



CHRIST  
CHURCH

# REVELATION

## 1:4-8

<sup>4</sup> 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,<sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood<sup>6</sup> and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.<sup>7</sup> Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

<sup>8</sup> “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

## 22:12-13

<sup>12</sup> “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.<sup>13</sup> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

# DAY 1

REVELATION 1:4a

John to the seven churches that are in Asia

As we open this week, we are reminded that we are still in John's body of work. There are some scholars who have questioned that this is the same John who wrote the gospel of John because of large differences in the vocabulary used in Revelation and the gospel of John. However, I think that we can safely assume it is the same John for a number of reasons: 1) Differences in vocabulary are to be expected given the different literary genres of the books. 2) Themes and motifs like Jesus as "the Lamb" or the use of the "I am" formula repeat often. 3) The author is a well-known John who needs no further introduction to the early church other than his first name.

We can be confident that this is the same self-identified, beloved disciple who learned to rest on Jesus as his Savior! So why make a big deal about this? Several ideas present themselves to us for reflection. First, Jesus promised Peter that he would build his church on the apostles. This has indeed happened, and it's amazing to think that God uses weak and flawed people like John to communicate his word (cf. Mt 16:18). Second, Jesus promised that the world would hate the disciples as it hated him (cf. Jn 15:18). Third, from his exile on the prison isle of Patmos, we see both the truth of this statement as well as Jesus's promise that he would not leave them or forsake them (cf. Heb 13:5). While we are not apostles in the same sense that John was, **we can take some comfort in the fact that Jesus uses ordinary people, held securely in his hand, to bear witness to the gospel in the face of opposition.**

One last thing to note here in these opening phrases. John is writing to the churches in Asia Minor. As he stands on the isle of Patmos, he casts his gaze back east and looks from north to south naming the churches in each area that his gaze falls on. While these churches have strengths and weaknesses, John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, communicates the importance that the "church" holds in the world, for better or for worse. Many folks today find themselves disappointed by the church. Some leave the church, some leave God as well. Others say they are leaving the church but not leaving God. As John writes to these seven churches (a symbolic number for the whole), we are reminded that for better or for worse the church plays an important role in God's working out his plan of salvation in the world. As in many things, the answer to the failures of the church, which are real, is not less church or no church, but rather an honest, repentant church that is more like Christ. Take some time today to pray for the church, both local and universal, that she would reflect Jesus. Also pray for those that you know that have been hurt by the church or left the church. Pray that they might recognize the love that Jesus has for broken things, even the church.

## **PRAYER**

*Lord Jesus, thank you for your willingness to use ordinary, flawed people like John and like us to bear witness to the wonderful truths of the gospel. Strengthen us as we stand in the midst of a world that hates us even as it hated you. We also thank you for the church, which you loved and laid down your life for. Lord, you know how much she as an institution has failed throughout the ages. Please grant your church the humility of true repentance and the grace to look more like you, her Head. We do pray today for those that have been hurt by the church and find themselves adrift from you and from the people of God. Be close to them. Speak peace to their wounds. May they too learn to self-identify as beloved disciples and may we together bring healing to your church. We pray all this in Jesus's name. Amen.*

# DAY 2

REVELATION 1:5a, 6b, 8

<sup>5</sup> ... from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. ... <sup>6</sup> to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. <sup>8</sup> “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

If one wants to ask where their belief in Jesus came from or where it is going, Revelation 1:8 is a good place to begin. Jesus’s name here—the Alpha and the Omega—is the combination of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. He is the beginning and the end. Not only is Jesus creator, he precedes creation. There’s a concept that stretches our thinking, maybe to places our minds have never been. In theological language, this idea is called Christ’s pre-existence. Christ existed as a member of the Trinity before he existed as the incarnate son of God.

Nothing is a mystery to him. He never asks “why?” He understands all the questions and has all the answers. That thought in and of itself runs against our typical latent skepticism. We think our understanding needs to allow for all the complexities we see and experience. I need to look no further. The search for ultimate answers is done. This name alone is a whole personal philosophy of religion course. My past, present, and future is in his hands.

He transcends time. He somehow entered time to start what we see and know all around us. He started life as we know it and will somehow bring it to a culmination and write a final chapter. In the middle of that final story, he promises to bless us (Rev. 21:6-7). This is grace beyond anything we know and now experience. He also promises to finish his plan as we know it and to give us something we don’t begin to know or really understand at this point going forward—eternal life.

Jesus is our beginning, and we want him to be our end. We also want him to be everything that is in between. We want our stories to be fully involved in his story. We know that Jesus is the author of our faith. We want him to also be the finisher. We know we can be everything he wants us to be when our lives are completely involved in his.

## PRAYER

*Gracious and merciful Lord, thank you that because you transcend time, we can trust our lives to your care, knowing that our past, present, and future are in your hands. Thank you for your promise to care for us now and for the promise of eternal life with you. Help us to be attentive to your Word so our lives will bring honor and glory to your holy name as we wait for your return. Amen.*

# DAY 3

REVELATION 1:4b, 5b

<sup>4</sup> Grace to you and peace ...

<sup>5</sup> To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ...

Mercy is compassion that withholds punishment even when justice demands it. Within the judicial system, granting clemency, which really is another name for mercy, entirely depends on the will of the grantor. I'm sure we have heard it said that grace is getting what we don't deserve, and mercy is not getting what we do deserve. It's helpful to distinguish between grace and mercy. Oftentimes, we use each word in the same sentence or interchangeably. This is a mistake. It's a mercy when the police officer doesn't write me a ticket even though I was going over the speed limit. I deserved a ticket according to the law of our land, yet the police officer showed great mercy by not giving me one. I deserved a failing grade on the paper I completed a week late for class. It's a mercy that the teacher would give me a B+ because I didn't deserve that. You get the idea. Each one of us could fill volumes of books with mercies God has given us. The key question is, What would be on page one?

The parable of the prodigal son as found in Luke 15:11-32 is a story with this very idea. A father has two sons. The younger asks his father for his share of the inheritance early and then leaves behind the family and the estate to pursue his own way of life. He throws away all his money, which leaves him broke, distant, and doing the worst job imaginable for a Jew of the time—feeding pigs. At his lowest, he decides it's best to return home. Here is where the great act of mercy comes in. Instead of shaming, berating, and telling his son "I told you so," rather than shunning him, keeping him away, and not letting him return, the father runs out to him, welcoming him home warmly. He then proceeds to throw a feast, giving him fine clothing and a welcome home fit for a prince—all because "this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." (Luke 15:24)

The Bible is full of God's mercy. If you would like to read a few examples, check out Hebrews 4:16, Ephesians 2:4-5, 2 Samuel 24:14, and Titus 3:5. Why does God show mercy? Mercy is a central part of God's character. Consider these words in Exodus 34:6-7:

*"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."*

God's character has never changed. He is merciful to his people. The blood of Jesus freed us from our sins and expressed his great love for us. It took this great act of the Son of Man, the one who is the Alpha and the Omega, to satisfy the punishment that we deserved.

Till on that cross as Jesus died,  
The wrath of God was satisfied;

For every sin on him was laid  
Here in the death of Christ I live. *(In Christ Alone)*

What a great mercy! You and I, as we stand in Christ, have been given clemency. The punishment that we deserved has been passed over.

## **PRAYER**

*Good, gracious, and merciful Father. You have acted with great mercy toward your people, sparing our lives from the stain of sin and the punishment deserved for our wrongdoing toward other people and you. Through your son, Jesus the Messiah, we have not only been forgiven but have been given life in him. Thank you for this mercy. It's in the Alpha and the Omega, Christ the saving King, we pray. Amen.*

# DAY 4

REVELATION 1:5a, 6

To him who loves us...and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Today our scripture passage concludes with us worshipping. In worship we focus on God and who he is and that reminds us of who we are. We proclaim God's glory--his completeness, majesty, beauty--and that gives us perspective on our illusions of self-importance. We proclaim God's dominion--his sovereignty, rule, authority--and remember he knows about our tears, frustrations, sin, and frailty and that he's working all things out.

Think about our times of worship.

Do you see it as a response to the love of God or a duty?

We who worship are doing so as those who have been made into a kingdom by Jesus who loves us. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray he prayed "your kingdom come." That's the kingdom he's making us into: where we recognize and acknowledge his glory and dominion. And we do that while bathed in his sacrificial love.

Think about that for a bit: Do you love God's kingdom? Are you resting in it or resisting it?

We who worship are described in one more way in our passage today: as priests to Jesus's God and Father. Jesus takes us into himself completely! He is Priest, and he makes us priests. He invites us to join him in mediating between the world and God! To offer prayers to God for the sins and needs of the world. To share the love of God with the world.

Think about being a priest. Do you see yourself more as an intercessor for the people of the world? Or more as either an idolizer or a detester of people of the world?

This song was in our worship service this past Sunday, where we sang about giving *honor, glory, and dominion* to our *Alpha and Omega* (see especially first and last verses). Consider using it as a closing prayer and/or a time of worship today.



*Of the Father's Love Begotten*

Of the Father's love begotten  
ere the worlds began to be,  
he is Alpha and Omega,  
he the Source, the Ending he,  
of the things that are, that have been,  
and that future years shall see,  
evermore and evermore!

O that birth forever blessed,  
when the Virgin, full of grace,  
by the Holy Ghost conceiving,  
bore the Savior of our race;  
and the babe, the world's Redeemer,  
first revealed his sacred face,  
evermore and evermore!

This is he whom heav'n-taught singers  
sang of old with one accord,  
whom the Scriptures of the prophets  
promised in their faithful word;  
now he shines, the long-expected;  
let creation praise its Lord,  
evermore and evermore!

O ye heights of heav'n, adore him;  
angel hosts, his praises sing;  
all dominions, bow before him,  
and extol our God and King;  
let no tongue on earth be silent,  
ev'ry voice in concert ring,  
evermore and evermore!

Christ, to thee, with God the Father,  
and, O Holy Ghost, to thee,  
hymn, and chant, and high thanksgiving,  
and unwearied praises be,  
honor, glory, and dominion,  
and eternal victory,  
evermore and evermore!

# DAY 5

REVELATION 1:7

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

John's last words, written from his exile on Patmos to believers in hostile surroundings, were a revelation of the ascended and reigning Lord Jesus Christ. Satan and his human agents believed they had finally succeeded in silencing John. But God, who rules and overrules, gave him a platform and a voice, not just for his contemporaries, but for all posterity—a demonstration that God has the last word as well as the first.

In his greeting, John promises a blessing to everyone who speaks, hears, and keeps these words. There is urgency: “the time is near” (Rev 1:3). What time? The time of Jesus's return, his second coming. John wants our attention. “Behold!” Look and keep looking; listen and keep listening! These are the things that will surely happen:

An assertion: Jesus WILL come with the clouds.

An inclusion: EVERY person will witness this.

A designation: Those who PIERCED him will see and know.

A description: People from every tribe will not just weep, but will WAIL, when they realize the undeniable and inescapable consequence of their refusal to believe.

Jesus's first coming split history into before and after, even for those who had no interest or understanding of who he was. For God's chosen people, Israel, the coming of the promised Messiah was the end point from which they measured their lives. God had prescribed specific and detailed instructions for worship, and they kept careful genealogies so they could recognize their Messiah when he appeared. But because God's revelation was progressive through history, they imagined this coming as a single event, not an undisclosed period of time involving an initial and a final appearance.

New Testament believers lived in the reality of a first coming and the promise of a return. They too measured their lives from the end. They accepted suffering with patience, a painful privilege that brought joy, because it identified them as belonging to the kingdom of light, no longer walking in darkness. When Peter said, “The end of all things is at hand” (1 Peter 4:7), he was not primarily speaking chronologically but was defining the end as the goal. With the coming of Christ, the goal of history has been inaugurated, and we live in the last days.

First-century believers expected Jesus would return soon. Two thousand years later, we realize that was not God's plan, but we also live in expectation. We too measure our lives from the end when Jesus will return as Savior, King, and Judge. This end gives clarity and meaning to the beginning and the middle. We live intentionally, choosing to invest our time and resources in eternal values. We live with urgency, while we still have time to invite and warn people God puts in our path. And because we know Jesus has already conquered Satan and death, we can live from the good future that is already ours, even as we navigate the confusions and contradictions of our experience. Satan's lies and abuse are not the last word. Jesus is Alpha and Omega!

He is coming soon!  
We will see Him!  
We will marvel and adore!  
Jesus, King of kings, Lord of lords!

## **PRAYER**

*Almighty Father, we join all creation in praise: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" Lord Jesus, no one else could open the scroll, revealing you as the Logos, the meaning of history. Please help us in our weakness, distractions, and rebellions to behold you walking with us, victorious. And help us keep watching. Are you coming for us soon? In your strong name, Amen.*