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Revelation 1:1–8 NASB 2020

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated *it* by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, everything that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

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 made us *into* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

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

Intro

It was never going to be easy...

Mark 8:31–38 NASB 2020

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise *from the dead*. And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God’s purposes, but

on man's."

And He summoned the crowd together with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it benefit a person to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what could a person give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

How often have I been like Peter? While worshipping Christ and following Him, how often have I demanded that He come my way or fulfill my vision rather than me conforming my heart to His?

When we make self the center of our religion (even if our doctrine is otherwise correct) rather than centering religion on Christ, we run the risk to be mere satanic do gooders rather than Christ shaped culture transformers.

Before saying anything else, John takes time to remind us of what this is all about and we would do well to listen here.

Purpose, context & setting

The origin of the revelation (v1-2).

According to V1 the revelation is of Christ. It is given by the Father to Christ who delivered it by an angel to John, who wrote it down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of the revelation (v3).

The Lord sent this message to His church to encourage us to read these inspired words, to hear them, and to observe what they say (which is to put them into practice in our lives).

Revelation is primarily an encouragement letter to the Church.

Sensationalist preachers and fear mongerers have taught it in a way that has not lead us to understanding God's true purpose in this letter. If you are a follower of Christ, this book should not produce fear in you, but rather

fortitude. To he who is on Christ's side, we are on the winning side and while we make absorb blows and seeming setbacks in the moment, the outcome of Christ's victory is secure and irreversible.

The point of it all is that Jesus wins. He is the Alpha and Omega. As the world began with Him, so shall it end with Him. The future is Christ as sure as it's beginning was Christ. Evil and darkness will soon be dealt with for good. Our job is simply to trust Christ and to remain in Him. He will handle the rest and give us strength to hold on while we await His final military campaign to come to a close.

Truth

Observations

Christian resilience is tied to our vision of Christ, who He is, who we are in Him, and what He is doing in the world.

I. The time is at hand. (1-3)

John harkens back to Daniel 2 in this passage. Daniel was prophesying forward about the future coming of God's kingdom in the so called "latter days." John is clearly piggybacking off of Daniel, but rather than saying this is a future "latter day" event, John says that it is imminent. These are similar to Jesus' own previous words when he said the kingdom of God is at hand.

What John is describing for us, is not so much a future reality, but a present one. Daniel's prophecy finds its fulfillment in the cross and resurrection of Jesus. Christ is ascended and seated on his throne now. His kingdom is already established, and his borders will only be growing. There is nothing the kingdom of darkness can do to stop it now.

II. The atmosphere for His church is grace and peace. (4-5)

"Grace and peace be unto you" is such a powerful blessing spoken over us through John from the Lord Himself.

He has not only spoken grace and peace over us, but He has purchased grace and peace for us as a new birthright through His blood. By His cross, He has ultimately proven His love for us for all time.

According to this word, Christ has washed us in His blood and it is certain that all who are washed in the cleaning flow of Christ's blood are truly and forever clean.

"It is pleasant to pass over a country after a storm has spent itself; to smell the freshness of the herbs after the rain has passed away, and to note the drops while they glisten like purest diamonds in the sunlight. That is the position of a Christian. He is going through a land where the storm has spent itself upon his Saviour's head, and if there be a few drops of sorrow falling, they distil from clouds of mercy, and Jesus cheers him by the assurance that they are not for his destruction... O that the hand of mercy may now lead you to Christ! He is freely set before you in the gospel: his riven side is the rock of shelter." -Charles Spurgeon (Morning and Evening, Feb 25)

To be in Christ is to be in the place of shelter from the coming storm of God's wrath on this wicked, sinful, disrespectful world. All who are in Him can be at peace because they are under the shelter of the One from whom the storm originates. He had endured our storm for us in our place.

When the One who justly brings the storm, endures the storm for you and protects you from the future coming of the greatest storm of all, you are indeed safe from it. We will never relent from watching over and advocating on behalf of those for whom He has already endured the wrath and judgement seat of the Most High.

Colossians 3:4 NASB 2020

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

III. We are a kingdom of priests, serving the body and blood of Christ to the entire world. (6-7)

We are a people brought out of the world by Christ for His own glory. In

this way, we have been reconnected to our original purpose which we were made for. We were always made for His glory and our divergence from that purpose has brought us nothing but emptiness, sadness, despair, and destruction.

A priest is one who offers up a sacrifice as a mediator between God and men. In our case, Christ the Great High Priest has already made the final sacrifice of Himself on the cross. Therefore we do not offer up sacrifices like the priests of the false gods and elemental spirits. Rather, we offer up the already sacrificed Lord, calling people to receive His sacrifice through repentance and belief, and administering water baptism as a sign that they have passed through the waters of judgement and delivered by the grace of Christ.

Hebrews 7:26–27 NASB 2020

For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens; who has no daily need, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because He did this once for all *time* when He offered up Himself.

Christ has dominion over all things and His dominion is both unending and irreversible. To the extent that we live as kingdom people, we are aligning ourselves with the truth of Christ's kingdom. To the extent that we do not live as kingdom people, we are aligning ourselves with the kingdom of darkness and all who are aligned with darkness best be prepared to be wiped away with a word.

His judgement is sure. He is coming with the clouds, just as He went up into them when he ascended. Like a storm on the horizon for all who oppose Him, He comes. His greatest and most sincere enemies will soon tremble at the sight of Him. When He arrives this second time, the matter will be over once and for all.

Daniel 7:13–14 NASB 2020

"I kept looking in the night visions,

And behold, with the clouds of heaven

One like a son of man was coming,

And He came up to the Ancient of Days

And was presented before Him.

"And to Him was given dominion,

Honor, and a kingdom,

So that all the peoples, nations, and *populations of all* languages

Might serve Him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion

Which will not pass away;

And His kingdom is one

Which will not be destroyed.

IV. He is our beginning and end. (8)

If the Lord were standing right in front of us today, I think he might say something like the following to we American Christians.

"My people trust me to be the Alpha and Omega of their salvation, and of creation generally, but they haven't trusted me to be the Alpha and Omega of their daily lives. Rather than beginning and ending with me, they have begun and ended in their own strength and thus their effectiveness has been greatly lessened. When they return to me as Alpha and Omega of their days, then I will empower them to set the hearts of many in their community right with me."

James 4:14 NASB 2020

Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. For you are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away.

Psalms 8:4 NASB 2020

What is man that You think of him,

And a son of man that You are concerned about him?

Brothers and sisters, our lives are but a vapor and yet within that vapor is great weight and substance. The Lord has given us our lives for our good and for His glory and our greatest good is tied up with His glory. The best human life is centered on Christ. It begins and ends with Him, echoing the great truth of all creation.

"God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." -John Piper

Likewise, we were made for God and our hearts are restless until they are found in Him. -Augustine

It follows then, that we as humans are most happy and satisfied (further, only truly happy and satisfied) when we are satisfied in God. He must be our Alpha and Omega or we will never rise above the misery of this broken, sinful life.

How are you doing at this? Is Christ the Alpha and Omega of your days? Does your life echo the ultimate truth of all things? Are you ready for His return one day soon? Are you living as if Christ is on His throne now?

Gospel

Who is God? Christ is God and He is the beginning and end, not of the world only but of our lives also.

What has God done? He has saved us, redeemed us, and made a new nation of us by His blood.

Who are we? We are His people, a kingdom of redeemed priests in Christ who have been empowered by the Spirit to live lives in alignment with the reality that Christ is the beginning and end of all things (including us).

What do we do? We center our lives around Christ, His mission, His people, and His glory.

It is for our own good, for the good of others, and for the good of the Lord when we live this way. The Father is pleased and takes great pleasure in seeing us fight with Him against darkness. He loves having His children join

Him on His mission to redeem and restore all that the rebellion has robbed from the Light.

Challenge

1. Christians, we must be pleased with nothing less in our lives than Christ being the blazing center and everything else taking second place at best.
2. This requires a radical reorientation of the life our Western world has taught us is best.
3. We must actually work to build our lives around Christ, the teachings of the Apostles & Prophets (Scripture), and around His resilient remnant community (the Church). We are God's plan to change the world and if we are not engaged in what the Lord is doing, we rob ourselves and everyone around us of the grace God intended to display through each of us.

I believe the Lord is calling His people back to a radical life of Christ being the Alpha and Omega not only of the world or as a concept, but of our very lives.

Lord, let it be so in me. Amen.