

Revelation's Sneak Peek

Revelation 1:4-8

(preached Pine Grove 10/23/16; Sunday PM)

Introduction

Open your Bibles to the Revelation chapter 1:4....

Today, we continue our look at this incredible book, and we are still setting the stage for what is to come...

I want us to begin by reading the verses that we will be looking at this morning..

So, take your Bibles out and let's read verses 4-8 of Revelation 1..

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who [c]is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins [d]by His blood— 6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to [e]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. So it is to be. Amen.

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

Let us pray.

Though very few of you would recognize the name Don LaFontaine, he was one for the most successful men in Hollywood until the time of his death in 2008, being featured in over 5000 movies...

Not only would you most likely not know his name, you would also not recognize his face because Lafontaine was not made famous by his face or acting ability...

Rather, Lafontaine was made famous by his voice..

Lafontaine was the voice you heard when you went to the movies as the previews played...

One of Lafontaine’s most frequently used lines was, “In a world where..”

In other words, Don Lafontaine made a great living by simply being the voice of coming attractions..

His voice along with pictures on the screen that only lasted a few minutes made us want to go see the full movie...

In Rev 1:4-8, we get a preview of coming attractions in the book of Revelation...

We get a few lines that simply give us a feel for the full movie that follows in chapters 4-22...

Today, as we take the second step into the book of Revelation, we are still in the introductory elements of the book, but we get a taste of what is ahead...

And I want us to sample some of the themes that we are going to see repeated throughout the book over and over...

Those themes form our outline this morning...

Because the book of Revelation is a book of blessing, a book of worship, and book of promises to be fulfilled...

And we are going to get a sneak peek at those 3 things this morning...

So, let's dive into verse 4, and see how this book is a book of blessings...

I. A Book of Blessing (4-5a)

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who [c]is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Now, last week we learned that there is a blessing from reading and hearing and obeying the words of Revelation...

But there is also the blessings of grace and peace that come with the book as well...

If you look at verse 4, John is writing to seven churches in Asia....

Here is a map of the area of the churches to whom John writes...

We will see these churches in much greater detail beginning in chapter 2, but the churches are the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadlephia, and Laodecia...

And these were all real churches in John's day that had been founded in the years after Jesus' death and had been established and were functioning when John wrote this letter in the late 90s...

Now, these were not the only churches in the world at the time of John's letter...

Yet, John wrote to these 7 probably because he had been close to these 7 congregations at some point in his ministry...

Now, let me make a little note here about the number 7...

Numbers in the Bible have been way overdone...

People chase rabbits and play tricks with numbers that have no significance in the Bible...

However, the number 7 is a number that we will see often in the book of Revelation very frequently...

We see 7 churches here, we will take about 7 spirits in a few minutes...

Then we will see seven stars, seven seals, seven horns, seven eyes, seven trumpets, seven angels, seven thunders, seven heads, seven crowns, seven plagues, seven bowls, seven kings, and so on...

And the overwhelming significance of the number 7 is the idea of completeness and wholeness..

We will talk about this more when we get to John's instruction to each church, but the idea seems that John is writing Revelation to every type of church in the world when he wrote...

These 7 churches will give us a complete picture of every type of church in the world, and as John is writing those 7 churches, he is writing to every possible church that has ever existed as well...

And so, he identifies his audience, but then he gives those churches a blessing not from himself but from the triune God in verses 4 and 5...

John says Grace and peace to you from Him who is and who was and who is to come...

So, there's God the Father, and now we see God the Spirit in the second half of verse 4, followed by the Son in verse 5...

And John's point is to bless the readers of Revelation with grace and peace from the Father, Son, and Spirit in the opening verses of this book.

This brings me to remind that the book of Revelation is to bring grace and peace into your life as you read it...

It is not meant to confuse or frighten or warn those in the church...

It is meant to bring grace and peace into your life as you read...

Now, what is grace...

Grace is God undeserved favor in your life...

In other words, God didn't have to tell anyone about what was coming in the future...

He didn't have to reveal anything about how the end would play out, but he has revealed it to his church as an act of grace...

On top of that, what God has revealed to us should bring peace to our lives...

Revelation is not meant to disturb us but to comfort us, and I personally believe the comfort and peace comes from the truth that the church will not be here for most of the events in the book of Revelation...

So, a great theme of this book is that the Father, Son and Spirit have written it and given it to the church as a source of blessing...

As a reminder of God's grace to reveal anything to us, and as a reminder of the peace that we have with the Father because of the work of the Spirit in our lives to draw us to the Son...

And that peace we have made with God will mean peace for us in the future as God pours out His wrath on an unbelieving world while we enjoy the peace of being with him in heaven...

Now, we are going to see more of this theme in the months ahead as John talks more specifically to the churches...

For instance, when John addresses the church of Philadelphia, he tells them...

10 Because you have kept the word of My [g]perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of [h]testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole [i]world, to [j]test those who dwell on the earth.

The idea is that the church will find peace and protection while the rest of the world is being tested....

A consistent theme of Revelation seems to be that believers find peace but unbelievers find trouble...

And John introduces and previews that theme right here in verse 4 and part of verse 5 where he tells his readers that God the Father, God the Spirit, and God the Son send grace and peace to the churches as they read this book...

Theme # 2 that we see previewed in the second half of verse 5 and all of verse 6 is that Revelation is also....

II. A Book of Worship (5b-6)

Let's read the end of verse 5 and all of verse 6...

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

As John leaves the blessing that the Father, Spirit and Son send to the readers of Revelation, the description that he gives of Jesus sends him straight into worship...

John describes Jesus in verse 5 as the faithful witness, which Jesus was...

Listen to how Jesus describes himself in ***John 18:37***...

“...For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

Jesus is a faithful witness to the truth of God's Word.

God promised to send a Savior into the world, and Jesus came as proof of that great truth...

Jesus bore witness to the truth of the rest of the OT as well...

John also said that Jesus was the firstborn of the dead, and the idea is that Jesus was the only one in the Bible to rise from the dead...

There are others in the Scriptures who rose from the dead; some even at the hands of Jesus Christ...

Firstborn of the dead simply means that of all who rose from the dead, Jesus was the most important of them all..

His resurrection secured the resurrection to eternal life of any who believed in Him...

IF you want to rise from the dead to spend eternity with God, you must believe in the death and resurrection of Christ...

His resurrection is the key to any resurrection to eternal life...

And then John writes a 3rd description of Jesus in verse 5...

The ruler of the kings of the earth...

Jesus is in fact, the King of kings...

The Lord of lords...

In his first coming, Jesus was the king of no one...

He submitted himself to any and all kings of the earth...

Yet, once his humiliation was through, Jesus ascended to heaven and he will return in submission to no one...

He will reign over all nations and kingdoms and kings and leaders...

And just those 3 thoughts threw John into an outburst of praise in the middle of verse 5...

John worships Christ because of what he has done in his death on the cross..

He released believers from the penalty of sin by His blood being shed in our place....

There is no forgiveness of sins without shedding of blood, and everyone in here will pay for sins with their own blood or by the blood of Christ shed on the cross...

And John simply breaks into praise and worship of Christ for what he has done for the believer...

But not only has Christ secured the forgiveness of sins for the Christian, he has won a place in God's kingdom according to verse 6...

We are even priests to God....

This is why the idea of a Catholic priest is so unbiblical...

You don't need a priest to access God today....

You don't need a priest to go behind a closed door and confess your sins to...

You don't need a priest to communicate to God for you...

Believers are members of a priesthood where we have access to the very throne room of God in heaven...

We can go to our Father in confidence that he hears us not some priest who speaks for us...

And not only that, we have a great high priest in Jesus Christ who pleads for us every day....

And so John does what any believer should do when they consider all that Christ has done for them...

He breaks out in worship and praise to God...

Look at the end of verse 6...

"....to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

We actually record Price is Right every day and watch it as a family...

And constants will get called up on stage, and Drew Carey will pull back the curtain and reveal that they have a chance to win a new car or \$25,000, and the contestant will literally go crazy...

Now remember, they haven't won a dime yet.

They only have the potential to win a car, and they will run around and go crazy even before the game even starts...

This reminds me of John here..

God has not even revealed what Jesus is going to do in the book of Revelation..

But just the thought of the glory of Christ is enough to send John into worship and praise of the Lord...

Look, there are times in your life when you simply see God's goodness and react to it...

It doesn't have to be flashy and showy, it simply needs to be a heart felt response to what God has done or is doing or will do in your life...

Often times for me, it is simply a quiet, “Thank you, Lord” or “Praise the Lord.”

John hears just simply writes that all glory and dominion belong to God forever, and he ends with Amen, which simply means, “so be it.”

Amen is simply an agreement in your heart with a great truth about God...

God is faithful, amen!

God is powerful, amen!

In this case, everything on the earth and all praise in the earth belongs to God, amen!

And this is going to be a constant theme in the book of Revelation.

Revelation is a book of worship...

And Christ will be at the center of that worship from now until the very end...

He will be worshipped in heaven as He opens the seals of wrath to be released upon the earth...

He will be worshipped by John in a few verses in chapter 1...

He will be worshipped by angels, by his people, and by the entire world...

He will be worshipped at his second coming, in the 1000 year kingdom, and in the new heavens and earth of the eternal state...

Revelation speaks of what is coming, but it also speaks about who is to be worshipped now and in the age to come...

The worship of God is central to the book of Revelation and John gives a preview of that in verse 5-6...

One final preview we get here in these verses is that Revelation is...

III. A Book of Promises (7-8)

Notice what John says in verses 7&8...

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. So it is to be. Amen.

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

John makes a bold prediction..

Jesus is coming with the clouds...

In other words, he is coming from above, and every eyes will see Him...

In other words, Jesus' second coming in Revelation 19 will be a global event...

It won't be localized to Jerusalem and the surrounding nations...

The world will know, but even those that pierce him will know it...

Now if you remember the crucifixion of Christ, Jesus was literally pierced by 4 Roman soldiers who sought to overly his death....

But John isn't saying that those 4 Roman soldiers will return to earth to see Jesus' second coming..

No, he is referring to the Jews who rejected Christ at his first coming...

Though the Romans carried out the crucifixion, the Jews were responsible for Jesus' death...

They made up phony charges against Jesus...

They called for his death, and the Jews who survive the tribulation to the very end will then lay their eyes on Christ when he comes from heaven...

Jewish eyes will see their Messiah, and they will see Him as they should have seen in the first time..

And they along with the rest of the families of the earth still alive at the second coming will mourn over the return of Christ...

They will be mourning over their rejection of Him...

They will be mourning over their sin that could have been forgiven in Him..

They will be mourning for friends and family that have likewise rejected him...

It is the same mourning that I used to do when the teacher never asked for our homework asked for it one day, and I hadn't done it because I never thought she would collect it...

Mourning in the day of the Lord will be the most severe mourning ever...

People will be overcome with the guilt of their sin before a coming Holy God...

They will mourn at their stupidity to have seen all the signs and warnings that Jesus was returning, but they loved their sin too much to repent...

The day of Lord will bring about two responses in every human heart...

For those in Christ, there will be unspeakable joy...

For those outside of Christ, there will be unspeakable sadness...

The day of reaping will have come, and everyone who wasn't planted in Christ will be uprooted and tossed away...

And it will be a day of great mourning...

That is a promise from God, and though it is painful to consider, John simply says, "so be it, amen."

And then in case, you don't want to take John's word of promise that Jesus is coming back and the world will mourn, God Himself steps forward in verse 8....

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

Alpha and Omega are simply the beginning and ending letters of the Greek alphabet..

And God is simply the beginning and end of all things...

He was, He is, and He is to come...

God is the Great I Am.

And he simply adds his endorsement to John's words.

He is coming in the clouds in the person of Jesus Christ to reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

This is a great promise or maybe the great promise of the book of Revelation...

And you see it here, and you see it all throughout the entire book...

The book is a book of promises...

Christ is coming, and he is coming soon...

Now, let me take just a moment to give you a few reasons why Jesus Christ must return to this earth...

The first reason that Jesus must come back is that God has promised it, and He never breaks His word...

The OT was filled with predictions of Jesus' first coming...

Born in Bethlehem to a virgin...

Born into the house and line David...

Born to die for the sins of His people...

All of those were promised by God in the OT, and God brought all of them to fulfillment in Jesus Christ when he came earth 2000 years ago...

However there are also multiple promises that Christ will return a 2nd time to rule the nations and crush all the kingdoms of the earth...

And since God is true to His Word, Jesus must return...

Reason #2 that Jesus must return...

Jesus must return to bring Israel to salvation in His name...

The OT repeatedly predicts a future time when the nation of Israel will live safely in their land free from the threats of their enemies...

That day has never come, but when Christ returns and Israel finally finds salvation in Him...

Jesus will wipe their enemies off the map and will set up a kingdom where Jews finally find the fulfillment of all that God promised them in the OT.

Reason #3 that Jesus must return...

Satan must be defeated once and for all...

Though Jesus dealt a death blow to Satan at the cross, the enemy still staggers around trying to cause trouble for the people of God..

Yet, Satan will not be allowed to do that forever...

The Savior must step on the head of the serpent once and for all, so Christ must return a second time to accomplish that very important task..

And reason #4 that Jesus must return is that His people are ready for it...

We are ready for a world without sin and without unrepentant sinners...

WE are ready for a world where righteousness dwells and evil is no more...

WE are ready for a world without elections where Jesus is King and King forever....

We are ready for a world without tears, pain, health problems, family problems, work problems....

We are ready for a world that isn't scarred by sin...

We are ready for a world where our bodies never wear out and the light never goes out....

We are ready for a world where the lion lays with the sheep...

Where the Jews lives in peace with the Gentile...

Where neighbors love one another and love God...

We are ready for a world where our faith is finally sight,
and our faith has been confirmed once and for all...

We are ready for a world where we worship our Lord
better than we could ever imagine and sad departures
never occur...

Come quickly Lord Jesus.

Your true people are ready for you...

Conclusion

And that church is the sneak peek at the book of Revelation...

It is a book of blessing...

It is book of worship....

And it is a book of promises that believers look forward to being kept...

I would ask you this morning...

Now that you have seen a sneak peek at what is to come in this book, are you ready to buy a ticket for a front row seat to it?

Let me tell you something very important....

If I were an unbeliever, I would consider the book of Revelation the worst kind of horror move imaginable...

And I wouldn't want to crack open another page of it for fear of what I may see...

If you sit through the book of Revelation as someone who isn't saved, you may be getting a sneak peek at what you could experience in your lifetime.

And what you will see is not comforting at all...

Today is the day to turn to Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the King of the rulers of the earth...

Today is the day to be released from the guilt of your sins by His blood.

Today is the day to stop trying to be right with God in your own power, and to fall on the mercy of God by trusting in the fact that only Jesus can save you...

Today is the day to make Jesus your Savior and not your Judge...

Today is the day to make the book of Revelation a movie with a happy ending instead of the worst horror movie you could ever imagine...

Today is the day to repent of your sins against a holy God and put your trust in Jesus Christ who died as your Substitute...

Today is the day to be saved forevermore...

Let us pray.