

NASB 1977 The Revelation of Jesus Christ

4 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; 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born 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, 6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7 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. Even so. Amen.

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

We've been working our way through this prologue now for three weeks and there is so much wealth for christians just in this opening paragraph that we want to tarry here and consider all of what we are told here in some depth.

Ancient letters always identify who the sender is and who the recipient is right at the beginning. The sender is of course the apostle John. And the recipients are the seven churches in Asia minor. And by default, all churches of Jesus, everywhere for all time. This letter is to us. Tonopah Community Church.

But we learn immediately that John is the amanuensis and the greeting of grace and peace comes from the three persons of the triune God. Father, Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ.

We considered two persons of that trinity last week, Father, and Spirit, but this morning we want to dwell on the third person in the trinity who is Jesus.

5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness,

Last week we spoke about the limits of our capacities to understand God. He is infinite, we are finite. We dwell in a time space continuum that ever moves in time. He dwells in eternity that we cannot yet comprehend.

He is beyond finding out. We gaze at creation and we can come up with some limited conclusions. He is perfect. He is all powerful. He is wise. The beauty of what He has made speaks of His holiness. The creation has perfection of intelligence in it's design.

And then if you were more clever than most, you could even surmise from what we call entropy in creation that some cause other than the perfect brought in death, decay, filth, despair. Somehow that doesn't align with the perfection we witness in the creation.

Your sidebar for the week; Suddenly everyone is talking about evil. Where does evil come from. Why is there evil. All of a sudden people are talking about an other worldly source of evil. The devil. The Satan.

Why are there regimes that only want to cause destruction and evil and harm. People are waking up to the fact that there is no logical answer to hatred and evil. It just seems to be an unseen force in the air. That's a conversation the world is having all of a sudden.

George Bush called it an axis of evil. Nations with an unexplainable, illogical bent to hate their neighbors. There's no logical reason to hate christians. There's no logic behind the centuries of hatred for Jews.

With our eyes alone we can surmise that whoever created the earth was perfect, but somehow, evil entered into perfection and caused entropy. Decay. Sickness, disease, wars, death, depravity. It's obvious that those things are in opposition to the beauty and perfection of creation. What happened.

That's as far as we can get, and farther than most people ever get. Without

direct revelation from God, that's the limit of what can be found out on our own.

Science has no answers. Science can show us the magnificence of the intelligence behind creation, breaking it down for us to the minutiae of elemental building blocks put in place by the Creator, but if you ask science for cause, they've got everything opposing the scientific method to get the most insane of answers.

We don't know. It just happened. Random happenstance. All of the things science and mathematics proves are impossible and ridiculous, that's how we got here. They have no answers. Just lies. It takes effort to believe there is no God. It's hard work to dismiss an intelligent source of creation.

Stay with me, I'm on my way back to Revelation and Jesus. We know what we know about Creator God, because He told us. **Things beyond finding out**, Job 11:7-9, Romans 11:33 unless He simply tells us. Revelation.

And Jesus is the pinultimate revelation of God. He is the walking talking picture story for us that reveals Who God is. Jesus is the faithful witness of Who the Father IS.

Hebrews 1:1 - 3 God, having spoken long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days spoke to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds, 3 who is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power; who, having accomplished cleansing for sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Jesus is the faithful witness. Jesus is our image, our picture of God. Philip says to Jesus, during the upper room discourse, the evening before Jesus was taken and crucified; show us the Father, and it is enough.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, (Thomas) "I am the way, and the truth, and

the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me.

7 If you have come to know Me, you will know My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”

8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”

9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all so long and have you not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

Adam is the image of an unfaithful son. Jesus is the image, the witness of a perfect Son. In Him we see God. He is our faithful witness.

5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

The "first born" of the dead. What does that mean?

It means that Christ is our prototype. God raised Him from the dead, first. And in like manner, God will raise all Christians who have gone to sleep in Christ, from the dead.

The dead in Christ will rise first, and then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air 1 Thess. 4:17

Jesus is the exact image of God, our perfect faithful witness of who God is. And He is the prototype of the resurrection. God raised Him up from the dead and God will likewise raise all of us up to meet Him in the air.

In Acts chapter 1, the disciples gaze into the heavens as Jesus ascends into the heavens, into the clouds, and out of their sight. In eternity, which we can't comprehend, really, is it a nano second that Jesus is alone, and then joined again by all who have believed? He was first, but we likewise will rise up to meet Him in the air. The living and the dead, in Christ.

First born also means, pre-eminent. Jesus IS the Christ. We all are

placed into Christ. He is the heir. We are the adopted brothers and sisters with the heir. But Jesus is always the pre-emminent One. (capital letters)

And Jesus is the King over all kings. He is; *the ruler of the kings of the earth*.

Jesus owns all rulers. Good and evil alike are under God's sovereign rule and control and are bringing about His ultimate purposes.

We think the evil is horrific now. With godless, evil, world leaders who murder in the millions, beyond sense, beyond any logic, but in this book we are studying together we will see our King over the world's kings relinquish all restraints and the world will go mad following Satanic evil. Like no one has ever seen before.

What we see now is restrained evil. What is coming to a world near you very soon is evil with all restraints removed. And isn't that what so called progressive people want. Remove all restraints. They're going to get so much more than they wished for. Unrestrained evil.

That's hard to watch, but it is God's long game, God's sovereign plan that brings Him all glory in the end when Jesus comes and crushes all evil.

This verse tells us that Jesus is ruler over ALL kings of this earth. In Matthew, as Jesus was about to ascend physically back into heaven, before the eyes of reliable witnesses, He made this statement of His authority to reign, over all created things, both in heaven and on earth.

18 *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. You say, why is that important for me to know? Why should I know in absolute clarity that Jesus is Ruler over all the kings of the earth?*

One scenario for you. Islam has a very detailed eschatology. In their end times scenario Jesus comes back out of heaven, but He isn't God, he never

died and therefore there is no resurrection, and in fact, Jesus who was taken to heaven alive, like Elijah, according to their traditions, comes back to earth and becomes a prophet, second in command to the Mahdi.

All of a sudden this truth about Jesus becomes very important. Jesus IS;
the ruler of the kings of the earth

Someone is right. Someone is wrong. I'm going with the guy who orders the wind and the waves to be still, and they obey. He doesn't have authority just over the kings of the earth, He has authority over all things in heaven and on earth.

John, here, breaks out in a doxology about Jesus. It's as if John hadn't burst out with this praise of our Saviour, the rocks of Patmos would have done it instead. And within what John states here is perhaps one of the most beautiful presentations of the gospel you will hear in all of scripture.

5a To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, 6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Sin captures and enslaves every human born into Adam's family.

Here's a conundrum to think about. What if God created twins. Adam and Elvis. And Satan comes along and convinces Adam to rebel against Creator God, but Elvis takes the high road and says I will not dishonor and disobey my Creator God. And then two families of man populate the earth.

Adamic race which is born into slavery to sin, and Elvis race which is born into a righteous race not in slavery to sin.

That isn't as far fetched as it sounds. Jesus came to be the faithful witness, the faithful Son of God. And His shed blood releases us from our captivity and slavery to sin. He paid the debt of our rebellion against God, unpayable by us, we were bankrupt and without hope, but Jesus is righteous

altogether. He was sinless. And thus He alone is eligible to be a substitute, in our place, for the debt we owed. That is called substitutionary atonement.

His blood, His life, for my debt. His righteousness substituted to my account. My sin is atoned for by His death. I am given a foreign righteousness, not my own, the very righteousness of Christ, accounted to me.

Why? Why would anyone do something like that. Didn't He get the memo. It's dog eat dog down here. Nobody dies for someone else. Just the opposite. We kill to get. Now, think about these splendid words John wrote;

To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, 6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Remember our silly scenario. Twins. One sins, one doesn't. The world is then populated with two families. The righteous and the rebellious.

Jesus actually accomplished just exactly that. He has made us to be a kingdom of priests. We are a family of man, set apart from the sinful and rebellious race of Adam.

We are purchased out of that condemned family, released from our sins, made righteous with a substitute righteousness given to us, a righteousness not our own, and we are adopted into a new family. The family of God.

We are the family delivered from the authority to reign of Satan and adopted into the authority to reign of God. That word kingdom means authority to reign.

And in that new family, freed from sins captivity, I have a priestly role to play in telling lost people of this glorious redemption and freedom that I

have found in Christ's love.

Here's a logical conclusion for you. If Satan usurped authority to reign in this world, and he holds that authority because sin has captured all mankind in a separation from God because of sin, is it not logical that any family of man that can undo his grip on his authority to reign on earth is an enemy to be eliminated?

Satan knew God's chosen people, the jews, were promised a deliverer who would accomplish exactly that. So he has been trying to eliminate the jews ever since God chose them as His own possession. And then Jesus. The fool did kill Him, and that death opened paradise for anyone who would believe and accept the gift of redemption.

So now Satan has two enemy combatant groups. Jews and christians. Kill both. Hold onto control of this earth. Kill christians and kill jews. It makes sense. Kill anyone who crosses over out of the Satan camp into the Jesus camp. Aren't you glad Satan has restraints on him. We'd all be dead.

That's consistent with why God removes His church before the restraints are removed in the tribulation. During the tribulation, thousands will come to Christ and be saved. But their life span is short. As soon as Satan can chop their heads off, he does. It costs you your head to be a christian in that period.

It's interesting in this scenario (*and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father*) that John describes that we are kings and priests together with Jesus. Interesting because in the old testament, kings and priests were seperate. Kings could not assume the role of priest. Taboo! And priests had no authority to be king. Two distinct and seperate lineages that both looked forward to God's annointed Priest / King.

Jesus is both priest and King of kings. And adopted into His family, purchased out of the captivity of sin, by Jesus blood, IN Him we are also a kingdom of priests who will reign with Him. Christ is King and priest, and

you and I are IN Christ, thus we are a kingdom, a people group who are kings and priests, in Christ.

How's that for an elevation. I once was a helpless slave captured and kept condemned by sin. I was at war with God. I was dead to God and He was dead to me. Sin did that. My future was nothing but increased torment for eternity apart from God. That was my dismal state, and indeed that is the state of most of the world. Condemned and awaiting imminent torment of pain for eternity in flames, apart from God.

Maybe Paul can say it much better than my words; Ephesians 2:

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus,

Is there an echo in the room? Paul wrote it first. Did John plagiarize what Paul had already written?

Love elevated me from dead, to adopted son and fellow heir. That's a stunning accomplishment. And I get no credit, He gets all glory. Jesus did it all, and His love for us is the reason.

Isn't it amazing that two authors, 1800 miles and 30 years apart from each other both say exactly the same thing! Not so amazing when you understand it isn't two author's it's One. Two amanuenses' with 2 pens, years and miles distant from each other, both saying the exact same thing. God wrote the book.

That's really good news! That's the gospel! *to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Glory is comingled with dominion and dominion with glory. Jesus is King of kings. Jesus has all authority over all creation. *to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Dominion and glory. What did Satan desire. He wanted God's glory to be his instead. So how did he try to accomplish that goal? Dominion equals glory. He took over this world by trapping every man born to Adam in Adams sin.

Verses 7 and 8 seem to be God's exultant response to John's outburst of gospel doxology. It's like God Almighty chimes right in and approves John's outburst of worship and praise.

7 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. Even so. Amen.

This is the first prophetic utterance in the book. Want to know the future? Here it is.

So let's jump in here and before we go any further, let's talk about something that confuses lots of people. Some terminology of events that are all related, but separate occurrences.

The "day of the Lord" is terminology that spans the entire 7 year tribulation period that begins when the church is taken out of the world in the rapture.

The rapture is the event that terminates the church age, us, now, and restarts the final seven years on the clock in Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks. One week of years remains. The church was a grand parenthesis while God was calling people out of all the nations of the world to belong to Him.

Jesus will return to gather His people, the church, out of the world before He allows Satan to inflict unrestrained evil on this world. Notice that when the rapture happens, we will meet Jesus "in the air" and His feet do not touch this world.

That return where Christ feet touch the Mount of Olives and split it in two is at the end of the final week of years. The ultimate return of Jesus in power and glory and final judgement on the nations. Satan's dominion and grab for God's glory is over. Jesus crushes Satan, and eliminates evil on this planet when He returns.

Our first prophetic utterance in the Revelation given to John is that ultimate coming in power and glory and judgement. Verse 7 doesn't describe the rapture of the church, it describes Jesus arrival at His second coming.

7 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. Even so. Amen.

That statement quotes other scriptures. Everything said there has been stated previously in prophecy. We'll look at some of those.

First the word cloud. Nephelon. I love those days with skies filled with puffy white clouds. I'm a photographer and that's the first thing you learn. Clouds are your friends. They can turn boring nothingness into inviting drama. We love clouds. Frankly, they are glorious. They speak of God's glory, and they belong to Him.

The old testament pictures God commanding His clouds to either rain or withhold rain. The lightning and thunder speak of God's infinite power. Drama in the sky.

But the word used here doesn't necessarily have to be limited to lovely puffy white clouds. It can be those, but it isn't limited by that. We look out on the desert below us on windy days, and our view can be completely

obscured by dust that forms a cloud. Or smoke that forms a cloud that obscures vision. Same word.

The Shekinah glory that led Israel through the wilderness was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. This word can describe that. So don't limit yourself to puffy cloud days and look up and think, oh it's cloudy, Jesus could come today.

BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS

Acts 1...9 After He had said this, they watched as He was taken up, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven." ...Acts 1:9-11

Did Jesus ascend into a cloud of shekinah glory that caused Him to be hidden from their sight. It's a worthy thought. And our passage in verse 7 adds to that possibility.

7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him,

I'm a literalist. You folks know that. I choose to think that when Jesus returns, the whole world, whether facing the sun in daylight or be it night time will somehow see Jesus coming. At the same time.

The old testament speaks of clouds and thick darkness during that exact time frame. Does Jesus return in a Shekinah glory cloud that blots out the sun, that is a cloud of fire seen world wide? I'm not sure. I wouldn't stick my neck out and be dogmatic about it, But I would draw you to the literal words, *7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him,*

This event will be seen by every eye on earth. The jews understood this from old testament prophecy. That may be why the unbelieving Jews asked Jesus to give them "signs in the sky".

Matt. 16:1 Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came and tested Jesus by asking Him to show them a sign from heaven. Matt. 16:1

The wicked unbelieving jews approached Jesus and demanded to see Him coming on the clouds, in the sky. Where did they get an idea like that?

Daniel 7:13 *In my vision in the night I continued to watch, and I saw One like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven.*

But God's response to wicked unbelief is only further hardening of already hard hearts. Jesus tells them; “*When evening comes, you say, ‘The weather will be fair, for the sky is red,’ 3 and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but not the signs of the times. 4 A wicked and adulterous generation demands a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.*” Matt. 16 3,4

A day is coming when every eye will realize that Jesus, God's annointed Messiah, is returning in judgement.

7 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.

Now then, out of every eye on earth that see's Jesus return in fiery judgement, there are two groups here in our initial prophecy in vs. 7

even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth

The reference to those who pierced Him is regarding the jews. Zechariah 12 speaks of this event. As does the apostle Paul.

The prophet Zechariah says:

Then I will pour out on the house of David and on the people of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and prayer, and they will look on Me, the One they have pierced. They will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for Him as one grieves for a firstborn son. Zechariah 12:10

Paul the apostle to the church says, a day is coming, at the end, when "*all Israel will be saved*". Romans 11

*25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and thus **all Israel will be saved**; just as it is written,*

*"THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."*

*27 "AND THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."* Romans 11:25 - 27

A future day is coming for Israel when they will look into the sky at their returning Messiah and mourn over Him who they pierced. The whole nation of them will mourn in repentance. Nationally, together, On that day.

Another side bar. Are we zionists in this church. Well I can't speak for everyone but I can tell you, I am. I believe those jews dwelling in the current nation state of Israel are real jews who are in the family tree of Jacob who God renamed Israel. Sons of Israel. They have DNA that traces their heritage all the way back to Israel.

And yes, I believe they have a God given claim to be in their ancestral homeland. And I choose to believe that we may be close enough to these things written in Revelation that some of those folks who are alive right now, may also be some who will recognize their Messiah that they pierced and weep for Him as for an only son.

If you would like some further clarification, if perhaps you've been watching some of the bru ha ha with Tucker Carlson interviewing with Mike Huckabee and Ted Cruz, there is a very excellent response done by Al Mohler and Todd Friel. It addresses a LOT of the confusion and questions about our current state of Israel and whether they are legitimate Israel or not.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0_ElqtvL-M&pp=0gcJCcUKAYcqIYzv

Great stuff and super important to know right now. If you get that wrong, what do you do with verse 7 here. It's important to know that when Jesus arrives in His second coming that His people will welcome Him with weeping. Theirs is a good mourning. They are broken hearted that they killed their Messiah deliverer. And boy do they NEED a deliverer on that day

Next group is; everybody else.

7 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.

All the tribes of the earth. That's all inclusive. Everybody will see Him coming in the sky. And they're going to mourn. Not good mourning. Let me give you a sneak preview of this group's mourning when they see Jesus arriving. This is the Satan group. They want Satan to keep his dominion. They love their sin. They hate God. Revelation 6 preview. Spoiler alert

12 And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain

and island were moved out of their places. 15 And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?" Rev. 6:12-17

That's a description of both the signs in the sky that the wicked unbelieving jews required of Jesus in order to believe, and also a description of the mourning all of the tribes of the earth will experience. In terror.

Just in case you're thinking to yourself, this must be some kind of allegory. No one could pull something like this off on a level that involves the entire universe. This is some kind of glorified hyperbole. This can't be literal. How could this be literal!!

Then God chimes in and says, Oh Yeah. It's literal; Believe it!

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

We'll end here this morning and begin right here next Sunday if the Lord allows. Even so, Come Lord Jesus. Amen