

Norman C. Schwab
Yacolt EVfree
May 23, 199

Ready or Not...Here I Come!
Revelation 1:4-8

What do we need to know when we look around our world and see such hate, violence, abusive behaviors to our bodies, rebels without a cause, shooting deaths in our schools, garbage, sin. It is in our communities and in our churches. Some weeks it feels like I'm more of a garbage collector than a Pastor.

This earth seems to be spinning wildly out of control. It appears to lack anyone, or anything that can reverse and stop its downward plunge. But..things are not the way they appear to be. We think that the power brokers of our day are truly the ones in control. We think it is our politicians, presidents, governors, senators and congressmen, We think it is our wealthy big business owners, our media entertainment stars, the news papers, television networks, ABC, NBC. CBS and TBS that have all the power. We think it is the movers and shakers that are really in control. We think that if we can get our Christian man in presidential power he will be able to better right all wrongs. We think that if we were able to control those areas of power then we could stop the wild spinning morass and bring morality back to America. Who really is in charge of this jungle? Have you ever wondered that question? And if there really is someone in charge..sometimes it sure doesn't seem like they are doing a very great job.

In the face of living in a world that is checking off all-time low scores in the holiness area...what will bring us encouragement? What will bring us strength and hope? What do we need to know that will buoy us through difficult times plagued with sin?

Turn with me in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 1. This is most fitting to be the last book in the Bible, because it tells the final story. We find out who wins in the end. This book was written by the Apostle John who had been exiled onto the Island of Patmos, by the terrorizing Emperor of Rome, Dioclitian. John tells us in verse 9 that he was in the midst of a tribulation times. Indeed as Jesus warned us that we will experience times of tribulation in John 16:33 ""These things I have

spoken unto you that you might have peace, in this world you shall have tribulation, but take courage, for I have overcome the world." Read with me in Revelation 1, verses 4-8. (READ)

In Verse 4 we read that John is writing to the 7 churches that are in Asia, modern day Turkey. Why seven churches? If you read the Bible very much you will quickly realize that the number 7 keeps popping up, over and over. 7 days of creation, 7 days the people of Israel marched around Jericho. The 7 feasts. The 7 last words of Christ. The number 7 speaks of wholeness, completeness. Seven churches are representative of all the churches. These representative churches are pictures for all the churches, both their strengths and weaknesses. Real churches with real strengths and weaknesses that we can learn from. The 7 churches are mentioned in a clockwise geographical arrangement covering an area 50 miles on a square. Now Clark County is about 25 miles by 25 miles so this area is about 4 times bigger than Clark county.

John writes Grace to you, and Peace. All these come from God the Father, the one who is and was and is to come. Grace is the incredible relation of God to believers. His unmerited favor given to us freely. Peace describes our standing before God as we experience his divine peace. All these are initiated and flow from God the Father, the one who has, who is now and can do in the future. He is the God of the past, present and future.

This passage is just dripping with theological facts about God. the father the son and the holy spirit. If someone came up to you and asked, "tell me three things about God, Jesus..what would you tell them? (Ask) Would you tell them of God's grace, His peace? His power? His eternal nature. In the middle of difficult tribulation we need to know truth about God, because there are so many things in our culture saying, I just don't think that's true.

In the middle of tribulation what do I need to know? Point #1 this morning, Know the truth about God that combats the counterfeits. In the middle of tribulation I need to know who God really is, what He can do, what He has done and what He will do. I need to know the One who is, who was and who is to come. It is fascinating that most of the truth of God is opposed by a counterfeit form from the evil one. In secular literature even in John's day one can read inscriptions To Zeus, the one

who is and was and is to come" We combat those counterfeit truths by knowing the real truth about God. Satan wants to pervert and twist one of God's best gifts true love, reducing it to a feeling or emotion, or cheap sexual thrill that leaves you with a terrible aftertaste. He loves to take great relationships, acceptance and forgiveness and counterfeit them at the local bar. It is knowing the truth that will set you free, truly free indeed.

John then goes on to speak of the Holy Spirit. Grace and peace also come from the seven Spirits who are before the throne. There is much debate in the theological literature as to what John is referring to the seven spirits. It may seem like a strange way to address the Holy spirit as seven spirits, but in keeping with the context, the Holy spirit is strongly implied. Plus there is that number again, 7. The number means what? Completeness. Wholeness. I believe it speaks of the whole Spirit, the fullness of His work. Flip with me quickly to Isaiah chapter 11:2 here we see the prophet referring the 7 fold work of Christ. (READ and number) In all the fullness before the throne of heaven.

And then saved for last because Jesus, the son of God is the focus of this book. Verse 5 "grace and peace also comes from Jesus Christ." Truth about God that we need to know? He is the faithful witness. Jesus is the primary source of revelation to us. The original gospel bearer and the gospel himself, wrapped up in his life. We see the word witness, Greek word, Martureo, Martyr. One who speaks the truth without any regard for his own life. Christ in fact was a faithful witness even to the point of death and death on a cross. That is a fact about God that we need to know. The counterfeits want to say it never really happened. They want to say he went into a coma and then somehow was revived. They want to call it a myth. But I am sorry folks, the fact is Jesus was the ultimate faithful witness, martyr. He spoke truth all the way to the point of death.

But..he didn't stay dead. Next line. Jesus who was the first born from the dead. On the third day he rose again to new life. First born from the dead. But he won't be the last who comes from the dead. Indeed the fact of his resurrection is a guarantee for all of us who are connected with Him in redeemed belief, that those who die before He comes back, we too will raise from the dead to life and be with God in heaven. Let me

read Col 1:16-18 to you. Jesus is first born from the dead therefore has the right to be first place in our lives. In everything. All power is given.

Colosians is an excellent segue into the next point. When this world goes crazy we need to be able to know and separate the counterfeit of the world with the truth of God. We need to know the attributes of God the Father, God the Holy Spirit and God the Son, Jesus Christ. Point number 2, In the middle of tribulation, We need to Remember who is the king of the jungle. In v. 5 it says here that Jesus Christ is the ruler of the kings of the earth. This is not a some day some time. John writes this in the face of exile by terrorizing emperor Domitian. It doesn't get much worse then John's time..and yet here it is Jesus is ruler of the kings of the earth.

The problem is that right now things are not as they appear to be. God is real power that happens to be currently clothed in apparent powerlessness. Evil is apparently in power, but is really totally impotent of any real power. Fake power, Fake authority. Why does God allow this? Besides unveiling our own need for Him. Exposing evil for its true colors. He has stepped out of the world for a time and has promised to return. He is still in control. He still has all authority even though sometimes it may not seem like it.

Remember what happened back in Junior high when the teacher had to run down the hall for a minute? The class toughs quickly realized they were alone, and assumed the power and authority of the classroom. What happened? Mayhem. Spitwads. Paper fights. Real fights. Gab sessions. Any work getting done? Not much. The teacher may have tried to leave one of the students in charge..but really how well does that work. The teacher has the authority in the room, but at that moment it doesn't look like it is under control. There are those loyal to the teacher who try to keep peace, but that is difficult at best. The teacher will be able to fully assert her authority when? She walks back into the door. Ready or not here I come.

Jesus is king and will come back to straighten things out. What a blessed encouragement in a crazy world. Steven Chapman wrote a song about this crazy world. What I see is telling me this world's gone crazy, but what is real..God is still on the throne. What I need is to remember

one thing that the Lord of the quiet breeze is Lord of the rough and tumble. He is the king of the jungle.

In this crazy world it may seem like the presidents and kings have all the clout and power. It may seem like we believers need to work hard at twisting the ear of those in apparent power, the political power game. It may seem like the only way to turn around this country moral slide is to try and get our man or woman into power. While that is good thing to do, I want you to know that getting a conservative Christian in power will not be the answer to our problems. It is not a political battle, it is a spiritual battle. Jesus is ruler and he can do what He wants in His way and His time. Matt 28:18 'All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth.' He will exert his full power, no holding back. It God who wield that real power. Don't ever forget that. He can turn the minds and hearts of the kings of this earth with a snap of his fingers. He can place in power and dispose at will. God is the real power broker not man.

In the middle of tribulation, we need to know the truth about God to combat the counterfeit. We must remember who is the king of the jungle. And third point this morning; We must praise the one who has loved us, freed us and empowered us with purpose. Look at the end of that theological stuffed verse 5. John cannot contain himself. He is full to the brim with praise of God and it must spill out. It does spill here. He continues to speak of Jesus Christ. who loves us. Ahhh to know the love of God. This love is not in the past tense, this is present tense love. He loves us now. For God so loved the world. There is nothing you can do to make God love you anymore than He already does. There is nothing you can do to make Him love you any less. He loves you. We praise Him for His love

Not only that but He freed us. From what? Ourselves. Our sin. Our self. Our own self-inflicted garbage. He is the truth that sets us free. We are freed from sin by what? By His blood. What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus? Have you been washed in the cleansing blood of Christ. It was Jesus death that paid our sin debt. When was the last time you specifically stopped to praise Him for loosing you free from the handcuffs of sin? Now is not a bad time.

Jeff Ebert tells about when he was 5 years old. This was long before factory installed seat belts and air bags. His family was driving home at night on a two-lane country road. Jeff was sitting in his mother's lap when a drunk driver came around a corner, swerved into their lane and hit them head on. He remembers the fear and confusion as he saw himself literally covered with blood from head to toe. Then he realized the blood was not his at all, but his mothers. In the split second that the lights glared into her eyes, she instinctively pulled the boy close to her chest and curled her body around his. It was her body that slammed into the dashboard. It was her head that shattered the windshield. She took the impact of the collision so Jeff didn't have to. It took extensive surgeries for his mother to recover from her injuries. In a similar but infinitely more significant way, Jesus Christ took the impact for our sin, now those who believe and receive Christ his blood now permanently covered our lives. He has released us to wholeness, life, freedom from sins by His blood. Wow. Doesn't that make you want to praise Jesus Christ?

He has loved us, freed us and also here in verse 6. He has empowered us. Infused us with purpose and significance. We are a kingdom of priests to His god and Father. We are citizens of a new kingdom. We have a purpose as part of a royal priesthood. We are not here to let the hired gun, the paid professionals, the pastors do the show, and shoot out all the work. The pastors are here to encourage those of you in the work of ministry and we minister alongside together. Those here who are believers are priests. Are you acting like a priest? Are you holy as a priest should be? Can others see your spiritual service and sacrifice?

In the middle of tribulation, be of good cheer for Jesus has overcome the world. Know the truth that combats the counterfeits, Remember who really is the king of the jungle. Praise the one who has loved, loosed and lifted us up to purpose and significance.

Finally, in the face of tribulation, Be ready...for he's coming back again. One day he will shout out from heaven. Ready or not here I come. Verse 7 Behold He is coming. He will return again to this world not in veiled form, but in full glory and power and deity. He will come in the

clouds. In contrast to the stealth of his first coming at Bethlehem as a baby, this time no one can miss the entry. Every eye will see his return.

Last week, I was outside looking up into the sky and it had been a rough week. There were those big cumulous clouds and hole in them with the sun streaming through. I said out loud. God this would sure be a great time to come on back. Have you ever thought that on a particularly rough week. Come on back I'm good and ready. We can be encouraged knowing that He will come again. Christ return is referred to as the Parousia, the appearing of God. Let me take you back to that junior high classroom when the teacher left the room for a few minutes. She didn't say how long she would be gone, but the longer she was gone the more brazen the wild ones became. Parousia, is when that classroom door opens and in steps the teacher. Ready or not here I come. All paper stops flying. Talking stops. Fists are caught in mid-air. All eyes are directed where? At the teacher. Time as those students know it, cease to exist. Parousia. Teacher has returned.

Just as there were probably a few in the class that were ready, there will be a few here on earth who are ready for Christ's return. Will you be one of those who is ready for parousia. Are you one of those who longs for Christ to return and exert full authority and right all earth's wrongs? It is belief in Christ that joins us to the right side of the battle. Have you taken that step to be ready...for He is coming again. In that day all will see him. We know the physical executioners of Christ who lived 2000 years ago will not view Him. They are all dead by now, and will not be resurrected until the judgment day after the 1000 year reign of Christ here on earth. But the Spirit of God will stimulate such a response of confession and repentance, the godly remnant of Israel who represents that group, will be left. They will mourn the loss of the rejected Messiah. They will mourn the fact that so many of their people missed seeing the true Messiah when He first came. They mourn how much they missed their rejected Messiah. Zech 12:10.

Jesus will return in all His power. God himself will set up and rule in righteousness. Verse 8 I am. Alpha and Omega. That is the first and last letter in the Greek alphabet. I am the A to Z and everything in between. Who was and is and is to come. Pantokratur. All strength. All Mighty One. Ready or not here he comes...and when He comes it will not

be in stealth but in His mighty power for He is God all strength. Pantokratur. Who is this God who will return in power and might? Who is He whom we must ready ourselves.

He is the Great "I am".

He is the alpha and Omega. The beginning and the end and everything else in between.

He is who was and is and is to come. The God of the past, present and future.

He is....

Elohim - Creator God

Adonai - Our Lord

Jehovah - God who keeps His covenant

El Elyon - the Most High God

El Olam - the everlasting, unchanging God

El Shaddai - God Almighty, full of grace

El Roi - God, who sees (my hurts)

Jehovah Raah - the Lord my shepherd..for those who hear Him.

Jehovah Sabbaoth - Lord of Hosts...for those wise enough to have their battles fought by Him.

Jehovah Jireh - The Lord who provides..for those who acknowledge their dependence on Him.

Jehovah Rapha - the Lord who heals you

Jehovah Shalom - the Lord our peace...to those who rest in Him

Jehovah Shammah - the Lord who is always near...For those who long to behold Him at the end of days

Jehovah Nissi - The Lord our banner..for those who choose to faithfully follow Him.

Jehovah M'Kaddesh - The Lord who sanctifies..for those who want to live pleasing to Him.

Jehovah Tsidkenu - The Lord is our righteousness...to those who trust in Him

He is the Great I am, who was and is to come. Who has stated clearly in his Word. Ready or not here I come. Are You Ready?