

Glory to the Holy One
REVELATION 1:4-8

INTRODUCTION

Our cry as Christians is that God would be glorified by life or by death (Phil 1:20). The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.¹ We believe that the entire Bible as a collection of writings inspired by God is bound by the string of God's glory. Scripture asserts that the heavens declare the glory of God (Ps 19:1).

The text before us contains this phrase: "to Him be glory." This will be our goal: to ascribe to the Triune God glory, and in particular to praise and magnify the Second Person of the Triune God, Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever and ever.

TRUTH: As we read, listen to, and heed the message contained in this book, let us praise and glorify the triune God.

Revelation 1:4-8 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.²

John, in his introduction, first calls us all to—

I. PRAISE THE TRIUNE GOD

John greets the "seven churches which are in Asia" (v. 4). These seven churches (the identity of whom we find out in v. 11) are Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Why the Lord commands John to write to these seven churches specifically He does not say, though in all likelihood these churches summarized the spectrum of churches not only in John's day but also through all of church history.

The letter contains a typical greeting from John's day: "grace to you and peace" (v. 4). All people (pagans and Christians alike) used this greeting. However, Christians recognized the significance of amazing grace and the peace that redeemed sinners have with God. For this reason Paul provides detailed introductions to his letters expanding on the theological significance of a common greeting: *grace and peace*. Such grace and peace stand in great contrast to the war, trouble, and pain found prophesied in this book. Oh that people would see the supernatural peace rebels might possess should they bow before the God of peace and grace!

¹The Westminster Catechism, question #1.

²Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations taken from the King James Version.

Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, Saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: And he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; His hands shall also finish it; And thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; They are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

Zechariah sees seven lamps and seven pipes to the seven lamps. The Lord indicates clearly to Zechariah that these lamps represent His Spirit (Zech 4:6) and specifically that the seven lamps represent the eyes of the Lord which view the entire earth (Zech. 4:10). This corresponds to John's use of "seven spirits" again in chapter 5:

Revelation 5:6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Though not airtight, the evidence weighs in favor of viewing the "seven spirits" as a veiled reference to the Holy Spirit and in particular His manifestation as watcher over all the earth. It reminds me of Psalm 139 —

Psalm 139:7–12 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, And thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; Even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; But the night shineth as the day: The darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

The eyes of the Lord are everywhere beholding the evil and the good (Prov 15:3). And in keeping with John's purpose in writing this book, the Lord looks toward the man who is of a contrite spirit and trembles at His Word (Is 66:2).

C. The Witness of the Risen Son

Completing this greeting from the Triune God is John's reference to the Son, Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and bridegroom. Jesus is "the faithful witness" which is to say that Jesus is *trustworthy*. What Jesus has spoken is always truth. He told His disciples "I am the truth" (John 14:6).

He is also the "firstborn of the dead" which simply means that *Jesus is the first one to rise again never to die*. People in Scripture were raised from the dead but they eventually died again (e.g. Lazarus, John 11). Jesus is the firstborn from the dead never to die again. He ever lives (Heb 7:25). He is the one who lives for ever and ever (Rev 4:9–10).

Jesus is also "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (NASB). *Jesus reigns over the kingdoms of men*. This was a Daniel's main point in his book (cf. Dan 4:17, 25). In the OT David understood that the Messiah would be one who will be "the highest of the kings of the earth" (Ps 89:27, NASB). He is the One before Whom every knee will bow and every tongue will confess as Lord (Phil 2:10–11).

It is this triune God that we worship. He alone deserves our creaturely praise.