

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 27TH–28TH, 2024 // REVELATION

“HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS...” (REVELATION 1:4–8)

Revelation is a letter written to seven actual churches in the Roman province of Asia.

- “Grace and peace to you” was the traditional Christian greeting, but John wants his readers to know that this only comes from God (v. 4).
- The source of these blessings is from the Father (“the one who is, ...was, ...is to come”), the Spirit (“seven spirits before his throne”), and the Son (“...from Jesus Christ”).

SEVEN SPIRITS?

This is a very unique phrase that only occurs in Revelation and is most likely a reference to Isaiah 11:2, where aspects of the Holy Spirit's work and ministry are described.

- The Spirit of God gives wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, Godliness, and the fear of the Lord.
- This is why we need the Holy Spirit to fill us.

For each person of the trinity (1 God, 3 persons) mentioned, John highlights certain aspects.

- God the Father as the God of the present, the past, and the future.
- God the Spirit as the God of fullness and perfection.
- God the Son as a Prophet (“faithful witness”), the resurrected one (“firstborn from the dead”), and as sovereign king (“ruler of the kings of the earth”).

While all persons of the Trinity send grace and peace, Jesus is named as the one to receive “glory and dominion forever and ever” (v. 6).

- Jesus is worthy of praise for three specific deeds: he loves us, he freed us from our sins by his blood, and he made us to be a kingdom and priests.
- The verb love could be translated “keeps on loving us”—we can be pretty unlovable at times.

In the OT, Israel was “set free” from death by the blood of the Passover lamb.

- At Passover, God commissioned Israel to be a “kingdom of priests and [His] holy nation” (Ex. 19:6).
- As God's people, we're invited to be part of a Kingdom as we rule and reign with Christ.
- But we're also priests—we can approach God directly because of the blood of Jesus!

V. 7 is the main idea of the book of Revelation—“He's coming with the clouds”

- The 1st coming of Christ was marked by humility, lowliness, & obscurity, but the 2nd coming will be public, glorious, & “every eye will see him.”
- “Those who pierced him” will wail is a reference to Zech. 12:10 and is a reference to this event being a terrible reality for those who have made themselves His enemies.

Those who have rejected Christ in every age, beginning with those who pierced Him, will realize their terrible error when they see Him return & they'll mourn, but not unto repentance.

- They'll mourn because they'll realize all is lost and now judgment has come.
- “The Alpha and the Omega” (A to Z) means that God is the One in control of all things from the beginning to the end of time.

GRACE & PEACE

What every person on earth is looking for is grace (the unmerited favor of God) and peace (freedom from disturbance or stress).

- Through Christ, we have a relationship with a God who “keeps on loving us.”
- We're “free from our sins” because of His blood.
- We're invited into a new identity and given significance as “priests” and royalty!

“ONE LIKE THE SON OF MAN” (REVELATION 1:9–16)

John describes himself as a man of the people. He's a brother and companion to the Believers in the 7 churches (v. 9).

- He understood the suffering they were going through and he knew the importance of endurance.
- On the “Lord's day” (the 1st day of the week, a Sunday), John received a vision by the Spirit of God (v. 10).

Physically, John is on the Island of Patmos—a small island off the coast of Turkey shaped like a crescent moon.

- On this island, there are rocky cliffs, and near the bottom of those cliffs would've been mines.
- Working in the mines would've been political prisoners banished to Patmos just as John was.
- Physically, John was in Patmos—but spiritually, he's experiencing a vision from God.

As John was “in the Spirit,” he heard a loud voice behind him like a trumpet that commanded him to write what he saw in a scroll (v. 10).

- In John's day, scrolls were made from strips of paper from the papyrus plant about a foot wide that were glued together as long as 30 feet and rolled up.
- The writing on scrolls was handwritten in even columns only a few inches wide.

When John turns around to see the voice that's speaking to him, he sees a vision that he's probably not expecting.

- The first thing he sees is “7 golden lampstands,” each of them most likely being a 7-branched candelabrum like those in the Jewish temple.
- In Zech. 4:2, Israel was described as a lampstand, but now each lampstand represents each of the 7 churches (1:20) shining light into darkness.

A lampstand itself can't give any light, it's only there to hold the light.

- In the same way, a church simply by virtue of being called a church or belonging to a denomination/heritage/tradition/institution can't give any real spiritual light.
- The only way a church can give spiritual light is if it holds Christ up for His light to shine!
- Any church that doesn't isn't really a church.

But then, “among” the lampstands, John sees Jesus—but much differently than how he'd seen him before.

- This Jesus was resurrected and glorified, and John struggles to find the words to describe exactly what he saw.

- Notice how many times the word “like” is used. Some of what John describes is symbolic, not literal, and speaks of Jesus' character.

John sees Jesus “among” the lampstands; He's present in His churches even in their suffering.

- Jesus is “like the son of man;” He has maintained His essential humanity (shape) even in His exalted state (that phrase also connects Jesus to the apocalyptic figure in Daniel 7:13).
- Jesus was wearing a robe; He was dressed in the garments of the High Priest of Israel as He represents His people before God the Father.

His hair was white, like wool or snow, to symbolize eternal wisdom & knowledge, and His eyes were like blazing fire to symbolize Him seeing everything.

- Jesus' feet were like “bronze glowing in a furnace”—a picture of a king who subdued his enemies and made them a footstool.
 - His voice was as powerful and overwhelming as “the sound of cascading waters.”
- In the right hand of Jesus, John saw 7 stars. V. 20 explains that these are the “angels” of the 7 churches (either guardian angels or God's messengers—ruling elders/pastors).
- Out of His mouth came a “sharp double-edged sword” representing Jesus' power to judge and conquer His enemies with His Word.
 - His face was “like the sun.” The glory of full deity was seen in Jesus like on the day of transfiguration.

As Jesus' close friend, John had become familiar with a version of Jesus (Jesus in His humanity), but here he sees Jesus in the fullness of His deity and glory.

- At times, we are far too casual and flippant with our mental picture of Jesus and it shows in how we view His role in our lives (as our genie, butler, or life coach).
- Jesus is the Lord of all the universe!

“THE FIRST AND THE LAST” (REVELATION 1:17–20)

What's John's reaction to seeing the glorified Jesus? He either faints, passes out or collapses in fear and worship.

- Anytime in Scripture when God visibly manifests Himself, this is how people respond.
- John's fear and worship were met by Jesus touching and blessing him (v. 17).
- Jesus tells John not to fear because He is the “First and the Last.” Jesus holds power over time.

Jesus also reveals that as the “Living One,” He has ultimate power over life as the Creator and Sustainer. He also extends eternal life to us through Himself.

- Jesus has ultimate power over sin and its wages (Rom. 6:23). As He says, “I was dead, but look—I am alive...”
- Jesus has ultimate power over Death and Hades. He says “I hold the keys” over them.

Keys are for opening or locking doors, and those who are key holders have authority over doors and limit their power.

- As the Final Judge, Jesus is able to open the doors of death and judge all those who have died.
- He also has the power to send into eternal death (“the lake of fire”) those whose names aren't in the Book of Life (Rev. 20:14–15).

As the keyholder to death, Jesus also has the power to unlock its doors and let out His saints when their time on earth is over.

- Jesus said in John 11:26, “...everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”
- As mortal human beings, our present bodies will eventually give out and we will taste death, but the keyholder of death (Jesus) won't let us stay locked in death's prison forever.

Jesus commands John to write “what [he has] seen” (v. 19), some of which are near events (“those that are”) and others concerning the future (“those that are to take place after this”). Side note: this is why a blend of the preterist and futurist interpretive methods makes the most sense!

- Jesus Himself interprets for John the mystery of the 7 stars and lampstands.

The 7 lampstands are the 7 churches in Asia, and the 7 stars are their “angels.”

- Both the congregations and their spiritual leaders are symbolized as light-bearing bodies that shine in the midst of darkness.
- Not only that, Jesus is among the churches, and He holds the leaders of His churches in His hand.
- Jesus deeply cares for and loves His Church!

SPECULATION VS. REVELATION

- Speculation is man's ideas about who God may possibly be. It is based on tradition, philosophy, what feels right in our cultural moment, and it's always changing.
- Revelation is from God. Only God can reveal to you the truth of Who He is, and He does so through the truth of His Word, the reality of Jesus, and the work of His Holy Spirit.

A REVELATION OF JESUS

- Before John gets a revelation of anything else, God gives him a revelation of Jesus.
- Above anything else we need in our lives, God wants us to receive in full measure a revelation of Jesus.
- Jesus is the Eternal One, the ruler of the kings of the earth, and He's powerful, holy, beautiful, wise, and overwhelmingly good.
- Jesus is the Alpha and Omega Who sees all, knows all, and reigns over all. Yet, he relates to us in an intensely personal manner.

Jesus...

- Keeps on loving us and has set us free from our sins by His blood.
- Will unlock death's door for us someday.
- Holds us in His hand and calms our fears.

The world needs a revelation of Jesus, which is why Christ's church is called to lift up Jesus in the darkness so His light can shine through us.

- We have a responsibility to testify of what we've seen, what is, and what will someday take place (the reality of eternity).
- As we shine, Jesus holds us up and sustains us—He's in our midst!