

Revelation 1:4-8

Prepare to Meet Your God and King!

Getting Ready - Receiving Grace and Peace)

<p>[4] John,</p> <p>To the seven churches in the province of Asia:</p>	<p>A. INITIAL GREETINGS</p> <p><i>The Author</i> - John</p> <p><i>The Recipients</i> - 7 churches</p>	<p>This is the only book where John refers to himself by name, as the author.</p> <p>Though originally written to seven specific churches, this is ultimately written to <i>all</i> of God's people.</p>
<p>Grace and peace to you</p>	<p>B. A DESIRE FOR THE READERS TO BE READY</p> <p><i>Grace</i> - God's undeserved kindness.</p> <p><i>Peace</i> - A restored relationship with God; the hostility is gone.</p>	<p>John wishes something for the readers that only God can give them (as stated in v. 4b-5)!</p>
<p>from him who is, and who was, and who is to come,</p> <p>and from the seven spirits before his throne,</p> <p>[5] and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.</p>	<p>C. THE SOURCE OF GRACE AND PEACE</p> <p><i>GOD [the focus here is on THE FATHER]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He exists. • He always did exist. • He is coming. <p>THE HOLY SPIRIT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Or "seven-fold Spirit" - seven manifestations of the one Spirit.] <p>JESUS CHRIST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He faithfully testified to the truth. • He was first to rise from the dead. (In doing so, he guaranteed <i>our</i> resurrection from the dead.) • He is exalted over all. 	<p><u>The Self-Existing God</u> - here focusing on the Father (See also v. 8.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Old Testament, God is described as "I AM" (Exodus 3:14) - <i>self</i>-existing and <i>always</i> existing. <p>God is returning to the earth. Not since sin entered the world, in the garden of Eden, has he been here in such a glorious manner.</p> <p><u>The personal manifestation of God's power</u> - not an impersonal force</p> <p>He resides in God's presence, ready to accomplish his will.</p> <p><u>The visible manifestation of God</u></p> <p>Jesus, God in human form (Philippians 2:6+), will be the visible expression of God returning to earth.</p>

Those who have received God's GRACE and PEACE (v. 4) can eagerly look forward to Jesus' return.

The Return of King Jesus

<p>To him who loves us</p> <p>and has freed us from our sins by his blood,</p> <p>[6] and has made us to be a kingdom</p> <p>and priests to serve his God and Father</p> <p>--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.</p>	<p>A. THE GREATNESS OF OUR KING</p> <p><i>Why did he do the things listed below?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because he loves us. <p><i>What did he do?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He freed/released us from our sins. • He has made us to be citizens of his kingdom. • He gave us direct access to the Father and the privilege of serving him. <p><i>How should we respond?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give him the praise he deserves! 	<p>LOVE - He has a special love for us. It is because of his undeserved kindness ("grace"), and because he restored the relationship between us and God ("peace"), that the following are true of us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We used to be slaves to sin, but not any more (Romans 6:6). Therefore, we have an obligation to <i>not</i> yield ourselves to our former master (Romans 6:16-17; 8:12). [Some mss.: he <i>washed us clean</i> from our sins.] • We used to belong to the "domain of darkness" (Colossians 1:13). Now we are "aliens" in this sinful world (1 Peter 2:11); we are like ambassadors from another (God's) country (2 Corinthians 5:20). • All citizens of God's kingdom are "priests," in the New Testament sense; all have direct access to God; all have the privilege of serving him (rather than serving the devil and sin - our old way). • We can joyfully acknowledge his glory and power - a glory and power which will never diminish.
<p>[7] Look, he is coming with the clouds,</p> <p>and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him;</p> <p>and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.</p> <p>So shall it be! Amen.</p>	<p>B. ANTICIPATING THE KING'S RETURN</p> <p><i>What will happen?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He will come. • All will see him. <p><i>How will we respond?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All will grieve. Yet... • We who have prepared for his coming can look forward to his return. 	<p>(Compare to Acts 1:9-11.)</p> <p>When he comes, all people, whether living now or in the past, will see him.</p> <p>When we see how wonderful the King is, we will be ashamed that we ever rebelled against him. It will grieve us.</p> <p>However, for us who have been brought into his kingdom, he will take away our tears (Revelation 7:17 and 21:4).</p>
<p>[8] "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God,</p> <p>"who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."</p>	<p>C. THE END RESULT OF THE KING'S RETURN</p> <p>God will be exalted as the focus of all reality!</p> <p>Contextually, the focus here is on Jesus Christ, the <i>visible</i> manifestation of God</p>	<p>"From A to Z" - God is the center of everything. (Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This title is also used to describe Jesus in Revelation 22:13. <p>Compare with 1 Corinthians 15:24, 27-28. (See also verse 4, above.)</p>

**All human pretension will be gone. God will be seen (and acknowledged) for who he is.
He will be exalted over all.**

Revelation 1:4-8 Supplementary Study Information

Many people go to the book of Revelation, simply to satisfy their curiosity about the end times. They would prefer to skip the first few chapters of the book. God, however, wants us to first *get ready* for his return, before we concern ourselves with the technical details about it!

Verse 4

JOHN (the author)

Like many others who were used by God to write Scripture, John did *not* want to direct people's attention to himself. In the gospel of John, he describes himself only as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:7). He calls himself "the elder," in 2 John and 3 John. He never mentions his name, in 1 John. Only in the book of Revelation does he refer to himself *by name* as the author. (In Revelation, his name is found in 1:1, 4, 9; and 22:8.) Considering the unique nature of this book, readers (both then and now) would *have* to know where it came from, so that they would know it was authoritative.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES

These will be examined in a later study. These churches were located in what is now the western edge of Turkey (near the Aegean Sea). Other churches existed in the area, such as the church at Colosse, which was located about ten miles from Laodicea. However, these seven churches were specially selected for this letter, probably because their strengths and weaknesses were typical of those experienced by churches down through the ages.

[Some believe that there is correlation between the specific *order* that the churches are addressed, and the average trends of the church (as a whole) down through history. They would claim that the earliest churches had a tendency to be like the church at Ephesus, followed, at a later date, by those with characteristics similar to the church at Smyrna. (There could be a time of "transition," during which characteristics of *both* were prevalent.) According to this view, this correlation would continue down through the centuries, with the last church (Laodicea) being representative of the typical church at the time of Jesus' return. (In each "era," all seven types of churches would exist, but one would be representative of the majority.)]

GRACE AND PEACE - God's kindness ("grace") is a prerequisite for genuine, permanent peace with God. This is only possible through Jesus, because Jesus *is* our peace! (Ephesians 2:14)

- The apostle Paul often mentions grace and peace at the beginning of his letters. So does Peter.

THE MYSTERY OF THE "ONE AND THREE" in Verses 4-8

In Scripture, God reveals himself as both "unity" (there is *one* God) and "plurality" (the Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God). Scripture treats these as statements about two *separate* facts, which stand side-by-side and which do not need to be "reconciled." They are *not* considered opposite (contradictory) statements about *one* fact. (If they *were* statements about one fact, then they *would* need reconciled.)

Both unity and plurality appear to be mentioned in this passage - the "three" in verses 4-5 (and to some extent, in verses 6-7), and the "one" in verse 8. We should note that these verses make no attempt to "prove" that God is "one and three" (or "unity and plurality"). Instead, they simply make reference to these concepts as *facts already accepted as true*.

It is interesting to observe how Scripture handles these two concepts. When the focus is on the "unity" perspective (verse 8; also much of the Old Testament), characteristics such as "who is, was, and is to come" are simply attributed to "*God*." In contrast, when the focus is on the "trinity" perspective (verses 4-6; also much of the New Testament), these (and other) characteristics are normally attributed to the *Father*.

- This is not intended as a *denial* that they apply to the Son. (There are many verses which take characteristics applicable to the Father, and apply them to the Son.) Rather, it is because the primary focus, when referring to the

Son, is on what he did as the "God-Man," as mediator between a holy God and a sinful human race - 1 Timothy 2:5-6. (From this perspective, Jesus can even refer to the Father as "my God" or "my Father," in the same way that we humans would - compare to Revelation 3:2, 5.)

- Such characteristics are attributed less frequently to the Holy Spirit. Again, it is not intended as a *denial* that such characteristics apply. Rather, it is because the Holy Spirit often works behind the scenes, like a "silent member" of the "trinity," directing attention toward Jesus Christ.

"WHO IS / WHO WAS"

This focuses on God as *always*-existing and as *self*-existing. These and similar terms are used in Revelation 1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; and 16:5-7; and are almost always associated with the title, "Lord God Almighty."

In the Old Testament, God describes himself as "I AM," which focuses on his self-existing character (Exodus 3:14). In John 8:58, Jesus says, "before Abraham came into existence, I exist (I am)." Jesus did not use *past* tense, suggesting that he merely existed (or came into existence) before Abraham did, but *present* tense, suggesting that he always was (and is) in a perpetual state of existence. (Obviously, this does not make reference to his *physical* existence as a human. In this sense, he was born just over 2000 years ago - definitely *not* before Abraham! John 8:56-57.)

"WHO IS TO COME"

This phrase occurs frequently in the book of Revelation. Sometimes it is used in reference to "the Lord God Almighty"; sometimes it is used in reference to "Jesus Christ." There are some verses in which it is difficult to determine which name ("God" or "Jesus Christ") is being referred to. But since Jesus *is* God, it doesn't really matter! Scripture tells us that God is returning; it also tells us that Jesus, the visible expression of God - God in human form - is returning.

- Some of the verses which focus on the Lord God Almighty returning: Revelation 1:8; 4:8.
- Some of the verses which focus on Jesus Christ returning: Revelation 1:7; 2:5, 16; 3:11.
- Some additional verses: Revelation 1:4; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20.

THE SEVEN SPIRITS - This phrase is found only in Revelation 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; and 5:6. Some have suggested that this might have reference to seven heavenly "spirits" who are always ready to serve God. Yet *nowhere* does Scripture suggest that *grace* and *peace* would come from some heavenly being (or "spirit") other than God. More likely, this is a reference to the Holy Spirit, with a focus on the fact that he manifests himself in many ways, in the church. [In the seven letters to the churches (Revelation 2-3), the Spirit manifests itself in seven different ways, strengthening his people so that they can become victorious "overcomers."]

- In Revelation 5:6, the "seven Spirits" are equated with "seven eyes," possibly an allusion to Zechariah 4:10.
- The Holy Spirit is often symbolically represented by things - examples: a dove (Matthew 3:16) and fire (Acts 2:3).

Verse 5

JESUS CHRIST - "THE FAITHFUL WITNESS"

He is trustworthy (faithful), testifying (witnessing) to the truth. (See also Revelation 3:14; 19:11.)

- Jesus was faithful unto death - both in what he *said* and what he *did*. When he was tested (tempted just like us - Hebrews 4:15), he did not give-in to sin or compromise, but continued to do what was right and true: the will of the Father. [Example: Jesus knew that he would one day have to suffer death on the cross. In Matthew 4:8-10, Satan tempted Jesus to *compromise*, so that he wouldn't have to die such a horrible, painful death. Satan claimed he would surrender to Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, if Jesus would merely be willing to give Satan a few moments of "painless" worship. Jesus, refused to give-in to compromise, even though it appeared to be to his advantage. (We are to follow his example, and *also* refuse to compromise, no matter how good the consequences may seem to be.)]

A Few Comments about the Faithfulness of Jesus' Testimony / God's Testimony

- He *faithfully testified* before Pontius Pilate (who sentenced him to death) - 1 Timothy 6:13. He now *faithfully testifies* about what will take place in the future - Revelation 1:2; 22:16-20.

- It is our duty to accept everything Jesus says (his "testimony"), to "hold to it" (Revelation 19:10) and to be willing to suffer (or even die) for it - Revelation 1:9; 6:9; 12:17; and 20:4.
- We should remember that everything God tells us about the new heaven and earth is "faithful and true" - Revelation 21:5; 22:6.

"THE FIRSTBORN OF (or FROM) THE DEAD"

Jesus, the "faithful witness" was condemned by people and put to death. But he was vindicated (declared "not guilty") by God and raised back to life. Thus, he is the "first born" from the dead. We who belong to him, who remain faithful witnesses for him, will *also* be vindicated (declared "not guilty") by *our* resurrections from the dead. (Our vindication is possible *only* because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. We do not deserve it.)

- See also Romans 8:29, where Jesus is described as the "firstborn" among many brothers, and Colossians 1:18, where is described as the "firstborn" from the dead. Jesus is also described as "the firstborn over all creation," in Colossians 1:15.
- As the first to be resurrected from the dead (not just a temporary return, such as what Lazarus experienced - John 11:43-44), he is a guarantee that *we also* will be raised from the dead. We are "the church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23).

"THE RULER OF THE KINGS OF THE EARTH"

He is called the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" in Revelation 17:14 and 19:16. He is also given many other titles of authority, throughout Scripture.

- After Jesus returns, there will still be kings and nations (Revelation 21:24), but Jesus will be the Supreme Ruler.

HIM WHO LOVES US, WHO RELEASED/FREED US

Note the contrast. The word "love" describes an *ongoing* relationship; the word "released" (= "freed") describes a *one-time* act.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ABOUT LIFE AS "REDEEMED" FROM OUR SINS (or "washed" from them - KJV)

We are no longer enslaved or dirty - trapped and polluted by sin. Therefore, it is *not* an option for us to go back to our sins, to yield once again to our old "master" (Romans 6:14). We are *not* to be like pigs that, once washed, go back to wallowing in the mud (2 Peter 2:22).

We must also remember that we are not *our own* masters. We are freed from sin, *for a purpose*: that we may serve a different master, namely Jesus.

- This is why Paul often began his letters, by calling himself a "slave" or "servant" of God - example Romans 1:1. Peter also begins 2 Peter that way.

Everyone serves someone or something; the only issue is who it will be - whether it will be God, or sin (and the devil). See Romans 6:11-23.

- If we are a citizen of God's kingdom (v. 6), we will serve *God*, for the only alternative to serving God is serving the devil (or sin) - and that is *not* an option in God's kingdom!

BLOOD

Our release was made possible *only* through Jesus' sacrifice of himself. This shows us how serious our sin problem is.

Verse 6

KINGDOM

We are now *aliens* (temporary residents or foreigners) to this world (1 Peter 2:11).

- Being a citizen of God's kingdom is more important than any citizenship we may have in this world's kingdom's - all of which exist only for a short time. Any loyalty we may have to earthly kingdoms must be, by nature, secondary and of comparatively minor significance. Our loyalty to God and to Christians *anywhere in the world* must be greater than our loyalty to any earthly kingdom - even the nation we happen to live in.

LIFE AS PRIESTS IN THE KINGDOM

All citizens of God's kingdom are priests, in the New Testament sense. Because of what Jesus did on the cross, *all* of God's people have direct access to God. (See 1 Peter 2:9.)

- Note that Jesus Christ is our *high priest* - Hebrews 3:1.

PRIESTS

In the Old Testament, under the covenant God made with Israel, the priestly duties (sacrifices, etc.) were to be done only by the Levitical priests. See Exodus 19:6. Yet there was a sense in which *all* the Israelites were supposed to be like priests:

- They were *all* supposed to devote themselves to serving God. In every walk of life, they were to live in obedience and service to him. (How they were to do this is described in the 10 Commandments and elsewhere.)
- However, a list of regulations does not change one's *heart*, so most of the Israelites chose rather to follow after their own ways (rather than *God's* ways), for their sinful hearts remained unchanged.

In contrast, the New Covenant, which Jesus brought to us (Hebrews 8:6-13; 12:24), starts with a changed *heart*, which then results in a desire to serve and obey God. Thus, what Israel failed to do (because most of the people's hearts remained unchanged) has now become reality, for those who belong to Jesus.

- Some of the people mentioned in the Old Testament did have changed hearts. Because of this, they wanted to obey the Ten Commandments and other regulations of the Old Covenant. But the commandments and regulations themselves were *not* the cause of their changed hearts. (The people trusted *God*, not their works, for that change.)

...TO SERVE HIS GOD AND FATHER

Jesus is "God the Son," the visible manifestation of God, in human form. As the Son, he focuses our attention on "God the Father" - the eternal, self-existing Creator of all. (See also verse 8, as well as comments about the "one and three," in the notes at verse 4.)

GLORY AND POWER

We will see Jesus return with power and glory (Matthew 24:30). These two terms are attributed, in various passages, both to God (as "Father," or as God on the throne) and to Jesus Christ. Both are mentioned together, in Revelation 5:13.

- In this context, "glory" refers to the expression of his moral and righteous character, and our acknowledgment of it. The day will come when *all* people will "glorify" God (Revelation 15:4). Even those who presently reject him will someday admit the greatness of his character - though in their case, God's greatness will be *contrasted* to their own shame and emptiness.
- "Power" can also be translated as "strength" (especially when displayed in one's actions) or "dominion."

Verse 7

HE IS COMING WITH/IN THE CLOUDS ... just like he left - Acts 1:9-11; ... and we will meet him there - 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

EVERY EYE WILL SEE HIM - Need we say more?

EVEN THOSE WHO PIERCED HIM

This will be a fulfillment of Zechariah 12:10: The Jewish nation will acknowledge Jesus for who he is. However, it will be more than that; for according to Jesus' warning in Matthew 26:64, the very people who were responsible for his death will someday see him return.

ALL (of us) WILL MOURN - wailing in grief because of our sins. (See also Matthew 24:30.)

- The unsaved will wail in horror, because they are hopelessly lost.
- The saved will mourn because of sorrow for the sins they have committed. Even though the sins are forgiven, Jesus had to endure great suffering because of them. We will be grieved over the pain we have caused him, but he will turn our sadness into joy - Revelation 21:4.

YES! AMEN! (SO SHALL IT BE!)

God's people may be sorrowful about the suffering that Jesus had to endure, because of their sins. But they can eagerly look forward to the day that Jesus is honored and glorified. This is what they have all been waiting for!

Verse 8

ALPHA AND OMEGA - first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, like A and Z in the English alphabet. From beginning to end, in *all* of reality, God will have preeminence.

- Revelation 21:6 and 22:13 also use this phrase (applied both to God and to Jesus).
- Other passages use the phrase, "the first and the last" or something similar - Revelation 1:17 and 2:8.
- Jesus is described as having preeminence in Colossians 1:18.

LORD GOD

He is both Creator (God) and Master (Lord) over all.

[BEGINNING AND ENDING]

A few translations include the phrase, "the beginning and the ending," in verse 8 - similar to Revelation 21:6. It means approximately the same thing as Alpha and Omega.

WHO IS / WAS / IS TO COME

This phrase is the same as in verse 4, where the focus seems to be directed toward the Father. Here, however, the connection with verse 7 seems to direct the focus to Jesus, who is the visible manifestation of God.

ALMIGHTY

This focuses on the supremacy of God. God is ruler over all. The day is coming when this fact will be acknowledged by all.

>> HE IS COMING! <<