

## **Revelation 1:4-8 – Strength to Endure Tribulations**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: John had to encourage and comfort the 7 suffering churches in Asia Minor, who were being persecuted by the Jews and Romans, telling them God was aware of their sufferings and would soon send help to them.

Today you will start to see what God said to encourage and comfort them.

Our headings are:

**The Receivers of the Benediction**

**The Richness of the Benediction**

**The Rejectors of the Benediction**

Our goals are: That you will **be refreshed in the knowledge of what God has done for you and promised you**, so **you will have confidence to serve faithfully him and endure hardships that you will face**.

### **The Receivers of the Benediction**

4 John, to the **seven churches which 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,

#### **1. The seven churches of Asia, even though they were imperfect, were the receivers of the benediction.**

These real churches, with real people, saved by grace and adopted as God's children, were facing real problems, so they needed God's voice...and promise of help...to endure.

**These churches were near the Isle of Patmos where John was imprisoned and they were near to his heart.** It is also likely John had the responsibility to supervise them.

#### **2. The Lord pronounced grace and peace to them.**

**Grace is the favor God gives those who have no basis for it!**

**Peace is the state of permanent reconciliation between God and man.** Peace gives sweet evidence and assurance of God's grace through Christ.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

**These 2 things showed the real relationship between Christ and his church.**

#### **3. God's grace and peace could never be separated from his people; nothing could hurt the relationship between them.**

#### **4. Lessons:**

**a. Your name is written in heaven.** You have received grace through Jesus and you have permanent peace with God. Whatever troubles come across your path, they can't destroy that grace and peace. No one can steal your grace and your peace. Even though you might take your eyes off of God and forget that grace or ignore that peace and worry instead, they are both there!

**b. Live your life with confidence.** God's got this! God will give you grace to endure suffering and he will give you peace during your difficulties. Just listen to his voice and your confidence will be strong.

### **The Richness of the Benediction**

4 ... **who is and who was and who is to come**, and from the **seven Spirits** who are before His throne, 5 and from **Jesus Christ**, the **faithful witness**, the firstborn from the dead, and the **ruler over the kings of the earth**. To Him who loved us and **washed us from our sins in His own blood**,

#### **1. This benediction is from Triune God: The Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son.**

The normal order of the persons is changed, but it is changed simply because John intends to **speak more at length about Jesus.**

#### **2. This benediction is from the Father is the one "who is, who was, and who is to come."**

He is eternal and unchangeable in all his ways. That means what he says he will do! Guaranteed.

#### **3. This benediction is from the Holy Spirit...who is described as 7 Spirits to show his completeness and his infinite presence.**

The Holy Spirit fills Christians with the oil of life.

**Zechariah 4:2,5-6** And he said to me, "What do you see?" So I said, "I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. 5 Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." 6 So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: **'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts.**

It is the ever-present "oil" from the Holy Spirit that enriches and lives in Christ's church – the whole church. He assures Christians of their eternal salvation. He gives light so Christians can conquer darkness! He helps them to destroy their fears.

#### **4. This benediction is from the Son.**

**a. Jesus is prophet, that faithful witness, the most pre-eminent source of truth.** He always spoke the truth.

But **this word "witness" also has the intent of being a martyr.** The word for witness is "martureho."

**John 18:37** Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say *rightly* that I am a king. **For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.** Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

**Christ was faithful to the word of truth until he was martyred for being a witness.**

Many readers would become martyrs.

**b. Jesus is king – the most powerful king.** Christ has authority (that’s what Firstborn means) over death so you too have victory over death. Further, it might have appeared that Caesar (Nero) was ruler of the whole earth – and this was widely believed-but Jesus makes it clear he was the ruler.

**Jesus made it clear to Pilate that Pilate had no authority unless it were given to him from God. Remember Psalm 2: Christ sits in the heavens and laughs at the arrogant rulers.** Nero, Caligula, or Domitian could do nothing except at the decree of Christ. Kim Jong Un or Iran can do nothing to you unless Christ decrees it.

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth

**c. Jesus is priest – a pure priest.** He was the firstborn from the dead, for he was the true sacrifice that lives. As a result, he has “released” you from your sins, not “washed.” Our translation paraphrases it. It is the **redemption of a slave** that is in view here.

6 and has **made us kings and priests to His God** and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

**5. As a result of being taught (Christ as a prophet) and believing it, you are now priests and princes in his kingdom – a kingdom without end.**

Exodus 19:6 `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."

**6. So then, knowing his Triune God, John bursts into praise.**

**7. Lessons:**

**a. What rich blessings we have in Jesus Christ!** The blessings are so rich you are able to endure the greatest difficulty. You know you have an abundance of riches that cannot be taken away by poor health, unfair treatment, broken homes, or even death!

**b. Do these truths move you to sing the doxology? Do the sermons move you to praise God?**

Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name.

**c. Keep in mind, however, this was not an individual promise.** Some Christians in these 7 churches would be killed. But the church would triumph in the end!

**The Rejectors of the Benediction**

7 Behold, **He is coming with clouds**, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

**1. Christ “is coming with clouds,” a most common picture of judgment on the wicked and**

## **protection of the godly.**

(Don't confuse this with Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming!) Christ brings blessings and he brings terror to the wicked.

Isaiah 19:1-2 - The burden against Egypt. **Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud, And will come** into Egypt; The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, And the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst. 2 "I will set Egyptians against Egyptians; Everyone will fight against his brother, And everyone against his neighbor, City against city, kingdom against kingdom.

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.

Psalm 18:9 **He bowed the heavens also, and came down With darkness under His feet.**

Nahum 1:2-8, Ex 13:21-22, 14:19-20,24, 19:9,16-19, Psalm 18:8-14, 104:3, Ezekiel 32:7-8, Mark 16:42, Acts 2:19

## **2. There would no doubt when Christ would come to save Christians from Roman and Jewish persecution.**

**Even those who killed him (pierced him) would see him and recognize him.** John says: "All the tribes of the earth will mourn because of him." He doesn't say all the "nations" will mourn. The Israelite nation will mourn– for they killed him. And the word "earth" is also translated "land" or "country." The context tells us John is referring to the land, not the earth. We looked at that recently in Zephaniah.

## **3. The Jews would mourn because they would know they killed the only one who could have helped them.**

Many of the Jews who helped to kill Jesus would still be alive when he returned in judgment of Jerusalem in AD70.

## **4. John prayed this would happen; he literally said: Amen – so let it happen.**

He wanted the Jews who rejected and killed Jesus to face the consequences of their actions.

8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

## **5. And knowing that Jesus is the Beginning and the End, and he is Almighty, who is able to stop his blessing and judgment?**

What comfort and assurance this must have brought to God's people in their trials! (You will learn more of those trials soon!) Some were killed, fed to hungry animals, as 60,000 people watched. Others had their property taken away. Many were not allowed to do business unless they acknowledged Caesar to be god.

## **6. Lessons:**

**a. Christ's coming in judgment upon Jerusalem in AD70 brought terror to non-believers and joy and freedom to Christians.** Don't be afraid to pray for and sing of God's judgment. Don't forget to praise God when he brings that freedom.

**b. Christ's coming in judgment at the end of the world will bring terror to non-believers and joy and freedom to Christians.** Work to rescue those who are trapped by sin and death. Let them hear the Gospel from your lips. Don't have the attitude "they are bad" so I don't want to deal with them. Look forward to heaven.

**c. The message is clear: Jesus saves all kinds of men...even the worse types.** Don't stymie God's grace.

### **Conclusion:**

Jesus Christ wanted to pronounce blessings on the 7 churches of Asia Minor as they would face many difficulties and tribulations. **The Benediction (blessing), as is always the case, was from the Trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.** All three persons bring fullness to the Christian. Yet heard more of the work of Jesus. Jesus was their pre-eminent prophet, their powerful king, and their purest priest for the church. **What comfort the 7 churches of Asia Minor must have received from this covenant book!**

Brother and sisters in Jesus Christ:

**1. This Trinitarian covenant benediction is pure, sweet, and necessary for you today as well.** (Number 6, 2Corinthians 13, etc.) So let the knowledge that God, the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, constantly watches, cares, protects, and provides for you always stay in your heart. **This will give you comfort to face the greatest challenges you will face.** After all, if the Lord is for you, who win against you? Receive the benediction weekly.

**2. The Lord will protect you because you have his grace and peace.** You know heaven waits for you and you can have peace even as you suffer in this life. But know, of course, there is no guarantee of a life of constant ease in this world!

**3. Work to rescue those who don't have this grace and peace!** Proclaim this message of hope.

Finally, if you are not a Christian today, just as Christ came in judgment on Jerusalem and so completely destroyed her, so he will do to you if you will not beg him for mercy. **The only way for you to have mercy and true victory is for you to completely surrender.**