

Commentary on Revelation 1:4–9

Setting the stage

John has already told us in verses 1–3 what this book is: **the Revelation of Jesus Christ**—not a puzzle box, but an unveiling of **His Person, His People, and His Plan**. And now, beginning in verse 4, John shifts from introduction to a **holy proclamation**. This is no ordinary greeting. Heaven is speaking, and earth is being addressed.

Revelation 1:4

“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace...”

1) John addresses real churches, but the message is bigger than them

John writes to **seven literal congregations**—real places, real people, real problems. But I already pointed this out: **when God groups things in sevens**, He is often communicating **fullness and completeness**. So yes, it’s to those churches, but it’s also to **the Church of all time**—the whole scope of church history and spectrum of church conditions over time.

2) Asia is not “Asia” the way we use the word today

“Asia” here is a **Roman province in Asia Minor**, and that region lines up with **modern-day Turkey**. This matters because it roots Revelation in history. This book is prophetic, yes—but it is not detached from reality. God spoke into a real time, to real people, in real places.

3) The greeting is intentional: *Grace first, then peace*

John says, “Grace to you and peace.” That order is everything.

- You don’t get peace by striving.
- You don’t get peace by fixing yourself.
- Peace is the fruit of grace received.

Grace is God’s unearned favor in Christ. Peace is what happens when grace has settled the war between God and man. Grace first—then peace.

Revelation 1:4 (continued)

“...from Him who is and who was and who is to come...”

1) This is not just poetry—this is theology

This phrase is one of the most loaded descriptions in the Bible. It's **timeless**. It echoes the heartbeat of Exodus 3—"I AM." God is not merely "was" and "will be." He **IS**.

And the way John phrases it matters. Here is something powerful highlighted: John doesn't just say, "who will be." It's more like, "**the One who is approaching.**"

Meaning: the future is not just time unfolding—**the future is God moving**. Heaven is not hesitating. Heaven is leaning toward earth. The Eternal One is on the move.

2) God is not trapped in chronology

This is not just past, present, future like a timeline. This is God declaring:

- I am above time.
- I am before it.
- I am in it.
- I am beyond it.

In other words, when God speaks, He is not guessing. When God promises, He is not hoping. When God says something is coming, it is not a probability—it is an inevitability.

Revelation 1:4 (continued)

"...and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne..."

1) "Seven Spirits" is not seven different Holy Spirits

John is not saying God has seven separate spirits floating around heaven. Remember: **seven = fullness, completeness, totality**. This is a symbolic way of describing **the Holy Spirit in His fullness**.

2) Scripture interprets Scripture—Isaiah gives the cipher

I already tied this to Isaiah 11, and that's exactly right: Isaiah gives us a **sevenfold description** of the Spirit resting upon Messiah—showing the Spirit's complete work and character.

So what we're seeing here is not division—it's **completion**. God is presenting Himself as fully equipped, fully sufficient, fully ready—because what is coming in Revelation requires nothing less than the fullness of God.

3) Some say angels—why the Spirit view fits better

Yes, angels are called “ministering spirits,” and Revelation later speaks of angels around the throne. But the weight of the language in Revelation (especially as it unfolds later) keeps pointing us to the **Spirit of God** in fullness, not created angels. The flow here reads like a Trinitarian greeting—Father, Son, Spirit.

Revelation 1:5

“...and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.”

Now John names Him plainly: **Jesus Christ**. And then he stacks titles like a trumpet blast—because John isn’t introducing a topic; he’s introducing a King.

1) “Faithful Witness” — the true Martus

The term “Witness” here carries the idea of *Martus*—the root of “martyr.” Jesus is not a witness who merely spoke truth—He **embodied** truth, and He sealed that truth with blood.

He was faithful unto death. That’s the truest measure of faithfulness: not how loud someone talks, but whether they remain faithful when obedience costs them everything.

2) “Firstborn from the dead” — not created, but preeminent

Cults love to twist “firstborn.” But “firstborn” in Scripture often points to **rank, priority, and position**, not origin.

This is not saying Jesus was created. This is saying Jesus is **preeminent**—the One with the highest standing. He holds the title uniquely. He is the first in rank over resurrection life secured by atonement. And yes—He had to be fully man to die for man, and fully God to be sinless and perfect. This is the glory of the God-Man: Jesus Christ, fully God, fully man, one Person.

3) “Ruler over the kings of the earth” — true now, manifested later

Even if the earth is still rebellious, the title is still true. Jesus is not running for office. He is not campaigning. He is not awaiting permission.

He is the ruler over every ruler, King over every king, Lord over every lord—whether they acknowledge Him or not.

Revelation 1:5–6

“To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests...”

This is where John turns from who Jesus is **positionally** to what Jesus has done **personally**.

1) He loved us

Not admired us. Not tolerated us. Not waited for us to improve. **Loved us.** The eternal “I AM” set His love on people who did not deserve it.

2) He washed us in His blood

This is not symbolic sentiment. This is substitution. This is redemption. This is cleansing that cost something real.

John ties cleansing to blood because Christianity is not self-help—it is **shed blood and an empty tomb**.

3) He made us kings and priests

This is one of the most identity-shaping statements in Revelation.

Under the Old Covenant, king and priest offices were separated. Men tried to merge them and fell under judgment. But under the New Covenant, Jesus—our High Priest and King of Kings—makes His people share in His kingdom service.

- Priests: access to God, worship, intercession, service
- Kings: authority, stewardship, purpose, spiritual rule under Christ

Much of this is **positional now**, spiritual now—but it is headed toward **literal fulfillment** when we reign with Him.

John ends it with worship because true theology always becomes doxology: to Him be glory and dominion forever. Amen.

Revelation 1:7

“Behold, He is coming with clouds...”

Now John lifts our eyes forward. The greeting turns into prophecy. And it starts with a word that demands attention: **Behold.**

1) The Second Coming is visible and universal

Not secret. Not hidden. Not local. “Every eye will see Him.”

The world won’t need an announcement. The sky itself will preach.

2) “Coming with clouds” — layered meaning

There’s depth here, and it doesn’t have to be “either/or.” Scripture often stacks meaning.

- His **cloud of glory**—God’s manifested presence
- The **clouds of the sky**—He returns openly, visibly
- A **cloud of witnesses**—His redeemed returning with Him

You don’t have to flatten it. The whole scene is massive. Heaven is not whispering. Heaven is arriving.

3) “Even they who pierced Him” — Israel is still in view

This is not accidental. This is a divine spotlight. John is pulling language that Scripture already anchors elsewhere: the pierced One is connected to the mourning of Jerusalem, the house of David, the faithful remnant.

Question: If God is done with the Jews, then why does Revelation keep addressing them—why does it keep returning to them—why does it keep centering end-time conflict around Jerusalem?

God keeps His Word. That’s the point.

And when Christ returns, the remnant will recognize Him, mourn, and be saved—because His covenant faithfulness doesn’t expire.

4) Worldwide mourning is also judgment-realism

John says the tribes of the earth will mourn. Why? Because many will have aligned themselves with the beast system—choosing darkness over light.

When the King appears, rebellion collapses into grief.

And John closes again: “Even so, Amen.”

Meaning: this is not just sad—it is necessary. It must come to pass. God is righteous.

Revelation 1:8

“I am the Alpha and the Omega... the Almighty.”

Now God Himself speaks. And He speaks like God.

1) Alpha and Omega — total sovereignty

He is the beginning and the end. Not just of time, but of purpose, history, meaning, and destiny. Nothing is outside His rule.

2) “Who is and who was and who is to come” — repeated for emphasis

In a few verses, we hear this again. Why? Because Revelation is going to show terrifying events, shaking judgments, collapsing systems, and global deception—and God anchors the reader early:

I am not reacting.

I am not threatened.

I am not surprised.

I AM.

And that word “Almighty” is not motivational—it is governmental. It is God saying, “I possess all power.” I own the throne. I will finish what I started.

“Almighty is used 10 times in Scripture, but 9 of those times are in Revelation. It relates to His Omnipotence. The other time in 2 Cor it speaks of Him making us sons and daughters.

Revelation 1:9

“I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ...”

1) John doesn’t stand above them—he stands with them

He calls himself their brother and companion. That’s pastoral. That’s humble. That’s leadership that bleeds with the flock.

He names three realities believers share:

- tribulation (pressure in this world)
- kingdom (Christ’s rule and our belonging)
- patience (endurance under tension)

2) Patmos: the place meant to silence him becomes the place God speaks loudest

John was on Patmos “for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Not for theft. Not for violence. Not for rebellion. For Christ.

And the irony is holy: Patmos was meant to shut him up—God used it to give him the loudest book in Scripture.

A barren island becomes a throne-room window. A prison becomes a pulpit. Exile becomes revelation.

And this matters because it tells the Church something timeless: Rome can relocate the servant, but Rome cannot restrain the Sovereign. God's Word is not chained.

Closing pastoral takeaway

Church, Revelation 1:4–9 is not just “information.” It's introduction—Heaven introducing the King, the Spirit, the Father's eternality, the Son's supremacy, and the Church's identity.

And if we study this book without intimacy, we'll miss what it's trying to do. Revelation is not meant to entertain us with prophecy charts. It's meant to **re-center us on Christ**—His glory, His authority, His return, and our calling to remain faithful.

Sermon Notes Outline (Condensed)

Review of Last Week (Revelation 1:1–3)

A. Introduction to the Book

1. Revelation is singular, not plural
2. It is the **Revelation of Jesus Christ**
3. About **His Person, His People, and His Plan**
4. Miss Him → miss the book entirely

B. Divine Transmission

1. Father → Son
2. Son → John (through His angel)
3. John → the Church

C. “Shortly” Explained

1. Greek phrase: *En Tachei*
2. Meaning: once events begin, they accelerate rapidly

D. Signified Revelation

1. Sent and signified (signs & symbols)
2. Symbols explained:
 - Elsewhere in Scripture
 - Within Revelation
 - As similes or metaphors

E. The Unique Blessing

1. Only book with an attached blessing
2. Condition: read, hear, keep
 - Revelation 1:3

F. The Divinely Given Outline

1. Red-letter outline given by Jesus
 - Revelation 1:19

G. Structure of the Book

1. “Things you have seen” – Chapter 1
 - The glorified, resurrected Christ
2. “Things which are” – Chapters 2–3
 - Seven churches
 - Complete picture of Church history
3. “Things which will take place after this” – Chapters 4–22
 - After Christ revealed
 - After Church age
 - Entirely future events

H. Clarity of the Book

1. God intends it to be understood
2. Blessing + outline confirm this
3. God desires our study and obedience

I. Transition

1. John continues writing what he sees
2. Revelation 1:4–8
3. Prayer

II. Greeting to the Seven Churches (Revelation 1:4)

A. Authorship

1. John is the instrument
2. Holy Spirit is the source
3. Addressed to seven churches—and all believers

B. The Number Seven

1. Seven literal churches
2. Also symbolic of fullness
3. Represents the Church throughout history

C. Asia Defined

1. Roman province in Asia Minor
2. Modern-day Turkey

D. Divine Greeting

1. “From Him” – Jesus
2. Grammar intentionally strained to protect His Name
3. Description: “Who was, who is, who is to come”

E. Eternal Nature of God

1. Echoes Exodus 3 – “I AM”

2. Above time: past, present, future
3. Triune and eternal

III. The Seven Spirits Before the Throne

A. Meaning of “Seven Spirits”

1. Not seven separate spirits
2. Symbol of completeness and fullness

B. Supporting Imagery

1. Seven horns = complete authority
2. Seven eyes = complete omniscience

C. Old Testament Foundation

1. Isaiah 11:1–2
2. Sevenfold description of the Holy Spirit

D. Alternate View Considered

1. Some suggest angels
2. Later context favors fullness of the Spirit

IV. Christ’s Person and Our Position (Revelation 1:5–6)

A. Titles of Christ

1. Faithful Witness
2. Firstborn from the dead
3. Ruler over the kings of the earth

B. Faithful Witness

1. Greek *Martus* – witness/martyr
2. Faithful unto death

C. “Firstborn from the Dead”

1. Title of preeminence, not creation
2. Position, not origin
3. Supreme rank and priority
4. First to die, be resurrected and live forevermore!

D. Hypostatic Union

1. Fully man – able to die
2. Fully God – sinless and perfect
3. The God-Man Jesus Christ

E. Our Identity in Christ

1. Loved and washed by His blood
2. Made kings and priests
3. Spiritual position now
4. Literal reign later

F. Old vs. New Covenant

1. Old Covenant - King and priest offices separated
2. New Covenant - United in Christ
3. Believers share in this authority

G. Future Reign

1. Revelation 5 – 24 elders
2. Return with Christ

3. Millennial Kingdom

V. The Visible Return of Christ (Revelation 1:7)

A. Universal Visibility

1. Every eye will see Him
2. Even those who pierced Him

B. Clouds Explained

1. Cloud of Glory
2. Clouds of the sky
3. Cloud of redeemed believers

C. Jewish Recognition

1. “Those who pierced Him”
2. Fulfillment of Zechariah 12:7–10
3. God is not finished with Israel

D. Worldwide Mourning

1. Survivors of the Tribulation
2. Many under judgment
3. Mark of the Beast context

E. “Even So, Amen”

1. God’s plan is inevitable
2. Human responsibility affirmed

VI. The Eternal Declaration (Revelation 1:8)

A. Divine Title

1. Alpha and Omega
2. Beginning and End
3. The Almighty

B. Witness Structure

1. Appears three times in Revelation
2. Trinitarian completeness

C. Earth-Facing Testimony

1. Declarative truth
2. Covenant witness

D. Heaven-Facing Worship (Later)

1. Revelation 4
2. Doxology, not declaration

E. “Who Is to Come”

1. Not merely future existence
2. God is approaching
3. His coming is personal and inevitable

VII. John Introduced (Revelation 1:9)

A. John’s Identification

1. Brother and companion
2. Tribulation, kingdom, patience

B. Patmos

1. Penal colony

2. Meaning: “to strike”
3. Place of death → place of revelation

C. Conditions

1. Harsh terrain
2. Limited water
3. Forced labor

D. Reason for Exile

1. Word of God
2. Testimony of Jesus

E. Church History

1. Attempted execution (boiling oil)
2. Exile under Domitian
3. Only apostle to die naturally

VIII. John’s Background and Character

A. Personal History

1. Name: Yochanan – “Yahweh is gracious”
2. Son of Zebedee
3. Brother of James

B. Sons of Thunder

1. Luke 9 – Samaritan village
2. Zeal transformed by grace

C. Relationship with Jesus

1. Inner circle
2. “The disciple Jesus loved”
3. Language of humility and grace

D. Apostle of Love

1. Wrote more on love than any other
2. Also entrusted with Revelation

IX. Intimacy and Revelation

A. Pattern in Scripture

1. Daniel – “Greatly beloved”
2. John – “The disciple Jesus loved”

B. Principle

1. God reveals most to those closest to Him
2. Intimacy precedes insight

C. Warning

1. Prophecy without intimacy leads to pride
2. Knowledge without love misses the point

D. Final Exhortation

1. To know His plans → know His heart
2. To know His heart → spend time with Him