

## Behold Our Great God

### *Revelation 1:1-8*

#### Introduction

In a world that exalts earthly power and demands allegiance, the book of Revelation pulls back the curtain and shows us the true throne of heaven. It calls God's people to place their hope and loyalty not in the rulers of this age, but in Jesus Christ—the One who governs history and alone deserves our allegiance.

To grasp Revelation rightly, we must consider the circumstances in which it was given. Most scholars agree that the book was written near the end of the first century, likely between AD 90 and 95, during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian. John tells us that he received this revelation while exiled on the island of Patmos **“on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus”** (Rev. 1:9). His exile was not a voluntary retreat, but punishment for unwavering faithfulness to Christ.

John had lived a long and costly life of discipleship. He had outlived the other apostles, witnessed the rise and fall of emperors, and seen friends and fellow believers martyred for their allegiance to Jesus. He had watched the brutality of Rome unleashed—most notably in the devastation of Jerusalem—and he had seen firsthand what happens when earthly powers claim absolute authority.

Long before Rome's pressure intensified, many Jewish believers in Jesus had already been pushed out of their own communities—excluded from synagogues, cut off from family life, and treated as apostates rather than brothers. Faithfulness to Christ often meant losing one's religious home before ever confronting the power of the empire.

By the time John was exiled, the pressure on the church had intensified. Under Domitian, emperor worship became a test of loyalty, especially in Asia Minor. For most citizens, participation was routine. For Christians, it was a crisis. To confess “Jesus is Lord” was to deny Caesar that title, and refusal could lead to social exclusion, economic loss, exile, or worse. This was not a moment of widespread slaughter, but of steady compromise. Christians were not being asked, “Will you die for Christ today?” They were being asked, “Will you bend—just a little?”

It is into this world that Revelation was given. The very word *revelation* means unveiling. God is not hiding His purposes; He is revealing them. This book was written to a pressured church to

show who truly reigns, how history is moving, and why faithfulness to Jesus is always worth the cost. And that is where Revelation begins.

### **Behold the Blessing (vv. 1-3)**

When it comes to Revelation, the book is not *Revelations*. It is not a series of secret disclosures reserved for the most skilled students of prophetic Scripture. It is not a collection of clues designed to help us identify the next antichrist—especially since we are told that many antichrists have already come. It is also not a puzzle to figure out the timing of Christ’s return, for Jesus even said, **“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only”** (Matt. 24:36). Revelation is *a* revelation—but more precisely, it is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. That is how the book begins, and that is what the book is about.

So what does Revelation reveal about Jesus? Everything.

From beginning to end, Revelation presents Jesus in the fullness of His person and work. He is the **faithful witness**, the **firstborn from the dead**, and the **ruler of the kings of the earth** (1:5). He is the **First and the Last**, the **Living One** (1:17–18), the **Holy One**, the **True One** (3:7), and the **originator of God’s creation** (3:14). He is the **Lion of the tribe of Judah** and the **Root of David** (5:5), yet also the **Lamb who was slain** and the **Worthy One** (5:6, 9, 12). He is the **Son of Man** (14:14), the **Word of God** (19:13), and the **King of kings and Lord of lords** (19:16). He is the **Alpha and the Omega**, the **Beginning and the End** (22:13), the **Root and the Descendant of David**, and the **Bright Morning Star** (22:16).

For this reason, the book of Revelation may rightly be called the most Christ-centered book in the Bible. How can I say that? Because, as Paul tells us, all the promises of God find their “Yes” in Jesus Christ—and Revelation is the book that shows us, again and again, how Jesus is God’s “Yes” to every promise He has ever made.

This is the primary reason why we are assured a blessing for all who read, hear, and keep what is written in Revelation. You do know, don’t you, that you can read something and not hear it right? You can read a verse in the Bible and not really hear it, just as easily as someone can tell you something and it goes in one ear and then out the other with little to no effect.

I believe part of that blessing is reflected in what **The Center for Bible Engagement** discovered through a large-scale study on Bible engagement involving more than 600,000 participants. The results surprised many people—including those who conducted the research. The study found that individuals who engaged with Scripture at least four times a week experienced:

- a **30% drop in loneliness**
- a **32% drop in anger**
- a **40% drop in bitterness in marriage and relationships**
- a **57% drop in alcoholism**
- a **60% drop in sexual sins, including pornography addiction**

- a 62% drop in those who felt distant from God

So what does it mean to “keep” the book of Revelation? It means more than reading it or debating it—it means treasuring its words and following the Christ it reveals in obedient faith. The very first sentence of the book gives us this clue: **“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His servants...”** The word translated *servants* is the Greek word *doulos*, a term that speaks of belonging, allegiance, and obligation. A true Christian, then, is not someone who merely speaks well of Jesus, but someone who gladly submits to Him—yielding not just words, but life itself—in faithful service to the One who is revealed as Lord.

And this is why we are called to read, hear, and keep the words of Revelation—not only because of the blessing it promises, but because *“the time is near.”* What time is near? Not simply the final return of Christ, though that hope is never absent. Rather, John is pointing to the nearness of pressure, opposition, and persecution that come when allegiance to Jesus collides with the demands of the world. Revelation prepares God’s people to remain faithful when conformity is rewarded and faithfulness is costly.

### **Behold Our Triune God (vv. 4-6)**

So why should we press on in light of what is coming? Why read, hear, and keep the words of this book? Because of who God is. Our God is the LORD Almighty—Yahweh—and there is no one like Him. He is the One who greets His people and extends grace and peace to those who belong to Him.

John’s greeting is not casual; it is deeply theological and addressed to the seven churches. These were seven real, historical congregations located in strategic cities of Asia Minor. Yet because the number seven signifies fullness and completeness, they also represent the church as a whole—God’s people in every generation and in every place. In that sense, the seven churches represent us.

And it is to this church—then and now—that grace and peace are given. They come first from the eternal, self-existent God, the One Isaiah proclaimed when he said, **“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god’”** (Isa. 44:6). This is the God who stands at the beginning and the end of history—the God who is never threatened, never surprised, and never displaced.

This God is also all-sufficient and unchanging. James calls Him **“the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change”** (Jas. 1:17). In a world where rulers rise and fall and circumstances shift, God remains the same. That is why His grace does not fade and His peace does not fail. In Revelation 1:4, He is described as the One **“who is and who was and who is to come.”** This is God the Father—the great I AM—who once set His people free by crushing Pharaoh and now meets His suffering church with grace and peace.

This grace and peace also come from the sevenfold Spirit—the Holy Spirit. The language of “seven spirits” speaks not of multiple beings, but of the fullness and perfection of the one Spirit

who proceeds from God's throne. It is the Holy Spirit who applies God's grace to our hearts, sustains us in suffering, and empowers faithful witness.

And finally, this grace and peace come from Jesus Christ, the Son. John describes Him as **the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth**. Jesus is the faithful witness because He perfectly revealed God and bore faithful testimony to the truth—even unto death. As the firstborn from the dead, He conquered death on our behalf, guaranteeing resurrection life for all who belong to Him. As Paul declares, **“Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”** (1 Cor. 15:20), and again, **“He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent”** (Col. 1:18).

Our risen Lord is not waiting to rule—He already reigns. He is not described as one who *will be* the ruler of the kings of the earth, but as the One who *is* the ruler of the kings of the earth. Having lived the life we could not live, died the death we deserved, and risen in victory, Jesus is now exalted at the right hand of the Father. As Scripture declares, **“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”** (Phil. 2:9–11).

But that's not all, dear brothers and sisters. Scripture tells us that truth is established by two or more faithful witness. Again and again, God confirms His testimony through two witnesses. And in Revelation 1:5–6, John gives us exactly that. Christ bears witness to His love for us in two unmistakable ways: *He has freed us from our sins by His blood, and He has made us a kingdom—priests to His God and Father*. These two witnesses proclaim one glorious truth—not merely what Christ has done, but who we are to Him. They testify to this above all else: *He loves us. He loves us.*

The love of Christ is never passive. The One who loves us frees us, and the One who frees us forms us into something new. Revelation does not simply assure us that we are loved—it tells us who we now are because we are loved. And that is where John now turns our attention.

### **Behold the Coming King (vv. 7-8)**

Where is the love of Christ leading us? What was it in these words that was meant to encourage John and the seven churches? Jesus—the faithful witness who lived the life we could never live, the firstborn from the dead who died the death we deserved, and the ruler of the kings of the earth who has made us a kingdom of priests—is coming back for us.

How is He coming back? He is coming to be seen, and He is coming in glory. Long before John ever saw this vision, the prophet Daniel was given a glimpse of that day when he wrote, **“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man... And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away”** (Dan. 7:13–14).

When Jesus returns, every eye will see Him—including those who pierced Him. Jesus Himself described what John records in Revelation 1:7 when He said, “**Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory**” (Matt. 24:30). At His appearing, the tribes of the earth will mourn—those who rejected Him, mocked Him, and sought to silence Him by silencing His church. But not all tears will be tears of grief or fear. For those who belong to Christ, for those who have longed for His appearing, our tears will be tears of joy, relief, and celebration.

Throughout the book of Revelation, Jesus promises His coming again and again—no fewer than seven times (2:25; 3:11; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20). This is the first of those promises, but it will not be the last. So what confidence do we have that this will happen? What guarantee do we have that Jesus is truly coming back? Our assurance rests not only in the empty tomb He walked out of, nor only in His promise as the faithful and true witness, but in God Himself—the One who declares, “**I am the Alpha and the Omega.**” He is the great I AM. He is the Lord Almighty—the One who is and who was and who is to come. Because He does not change, His promises do not fail, and it is this unchanging God who has guaranteed that these promises belong to His redeemed sons and daughters.

## **Conclusion**

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, devote yourselves wholeheartedly to the risen and reigning Christ, rather than to the temporary powers and fleeting trends of this world. Anchor your plans, your hopes, and your very lives in Him alone. Let your hearts rest in the deep assurance of His unfailing love—the love that has freed you from your sins by His precious blood and has made you a kingdom of priests to His God and Father. As you await the glorious appearing of the King who will come with power for all to see, endure the pressures that seek to silence your testimony, resist the subtle temptations to compromise, and hold fast to the blessing promised to those who read, hear, and keep the words of this prophecy. Do all this with unshakable confidence and living hope, for the One who calls you is faithful, and He will surely fulfill all that He has promised.

So here is what I want to leave you with. If you would remember what it means to read, hear, and keep the words of the book of Revelation, remember this one word: *HEAR*.

**H — Hold fast** to the blessing promised to those who read, hear, and keep the words of this prophecy.

**E — Endure** the pressures that seek to silence your testimony.

**A — Anchor** your plans, your dreams, and your hopes in the incomparable Christ.

**R — Resist** the subtle temptations to compromise, trusting that God will fulfill all His promises.