!" We have three descriptive titles for Jesus. He is **1) the faithful witness** – He has

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been faithful to His Father, to His mission, and to His people by virtue of His obedience in both life & death; **2) the firstborn of the dead** – Jesus not only died, but He was the first to rise again and be transformed completely from the corrupted fleshly state. “*Firstborn*” also conveys supreme authority (cf. Col. 1:15, 18). The Son of God has complete authority over death. This is reiterated in Rev. 1:18; **3) ruler of the kings of the earth** – Christ is the supreme ruler over all on the earth. Recall Jesus’ words to Pilate in John 18:36-38; 19:11. His rule will not be fully manifest and permanent, however, until His Second Coming (Rev. 11:15; 17:15; 19:16).

Now notice the threefold active work of Christ. **First, He loves us!** What a wonderful statement of our Savior’s predisposition towards us! Revelation is as much about God’s love as it is about His judgment of evil in the world. **Second, Jesus “released us from our sins by His blood.”** He demonstrated this love in His earthly life, culminating in His death on the cross. The cross is at the core of the Christian Faith. Through Christ’s death on the cross, we not only see His and the Father’s love demonstrated for us (John 3:16; Romans 5:8) but we see God’s holiness and justice satisfied. We now can be set free from the penalty of our sinful nature, forgiven of our sins and given a new life if we repent. Satan and death no longer have power over those who are in Christ! **Third,** as a result of Christ’s death and resurrection, **we have been transformed into a kingdom and priesthood for God the Father** – “*He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.*” Just as the people of Israel were to be a “*kingdom of priests and a holy nation*” (Ex. 19:6; Is. 61:6) Christ has made us a new people, both Jew and Gentile, to reflect His Kingdom on earth and to be His priests to our world and to His Father. We are to be His light to our world as priests who both represent the Father to others and who offer up sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to the Father. Since Christ, as the Son of God, is the very means to all of these blessings, John then exclaims “*to Him be the glory and dominion forever and ever!*” Amen. This final praise marks the **seventh element** in the greeting extended from Jesus Christ in vv. 5 & 6. Can you find the seven?

E. The hope and certainty of Christ’s Return – in v.7 the Father declares the coming of the Son. It was foretold in Dan. 7:13-14. Jesus predicted His return in Mt. 24:30; Mk. 13:26, & Lk. 21:27. The angels affirmed this in Acts 1:9-11. Not only will Christ’s coming be a supernatural event with natural phenomenon (clouds) but everyone will see it, even those who crucified Him (“*pierced Him*”). This latter phrase means both the Jewish people (Zech. 12:10) and the entire world as it was man’s collective guilt – both Jew and Gentile – that put Jesus on the cross. At Jesus’ Return there will be great mourning both by those who realize Jesus is (Jews - Zech. 12:10) in hope and those who face judgment! Christ’s Return is a focal point throughout Revelation (22:7, 12, 20). The “*Even so. Amen*” can also be translated “*So shall it be! Amen.*” It is either both John and the congregation responding to the Father’s words, or the Son saying first “*Even so.*” And then the congregation responding, “*Amen!*” Either way it is an emphatic way of all saying let it be so!

F. God Himself (in v.8) **verifies all that is to be revealed and the certainty of Christ’s Coming** with the words, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega,*” says the Lord God, “*who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*” There is no greater authority than the One who is omniscient (alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet). They represent the entire alphabet and therefore all words and all knowledge. They also represent the first and last of all things. Thus, God is the source of all knowledge and creation! In addition, He is omnipresent – both in space – “*every eye will see*” and in time (*who was and is and who is to come*) and He is omnipotent as the Almighty. These very words of the Father can also be said of the Son and as a result in some Bibles verse 8 is in red as the words of Christ! God rules over both the past (history) and the future and therefore Revelation is entirely from the Triune Godhead.