

**CHRIST HAS COME
REVELATION 1:4-6**

A truck driver was driving across a town but something appeared to be wrong — every time he stopped at a red light or stop sign, he would jump out of his truck running around it and beating the side of it with a baseball bat. Someone followed him to a restaurant where he stopped and repeated this odd practice. A curious driver who had followed him asked him the obvious question, “What are you doing? Why do you beat your truck every time you stop?” He answered, “Well, it’s like this: I have a two-ton truck and four tons of canaries in the back, so I have to keep two tons in the air at all times.”

In 2020, we understand that sentiment. There is pretty much universal agreement that this has been a tough year, with lots of things that need to be fixed and “kept in the air.” It’s been a year of disappointment, hardship, suffering, loss, disagreements, and anger (just to name a few things). At the end of every year, we generally need a “re-set” of some kind — something to refocus our minds and hearts and righteous and true realities. This year, that is particularly true. And that is one reason that Christmas is such a grace to us — it is a reminder to us of the only One who is best, right, and satisfying: Christ.

Over three Sundays, I want to take you to a passage penned by the apostle John to remind us of Christ’s greatness and supremacy — a passage you may not think of as a Christmas passage, but a passage that exalts our Savior — **Revelation 1:4-8**. As we begin this consideration of our Savior, today we will be told:

DELIGHT IN CHRIST BECAUSE OF HIS INFINITE UNIQUENESS.

Is Christ our joy? Is *He* (alone) our (supreme) pleasure? Do we find refuge, solace, and comfort in Him? The uniqueness of Christ makes him imminently worthy of our worship.

In this passage, John gives **a doxology** to remind us of the priority of worshipping Christ —

Context (v. 4):

1. Worship Christ Because of His **NATURE (v. 5a)**

- ✓ He is **TRUTH**
- ✓ He is **LIFE**
- ✓ He is **KING**

2. Worship Christ Because of His **WORK (vv. 5b-6a)**

- ✓ He **LOVES** us
- ✓ He has **FREED** us
- ✓ He has **COMMISSIONED** us

3. Worship Christ (v. 6b)

Context (v. 4):

- The author is **John** — the disciple and apostle. We know that he spent his later years in Asia Minor; after the emperor Domitian died, John was released from Patmos and went to Ephesus where he served as an elder and may have died in the late 90s or early 100s, as a very old man.
- The **churches** addressed in **Asia** were churches that were in the region of Ephesus where John lived.
- While John wrote this letter, it was not his revelation — it was God’s revelation to the churches through the pen of John. Notice —
 - ✓ **Verse 1** tells us that this is the **revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him** (Christ); that revelation was mediated through **His bond-servant John**.
 - ✓ **Verse 4** tells us that the blessing of **grace and peace** is **from Him who was and is...** That is, God is the originator of this message, not John.
- In fact, this is not just a message from the Father, or from Christ, but it is a Trinitarian message:
 - ✓ It is from **Him who is and who was and who is to come** — this is a reference to God the Father (4:8) and emphasizes His eternal nature (past, present, and future). But it also emphasizes His self-sufficiency and immutability. The message is “from the Absolute One, who knows no change, no dependence on time or place...from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift, and with whom is neither variableness, nor the least shadow of turning.” [Seiss, 27.]
 - ✓ The message is also from **the seven Spirits** — this is an unusual phrase; it is used only in Revelation (cf. also 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). It appears to be an allusion to **Zech. 4:2, 6** and a reference to the Holy Spirit. That also makes sense because a divine message (like Revelation) can’t originate from a created being, like an angel.
- While this is a Trinitarian letter, the emphasis is on **Jesus Christ** as the One who is (and will eternally be) Savior and authority over all men. And this book and this introduction establish Him as being worthy of our worship because of that authority. *Revelation* is by Christ, about Christ, and to stimulate our worship of Christ. In verses 5-6, John identifies a three-fold nature of Christ, a three-fold work of Christ, an a singular response to Christ.

1. Worship Christ Because of His NATURE (v. 5a)

- One commentator recounts some of the great Christological chapters in the Bible — Isaiah 53; Matthew 17; Philippians 2; Colossians 1; Hebrews 1. Then he says, “But of all the chapters in the Bible which show forth our blessed Lord, none surpasses Revelation chapter one.” [Strauss, 26-7.]
- Here is our exalted God, Savior, Groom, and Friend who demonstrates worthiness to be worshipped.

- He is **TRUTH**

- ✓ To say that Jesus is **the faithful witness** is to say that He is a trustworthy source of revelation (3:14).
 - As a witness, Christ testified against the world (Jn. 7:7), about Himself (Jn. 8:13-18; 10:25), and He also testified about the Father (Jn. 1:14, 18).
 - In His faithfulness, His testimony was wholly true and trustworthy. There is nowhere else one might go that would reveal God and His truth more fully and accurately than Christ.
 - He is giving a testimony as the supreme prophet (Dt. 18:15). He came to this world for this reason — to testify to the truth (Jn. 18:37) While the Israelite prophets were often wayward shepherds leading God's people away from God, Christ is the supreme prophet who can be trusted. What He says is right, true, and good.

“ [Jesus Christ is] A *faithful* witness, because He gave faithful testimony concerning all things which were to be testified to by Him in the world. A faithful witness, because whatever He heard from the Father, He faithfully made known to His disciples. A faithful witness, because He taught the way of God in truth, neither did He care for any one nor regard the person of men. A faithful witness, because He announced condemnation to the reprobate and salvation to the elect. A faithful witness, because He confirmed by miracles the truth which He taught in words. A faithful witness, because He denied not, even in death, the Father's testimony to Himself. A faithful witness, because He will give testimony in the day of judgment concerning the works of the good and of the evil.” [quoted in Vincent]

- ✓ Jesus is also the prophet who fulfills prophecy (Ps. 89:36-37) — He is the faithful witness who will eternally sit on the throne of David and endure and persist just like the sun does.
- ✓ Where will you go for truth today? Where will we go for someone to speak the truth, but who wholly conforms to the truth Himself and empowers us to live the truth? Only Christ will give a testimony to what is true, live what is true, and enable us to live the truth.

- He is **LIFE**

- ✓ He is **the firstborn from the dead**. This is a clear reference to the resurrection and infers two truths:
 - He is the first to be truly resurrected (all other resurrections were actually resuscitations). He is the first of many to be resurrected to eternal life, as Paul explains (1 Cor. 15:20-23).
 - He is also the firstborn from the dead in that He is preeminent over everyone else who will be resurrected (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18b). This also is a fulfillment of Psalm 89:27.
- ✓ To say that He is firstborn is to say that He is alive and possesses life. It is also to infer that He is self-sufficient and has life within Himself. He is the resurrection and the life (Jn. 11:25). And it is to fulfill His promise, “because I live you also will live” (Jn. 14:19).
- ✓ To say that He is the firstborn from the dead is to say that He is alive and we need to find our life (and joy) in Him (Col. 3:4, 11).

- ✓ Many years ago Woody Allen was asked “what makes life worth living?” He answered: “Five things: 1) Groucho Marx, 2) The 2nd movement of Mozart’s “Jupiter Symphony,” 3) Louie Armstrong’s recording of “Potato Head Blues,” 4) Flaubert’s novel *A Sentimental Education*, and 5) Cezanne’s painting “Still Life of Apples and Pears.” We might say, “that’s a swing and a miss, Woody.”
- ✓ There is only One who makes life worth living — Christ. He is life.
- ✓ Instead of Christ we have pursued all manner of desires that have been exposed as vanity in 2020. Perhaps most significantly, we have pursued safety (protection from problems and long life), and we have found it fleeting and elusive. Let me paraphrase John Piper — “We can’t go on with business as usual — doing our work, making our money, giving our charitable donations, eating, sleeping, and ‘going’ to church. It’s time for radical re-evaluation and re-direction. Our passion in life must be to be pure, holy, loving, and sold out to Christ, supremely and alone.”
- ✓ He is life. Is He *our* life?

- He is **KING**

- ✓ Jesus is the **ruler of the Kings of the earth**, the preeminent King, the King of all other kings, the King who cannot be overthrown (Ps. 2:2; Phil. 2:9; 89:27; Is. 52:15; 1 Tim. 6:16; Rev. 6:15-17; 17:14; 19:16). All manner of men seek a similar kind of authority; no one has Christ’s authority.

“He is the King of Heaven (Daniel 4:37), the King of the Jews (Matthew 2:2); the King of Israel (John 1:49); the King of the ages (1 Timothy 1:17); the King of glory (Psalm 24:7); the King of saints (Revelation 15:3); and the King of kings (Revelation 19:16). He is the mighty Prince of the kings of the earth (Daniel 8:25).” [Strauss]

- ✓ Jesus is a King who does not receive His authority from another (Mt. 4:8ff). What Satan offered Jesus through rebellion to the Father, Jesus accomplished through submission to the Father’s will.
- ✓ Here is one more reference to Psalm 89:27. Not only is Jesus greater than all kings, but He will fulfill the Davidic Covenant eternally and all His people will be preserved through Him (89:28-29).
- ✓ That all three of these attributes are rooted in Psalm 89 is also God’s way to have us understand that He will keep His covenant from 2 Sam. 7 — it is an unconditional, unilateral, eternal promise.
- ✓ So if Christ is our King, not only do we follow the Victor, but we are all preserved through Him. As King of all kings, He keeps us *safe* (cf. also Jn. 16:33; 1 Pt. 1:5-6).
- What John says in verse 5 about Christ’s nature is a prelude to calling us to worship Him (v. 6b).
 - ✓ These are fitting reasons to worship Christ. These are fitting reasons to be joyful and happy *always*.
 - ✓ But these are also words of *comfort*. In a world where truth is suppressed and where truth is hard to determine, and in a world where there is only death and dying and no eternal life, and in a world where there are so many incompetent and incapable kings (and I don’t mean that to sound humorous), to have a Lord who is truth, life, and sovereign is our rest and peace.

- ✓ At the advent and incarnation of Christ, virtually the first thing that was said of the new King Jesus was, “peace on earth” (Lk. 2:14); and one of the last public declarations about Christ was “BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; *Peace* in heaven and glory in the highest!” (Lk. 19:38); and one of the last things Jesus said to His disciples was, “Peace be to you” (Lk. 24:36). His coming was in authority and power — and to provide peace.
- ✓ Friend, if you are suffering and despairing and grieving and provoked, go to the only One who is peace and hope and joy — the One who came authoritatively so we would rest and not be anxious.

2. Worship Christ Because of His WORK (vv. 5b-6a)

• He LOVES us

- ✓ The middle of verse five begins the actual doxology of praise — *to Him who loves us*.
- ✓ The verb love is not a past tense — “loved” us — it’s a present tense — “loves us.” Now. Still. Forever. And it is personal. He is intimately acquainted with each of His loved ones, and He loves each one with an infinite measure of love, and for an infinite amount of time.
- ✓ Christ’s love is manifested in His incarnation (Jn. 3:16; 6:35-40; 13:34), in His cross (Jn. 13:1; 15:13) and in His eternal rule (14:21; 17:26). From the eternal past through His incarnation and to the eternal future, Christ has unceasing, infinite love for His sheep and bride.
- ✓ Frankly, there is no way for us quantify this love, though the Scriptures exhort us to try — Eph. 3:17-19.
- ✓ If you are a believer in Christ, you can be, should be, must be, secure in that love.
- ✓ These verses then demonstrate two particular ways that Christ has given His love to us —

• He has FREED us

- ✓ There is liberty in Christ. Freedom. **Release**. But not freedom and liberty to do what we want. We are freed from what we used to want to do, in order to do what we could never do — please Christ.
- ✓ The release that John speaks of here is a release that has “undone” something — it has untied the chains of bondage to sin so that we no longer have to sin (e.g., Rom. 6-8; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Rev. 5:9-10; 14:3-4). And notice that this is a past tense — “released.” It’s a finished act; Christ does not need to do anything else to liberate us. That work is done. The chains are gone. *My chains are gone*.

“We have not to wait and work to be forgiven. The work has long since been done. The decree went forth, the releasing word was spoken, the forgiveness was declared, when Jesus left his tomb; and all that any man has to do on that subject is to believe it, and to appropriate to himself the glorious reprieve.” [Seiss, 29.]

- ✓ The release is **for us** (who believe) and only by **His blood**. Death was required for our release. Sacrifice needed to be made; only Christ was adequate as a sacrifice (1 Jn. 2:1-2). This is love.

✓ A second way that Christ has loved us is that...

• He has COMMISSIONED us

✓ He liberated us from sin — taking sin's power away from us. But He also granted something to us — ***He made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.***

➤ Not only is the individual believer placed *into* the ***Kingdom***, but He is *made* a Kingdom (corporate identity). We are not alone, but we are with a myriad of other believers in Christ (this repeated reality in Revelation [5:11; 19:1ff, 6; 21:22ff] must have been a massive encouragement to churches that were being persecuted).

➤ But each person that is part of this corporate kingdom is also an individual ***priest***. Only Revelation (5:10; 20:6) and Peter (1 Pt. 2:5, 9) use this term for believers (Paul uses a verb form in Rom. 15:16).

... In the OT, the believer's access to God was through the priest who had to be in Aaronic line.

... Now, the believer himself (and *every* believer, not just "privileged" one) has access to God.

... This also suggests that every believer has a role in which to serve God as priest. Every believer is usable by God for His purposes. We need no mediator; we have direct access to the throne of God and the One who has adopted us as His children and eternal ministry (22:3).

... But even in this, Christ is pre-eminent — did you notice ***to His God and Father***. He is *our* God and Father also (which Jesus explicitly says after the resurrection, Jn. 20:17). But to emphasize Christ's supremacy and that our access is only through Him, he says, ***His God***.

➤ Notice this also — ***He made us*** — whatever we are is because of *His* doing and work, not ours.

➤ We are redeemed by Christ and we have a role and function in serving Christ.

✓ This is not the only place in this book where this phrase is used; it is the song that is sung in Heaven by the four living creatures and 24 elders (Rev. 5:9-10). Notice that this work of Christ is cause for eternal celebration in Heaven — this is no small or insignificant task. It is a primary work of Jesus.

✓ And notice that while we generally think of the priestly role of the believer as one of access and ministry (which it is), it is also a position of authority and rulership (5:10b).

✓ In Christ, we do not lose. In Christ there is no loss. In Christ there is only victory and joy.

3. Worship Christ (v. 6b)

• Because all these things are true of Christ, there is only one response: worship: ***to Him be the glory and dominion forever and ever.***

✓ Because everything we have is only through the work of Christ, only Christ is exalted. And He is honored eternally. We were created to worship God. In Adam, we all sinned and chose to sin and rebel against Him.

- ✓ He came to earth and He died as eternal God-Man so that He might redeem us, so we might fulfill our original calling to glorify Him — reveal Him and live for Him above all things.
 - ✓ As one writer said, “He made the kingdom; so dominion over that kingdom belongs to him. He loves and frees; so those loved and freed give him glory.” [Hamilton, 37.]
 - ✓ And the doxology finishes with **Amen** — a word that means “true” — it’s an affirmation of ascent. “It is so and I believe and affirm it.”
- Is this doxology of praise and worship of God true for you today? Do you delight in the Christ who has come for the purpose of honoring God by loving you through releasing you from sin and equipping you to serve Him as a priest? Or are you tantalized by the trinkets of the world that will always disappoint?

“Are you bored with God? Do you find other things more interesting than he is? Things like television, pornography, video games? This verse, 4:4, and this chapter and this book and this Bible exist to convince you that God is infinitely more interesting than TV, porn, and video games. You were made to know God. You were not made to fritter your life away.” [Hamilton, *Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches*, 145.]

- He came. He loves us. He released us. He made us a Kingdom of priests. It is time for worship. It is time for delight in Him above all else.
 - ✓ This should be natural for those of us who are already His children. We believe, so we worship.
 - ✓ If you are not a follower of Christ, know that you were made to worship Him and find your satisfaction in Him, only. The reason you are unsatisfied is because you have sought happiness in secondary things and ignored the primary One. Today is a day to change that. He has loved you and He has made a way for you to be free from your sin; the way to freedom is to believe in Him — to ask for forgiveness and freedom from sin, and then live as one who is forgiven and freed. Won’t you repent of your sin and believe in Him today?
- To all of us, let us hear this simple call: *Come and worship the Christ who came.*

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME: Ron and Lynda Belden

BENEDICTION: **Revelation 5:9-10**