

Blessings from the Godhead

NKJV Notes by Pastor Mike Sasso

Introduction

In today's text we will investigate who the book of Revelation is from and who this book is written to. The answer is much more complex than you might suppose. The book of Revelation is unique in so many ways. It is unique in its prophetic writings. It is unique in its authorship. And it is unique in its many divisive interpretations among true believers. There is no other book in the Bible that is the cause of more confusion or disagreement among Christians than the Book of Revelation. Therefore, it is very important that you begin your study time with prayer asking the One who was, and is, and is to come, to open the heart of your understanding to this book.

Before beginning your in-depth study of today's text take some time to read over Revelation chapter one, the first eight verses.

STUDY NOTES: verses 4-8

v. 4 John - The Apostle John begins this letter to the seven churches by identifying himself. Considering the extreme visions and events we are about to read about in this book, it would need to come from someone with the credibility of the Apostle John in order to be confidently received. Besides, when a writer is willing to disclose his name in a letter he makes himself accountable to his readers. And he becomes accessible to be tested, questioned or challenged.

It is interesting that the translators of the Jehovah's Witnesses' bible, the "*New World Translation*" refused to put their names on the finished work. Though the Watchtower claims this was done out of humility, it actually weakens the credibility of their translation because we don't know the scholastic credentials of the translators, nor can we hold them accountable when we might disagree with their work.

Thank God that as mysterious as the Book of Revelation is, there is no mystery of who wrote it and where it is from. And there is no question concerning its credibility.

To the Seven Churches Which are in Asia - John now identifies who this letter is written to. John addresses this letter to the seven churches because, as we'll see in verse 11, Jesus commands him to. This Asia is not the continent of Asia that we all know today. John was writing to a group of churches scattered within a Roman Province identified in what we know today as Turkey. These were actual churches that we know existed in the past.

Most scholars believe that the letters of the apostles were read, copied, and circulated among the churches for doctrine and edification. The same would be true for this letter to the churches in Asia Minor.

As with all scripture, though this letter was written to "*the seven churches of Asia*" it still has great application to all Christians everywhere (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Grace to You and Peace – Grace is God’s undeserved favor. Peace is the state of being in harmony with God. In most epistles, grace and peace are said to come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We will soon see that, in the full context of this verse, this greeting gives a much more elaborate explanation of the origin of grace and peace. There is a clear connection with not only the deity of Christ, but also the doctrine of the Trinity.

Though the Apostle John writes this letter, he pronounces a blessing of grace and peace from three personages...

From Him Who is and Who Was and Who is to Come - The first person grace and peace comes from is God the Father (Is. 41:4; Rev. 4:8). This identifies the head of the Godhead. The use of three tenses here is a picture of an eternal God. He is God in the present. He was God in the past. And He shall always be God in the future.

And from the Seven Spirits who are Before His Throne - The second personage or personages that grace and peace come from are the seven Spirits. Only in the book of Revelation is this particular phrase, “the seven Spirits” used. There is great debate over who these seven Spirits are before the throne of God. Some argue that these are seven high-ranking angels. Others argue that this phrase is merely a symbolic picture of a perfect number of spiritual beings before God’s throne (Seven being the number of completion). Still others believe this is a representation of the seven characteristics of the Holy Spirit as in Isaiah 11:2.

“The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD” (Is. 11:2).

I personally believe that “seven Spirits” is a way of describing the Holy Spirit of God. According to verses four and five we know that grace and peace are from three sources, 1) God the Father (v. 4), 2) The “seven Spirits” (v. 4), and 3) Jesus Christ (v. 5). Sending this blessing would seem to be an unlikely partnership if the seven Spirits were angels. Grace and peace do not come from angels, but from the triune God. This is another reason why I feel the phrase “seven Spirits” is a picture of the Holy Spirit of God. Seven is often a number used in Scripture to show completeness and fullness. See how this phrase “seven Spirits of God” is used in Revelation 5:6, and you can see the angel explanation would prove awkward. Therefore, the wording in verses four and five is most likely a completion of the picture of the triune God who sends His blessing of grace and peace.

v. 5 And from Jesus Christ - The third personage who sends His grace and peace to us is Jesus Christ. In this verse John gives us four pictures of who Jesus Christ is and what He has done:

1. The Faithful Witness - There have been many good men and women of God over the years who could be considered faithful witnesses. But even the best of them could only witness of God’s character in a very limited degree. Jesus Christ is THE faithful witness. He is THE ONLY One who can fully express the Father to us.

a. Paul said in Colossians 1:15 that Jesus is the “image of the invisible God.”

b. John has also written in John 1:14 that Jesus Christ is the perfect witness of the Father's glory, grace, and truth. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

c. Jesus Christ is the only One who fully knows and accurately declares the Father.

i. "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18).

ii. "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matt. 11:27).

2. The Firstborn from the Dead - There have been others who have been raised from the dead. But this phrase identifies Jesus Christ as the first to rise from the dead never to die again.

a. The word firstborn is the Greek word "prototokos" (pro-tot-ok'-os) meaning preeminent. In Jewish thought, the firstborn is the one who inherits all the wealth, power, and authority of his father. It certainly is not a term of inferiority, but superiority. This word firstborn is emphasizing a position of prominence rather than a chronological date of birth. It is the same Greek word used in the following verses:

i. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation" (Col. 1:15).

ii. "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

iii. "But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him'" (Heb. 1:6).

b. "Firstborn from the dead" also implies that there will be more to follow in the likeness of the resurrection of Christ. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).

3. And the Ruler Over the Kings of the Earth – The King James Bible words this "Prince of the kings of the earth." The Greek word from which we translate prince or ruler is "archon" (ar'-khone): a ruler, commander, chief, leader. It may not be seen at the moment, but by the time the events recorded in the Book of Revelation are accomplished, Jesus Christ will be clearly established as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

a. "Which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (1 Tim. 6:15).

b. "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17:14).

c. “And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:16).

4. To Him Who Loved Us and Washed us from Our Sins in His Own Blood - Another very important description of who Jesus Christ is and what He has done.

a. He loved us. His love was proven by His actions. The word loved here in its Greek grammatical setting is not necessarily past tense. Most modern translations word this, “He loves us.” This also could be accurately worded “is loving us.”

i. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

ii. “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friend.” (John 15:13).

b. He washed us from our sins in His own blood. According to the scriptures the only way to be washed from sin is through blood sacrifice.

i. “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Heb. 9:22).

ii. “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb. 9:14)

iii. “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

iv. “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

c. It is also worth noting that Jesus loved us, and then washed us. He didn’t love us because we were clean. He loved us when we were dirty and because of His great love, washed us.

v. 6 And Has made Us Kings and Priests to His God and Father - Those who find salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ are transformed from sinners to saints. They become children of God and partakers of the promise to rule and reign with Christ. This promise begins the moment you become a child of God, but is expressly made manifest in the millennial reign of Christ (See 1 Cor. 6:2-3).

A king is one who rules over others. A priest freely handles the holy things of God, and is one who stands on behalf of man before God. So one who is both a king and a priest would be one who is acting in the authority given him by God, to rule over others, in order to bring them to God, for the glory of God.

There is some variation in Greek translations here that brings into question whether a believer is actually made into a "king," i.e. some Greek manuscripts read, "and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father."

Nevertheless, God has made the following incredible promises to His obedient children in both the Old and New Testaments.

- “‘And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel” (Ex. 19:6).
- “‘But you shall be named the priests of the LORD, They shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, And in their glory you shall boast” (Is. 61:6).
- “‘You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).
- “‘But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

To Him be Glory and Dominion Forever and Ever – Although faithful believers shall be kings and priests who rule and reign with Jesus Christ, the ultimate glory and dominion belongs only to Him forever and always.

To Him refers to God the Father – It shouldn’t bother the Christian when we read that God the Father is the God and Father of Jesus Christ. This does not detract from the deity of Christ (see Ps. 110:1).

- “Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’” (John 20:17).
- “‘Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power” (1 Cor. 15:24).

Glory means immeasurable exultation.

Dominion means great power, authority, strength, and dominance to rule.

Amen means so it is; so be it; may it be fulfilled. John says amen to all the above proclamations, declaring his hearty agreement.

v. 7 Behold, He is Coming With Clouds - This is not some metaphorical language. Jesus promised repeatedly in the Gospels that He would return in the clouds. The angel also told the disciples at Jesus’ ascension that He would return in the literal clouds.

- “Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 26:64).

- “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory” (Mark 13:26).
- “And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:62).
- “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27).
- “Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

And Every Eye Will See Him - When Jesus returns in the clouds at His Second Coming, it will not be a secret event. It will be a dramatic event seen by all, both Jew and Gentile, around the planet.

“Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matt. 24:26, 27).

The “Pre-Tribulation” view distinguishes the second coming of Christ described here from what many today call the rapture of the church.

Another interesting view of this event is described by Robert Van Kampen in his online commentary at www.revelationcommentary.org - Van Kampen sees this event as a simultaneous rapture then commencement of judgment of the wicked.

“While some would argue that Revelation 1:7 is a reference to the Lord’s return at Armageddon, a closer examination supports the parousia of Christ. This is when He gathers His church to heaven and begins to punish the wicked on earth with His Day of the Lord’s wrath. John uses the future tense to refer to the mourning of the wicked, i.e. they will mourn. John indicates that the wicked begin to mourn when the Lord is seen coming with the clouds, and not before. Question: wouldn’t the wicked have already experienced God’s wrath in the form of the trumpets and bowl judgments if this were an Armageddon return? It is inconceivable that the wicked have experienced the wrath of God before the Lord’s return at Armageddon, but have not mourned. The only indication in the book of Revelation of the wicked mourning occurs in Revelation 6:15-17, which depicts the beginning of the Day of the Lord (see later discussion on Revelation 6:12-17). John indicates that the response of the wicked to the trumpet and bowl judgments is either a lack of repentance or men blasphemed God, but no mourning. “

Even They Who Pierced Him – This refers to the Jewish people. This is also a phrase that would be recognized as a Messianic promise by the Jews. For it is stated in Zechariah 12:10, NKJV, “... then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”

And again another Messianic prophecy speaking of Jesus and His relationship to His own people the Jews - “And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will answer, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends’” (Zech. 13:6).

And all the Tribes of the Earth will Mourn Because of Him – Those who have refused to submit to the rule and reign of Christ will have much reason to mourn at His return. This statement applies to both Jew and Gentile. Jesus Himself made this statement in Matthew 24:30: “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

Even so, Amen – Again it is apparent that the Apostle John is eagerly agreeing with the words of this prophecy.

v. 8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End - The first letter in the Greek alphabet is Alpha. And the last letter is Omega. Therefore, this is equivalent to saying, “I am the first and the last.” Some have wondered whether these words are the words God the Father since this phrase has definitely been ascribed to Him (Is. 41:4, 44:6, 48:12). But this title is also clearly claimed by Jesus in Revelation 2:8 and 22:12-13. Jesus is the beginning and the end of everything. He existed before anything was created (John 1:1-3). And He will always be the same in eternity future (Heb. 13:8).

Since in the Old Testament this language was used to describe Jehovah God, we see again the deity of Christ laid out in this book.

Says the Lord, “Who Is and Who Was and Who Is to Come” - Again, as in verse four, the eternal quality of God is expressed. This term can only be attributed to deity.

The Almighty – This is a word describing unlimited power. This word is translated “omnipotent” in 19:6. This word is used in relation to both the Father and the Son.

- “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6).
- “Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Rev. 19:15).
- “But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Rev. 21:22).

TRUTH APPLIED:

Note to group leader: This text contains enough discussion-rousing ideas that you may not have time to go over these questions. They are simply provided for you as an option for further discussion if needed.

1. What is the significance of John identifying himself as the author of this letter in verse four?

2. Who, specifically, was this letter written to, and to whom does it apply?

3. Who offers believers grace and peace according to verses four and five?

4. What are the credible explanations of the seven Spirits in verse four, and what do you think the correct interpretation is?

5. Review and define the four pictures of who Jesus Christ is and what He has done (v. 5).

6. What are the implications of the statement “has made us kings and priests to God”? (v. 6)

7. How many key truths can be found in verses six and seven? Who is the ultimate recipient of all glory and dominion forever?

8. What essential Christian doctrines are presented in verse eight?

9. What truths taught in today’s text bring encouragement and blessing to you?

10. What does today's text teach about the person of Jesus Christ?

11. If there are any questions concerning today's text, take time to discuss and answer them.

CONCLUSION:

The book of Revelation is packed full of rich theology. If this book is properly studied, any Christian will grow in grace and appreciation of the person of Jesus Christ. May God continue to bless us with His grace and peace, as we grow to know Him better through His Word.

To the Glory of Him Who Was and Is and Is to Come.

Mike Sasso