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Revelation 1:7-8

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English Standard Version

“Victory of the King”

This is the 4th sermon in the series on The Book of Revelation entitled,
“The King’s Triumphant Return.”

Revelation 1:7-8

“Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him. Even so. Amen. ⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Heavenly Father, as we now dare to make our way through Revelation, will You please help us. We know that there’s still a lot that we need to learn from Your Word so that it can have full impact in our lives. We know we want to be the king of our own lives. So Lord, once again open our eyes and ears to truly hear and understand and apply this Word to our lives and repent of our sin and selfishness. Help us to meet the real King in its words. Do this for each of us, this morning, in Jesus’ name, and for His glory, Amen.

INTRODUCTION: *The Best Part of Coming Home* ¹

Whenever I travel, one of the things I love the most is coming home. Even after being gone for just a few days, you begin to miss the familiar — home cooking, sleeping in your own bed, the dinner table conversations with your family, long hugs from your wife.

So I very much look forward to coming home.

But I think that the best part of coming home is when you actually walk through the door.

¹ The Introduction is adapted from *When God Whispers Your Name* by Max Lucado, pages 171ff and *Heaven* by Dr. Peter Kreeft, page 49.

The cry goes up, “Dad’s home!” and however many kids are home come to the front door with hugs. It was somewhat more exciting when they were little and you could have three or four of them hug you and hang on you at the same time. Now it’s more of a quick hug and questions about the trip.

When they were younger they would often greet me and sort of just hang around, waiting expectantly, until someone would blurt out the question they all wanted to ask ... “Did you bring us anything?”

And I’d usually stall, and mutter something like, “Gee, I don’t know. Was I supposed to? Maybe there’s something in my suitcase ... can’t really remember.” And they’d cry out with something like, “Oh, come on. Let’s see. What’d you get?” Whereupon I’d pull out whatever it was, t-shirts or hats, various trinkets, and postcards, always postcards (Sarah collects them).

Now in a few weeks I’m going to Atlanta for a few days, as part of my responsibilities as a member of our denominations Administrative Committee. Now suppose for a moment, I didn’t come home. Suppose I just called home, and said, “You know, things are real busy and I’m not going to be able to come home anymore. But not to worry, I’ll still send the t-shirts and hats, trinkets and postcards. And I’ll send them every week.”

How do you think that would go over? Probably not too well.

Because deep down, we all know that it’s the person, not the presents, which makes coming home special. It’s not the frills, it’s the father.

Imagine God making us a similar offer:

I will give you anything you desire. Anything. Perfect love. Eternal peace. You will never be afraid or alone. No confusion will enter your mind. No anxiety or boredom will enter your heart. You will never lack for anything.

There will be no sin. No guilt. No rules. No expectations. No failure. You will never be lonely. You will never hurt. You will never die.

Only you will never see my face.

Would you want that? Neither would I. It’s not enough. Who wants heaven without God? Heaven is not heaven without God.

A painless, deathless eternity will be nice, but inadequate. A world shot with splendor would stagger us, but it’s not what we seek. What we want is God. We want God more than we know. It’s not that the perks aren’t attractive. It’s just that they aren’t enough. It’s not that we’re greedy. It’s just that we’re His and —Augustine was right — our hearts are restless until they rest in Him.

Only when we find Him will we be satisfied.

Moses can tell you. He had as much of God as any man in the Bible. God spoke to him in a bush. God guided him with fire. God amazed Moses with the plagues. And when God grew angry with the Israelites and withdrew from them, he stayed close to Moses. **Exodus 33:11** tells us, “*Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses ... as a man speaks to his friend.*” Moses knew God like no other man. But that wasn’t enough. Moses yearned for more. Moses longed to see God. He even dared to ask, **Exodus 33:18**, “*Please show me Your glory.*”

Postcards and hats aren’t enough. A fiery pillar and manna in the morning were insufficient. Moses wanted to see God himself. Don’t we all?

Isn’t **that** why we long for heaven? We may speak about a place where there are no tears, no death, no fear, no night; but those are just **the benefits** of heaven. The beauty of heaven is seeing God. And our heart will only be at peace when we see Him. The Psalmist says in

Psalm 17:15, “As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be *satisfied* with Your likeness.”

Satisfied? That’s the one thing we’re not. We’re not satisfied.

As a child we say, “If only I were a teenager.” As a teen we say, “If only I were an adult.” As an adult, “If only I were married.” As a spouse, “If only I had kids.” As a parent, “If only my kids were grown.” As an empty nester, “If only the kids would visit.” As a retiree in the rocking chair with stiff joints and fading sight, “If only I were a child again.”

We’re not satisfied. **Contentment** is a difficult virtue.

Why? Because there’s nothing on earth that can satisfy our deepest longing. We long to see God. The leaves of life are rustling with the rumor that we will —and we won’t be satisfied until we do.

We can’t be satisfied. Not because we’re greedy, but because we’re hungry for something **not found on this earth**. Only God can satisfy. The Apostle Philip was right when in **John 14:8** we read, “Philip said to Him [Jesus], “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”

And therein lies the problem, God told Moses, **Exodus 33:20**, “But,” He said, “you cannot see My face, for man shall not see Me and live.”

According to legend, the first American Indian to see the Grand Canyon tied himself to a tree in terror. According to Scripture, any man privileged a peek at God has felt the same ... terror.

Remember the words of Isaiah after his vision of God? **Isaiah 6:5**, “And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” Upon seeing God, Isaiah was terrified. Why such fear? Why did he tremble so? Because he was **wax** before the sun. A **candle** in a hurricane. A **minnow** at Niagara. God’s glory was too **great**. His purity too **sterling**. His power too **mighty**. **The holiness of God illuminates the sinfulness of man**.

When Isaiah saw God, he didn’t sigh with admiration. He didn’t applaud in appreciation. He drew back in horror, crying, “I am unclean and my people are unclean!” The holiness of God **highlights** our sins.

Listen to the words of another prophet. **Revelation 1:7**, “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will **wail** on account of Him. Even so. Amen.”

Read the verse in another translation, the *New Century Version*, **Revelation 1:7** reads, “Look, Jesus is coming with the clouds, and everyone will see Him, even those who stabbed Him. And all peoples of the earth will **cry loudly** because of Him. Yes, this will happen! Amen.”

And in *The Message*, that verse reads, “Riding the clouds, He’ll be seen by every eye, those who mocked and killed him will see Him. People from all nations and all times **will tear their clothes in lament**. Oh, yes.”

The holiness of God **highlights** the sin of man.

Then what do we do? If it is true, **Hebrews 12:14b** that, “Anyone whose life is not holy will never see the Lord.” Where do we turn? What can we do?

Once again, the answer is found in the story of Moses. Read carefully, very carefully, the following verses. Read to answer **this** question — what did Moses **do** in order to see God? Read slowly what God says. It’s easy to miss it.

Exodus 33:21-23, “There is a place near Me where you may stand on a rock. ²² When

My glory passes that place, I will put you in a large crack in the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by.²³ Then I will take away My hand, and you will see My back. But My face must not be seen.”

Did you see what Moses was to do? Neither did I.

Did you note who did the work? God did the work! **God** is the one who’s active. **God** gave Moses a place to stand. **God** placed Moses in the crevice. **God** covered Moses with His hand. **God** passed by. And **God** revealed Himself. Please, underscore that point. **God** equipped Moses to catch a glimpse of God.

All Moses did was ask. All we can do is ask. But we must ask.

For only in asking do we receive. And only in seeking do we find.

And only God can equip us for our moment with the Son. Hasn’t He given us a rock, the Lord Jesus? Hasn’t He given us a cleft, His grace? And hasn’t He covered us with His hand, His pierced hand? And isn’t He on His way to get us?

Just as I came home to my family at the right hour, so God will come. And just as I brought my family gifts, so will God. But, as splendid as the gifts of heaven are, it is not for **those we wait**. We wait to see the Lord God. And that will be enough. **He** is worth it. Our passage this morning says so.

So let’s turn to our text, Revelation 1, starting at verse 7 and ...

v. 7: THE PROMISE OF SECOND COMING²

“Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him. Even so. Amen.”

Last week I talked about this book being a drama in several acts, where we look at the same scenes from different vantage points. However, as in most good dramas, it will take some time for this drama to unfold, so, like any good writer, John gives his readers a preview of what will come later in the book. By so doing, he reveals the theme of the book of Revelation: It is a book about the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In verses 7 and 8 John presents a couple of key truths about His second coming. And first we see its’ ...

- **NECESSITY**

Last week I talked about how Jesus was the One who loves us, died for us, freed us from our sins by His blood, and made us priests to His God and Father. This same Jesus, who was raised from the dead, will one day come for us and receive us to Himself. John wants to make sure that we get that.

He says, *“Behold, He is coming with the clouds.”* The exclamation, **“Behold,”** is an arresting call to attention. It’s intended to arouse the mind and heart to consider what follows. This is the first of 25 uses in Revelation — a book filled with **startling** truths that demand **careful** attention. Fittingly, the first thing John calls attention to is the glorious truth that **“He is coming.”**

Despite the scoffers who deny the Second Coming, which the Apostle Peter warned us about in **2 Peter 3:3-4a**, *“knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with*

² The Exposition of the text is adapted from the sermon *“Notes on The Biblical Portrait of Jesus”* by Rev. Charlie Baile, Shady Grove Presbyterian Church, Derwood, MD; the sermon *“The Alpha and The Omega”* by Dr. Kim Riddlebarger, Christ Reformed Church, Anaheim, CA, 2002, www.christreformed.org; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Revelation 1-11* by Dr. John MacArthur, pages 27-35; the sermon *“The Alpha and Omega”* by Pastor Jeff Williams, Pontiac Bible church, Pontiac, IL, 4/18/03.

scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴ *They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming?”*

However, the Bible repeatedly affirms that Jesus will return. That truth appears in more than 500 verses throughout the Bible. It’s been estimated that one out of every 25 verses in the New Testament refers to the Second Coming. Jesus repeatedly spoke of His return and warned believers to be ready for it in all four of the Gospels. The return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth is a central theme in the Scriptures.

The **clouds** picture Christ’s descent from heaven. More significantly, they symbolize the brilliant light that accompanies God’s presence — a light so powerful that no one could see it and live. The appearance of the blazing glory of Jesus Christ, and the lesser brilliance of the innumerable angels who accompany Him, will be both an indescribable and terrifying sight.

Hebrews 1:3 reminds us that *“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”*

So not only is Jesus’ second coming in glory necessary to fulfill the Scriptures, but also we get some idea of its ...

- **SCOPE**

John says, *“Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him.”*

This is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords saying He is coming back, not through the clouds or in the clouds, but **with** the clouds — He is bringing the Shinekah glory with Him and every eye ever made will see Him, even the ones who pierced Him with the nails, pierced Him with the thorns, and pierced Him with the sword in His side, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him.

There will be people at the last day who will worship Jesus from every tribe, tongue, nation, and people. Jesus is Lord over the nations. At the same time, there will be people from every tribe, tongue, nation, and people who have willfully rejected the Lordship of Jesus Christ and saw no need for His atoning blood to reconcile them to the God of this universe. They have disregarded God’s holiness, despised God’s wisdom in sending His Son to pay for their sins against Him, and they have assumed there’s no offense and therefore no need for such a radical means of reconciliation (the death of His only Son).

So when Christ splits the clouds and they see Him and they’re awakened to His glory, His blazing holiness, His absolute and perfect justice, His deserved wrath, they will know that it’s too late to change their ways — they have been eternally mistaken and lived for the wrong glory.

And the text says that they *“will wail on account of Him.”*

John’s language here, in part, echoes the prophecy of **Daniel 7:13-14**, *“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.”* ¹⁴ *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, and His kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”*

But John also has in mind the great prophecy of **Zechariah 12:10**, *“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one*

mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a firstborn.”

These two themes, the glory of the kingdom, and mourning and weeping, come together in only one person, Jesus Christ.

A couple of points are worth mentioning. For one thing, our Lord’s second coming cannot be limited to God’s judgment upon Israel in 70 A.D. as the preterists contend. The language John uses here is universal, not local ... *“every eye will see Him.”* Indeed, in their prophecies both Daniel and Zechariah see our Lord’s second coming in connection to Christ’s everlasting kingdom, a kingdom which will never be destroyed. This certainly implies the final judgment, the resurrection from the dead, and the re-creation of the heavens and the earth, not merely the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Roman army.

The point is that the crucified one of Zechariah’s prophecy is also the one that causes the nations to mourn. Furthermore, He’s the *“Son of Man”* of Daniel’s prophecy, who approaches the Ancient of Days and who will bring terror to His enemies when He comes in all His glory. This can only be a reference to the final judgment, not just to the fate of Jerusalem when it’s destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.

During the incarnation, Christ’s glory was veiled. Only Peter, James, and John caught a glimpse of it at the Transfiguration. But at His second coming *“every eye will see Him”* ... His glory will be obvious to the entire human race.

God has promised ... and so it will be, amen. And thus we can see ...

v. 8: THE GREATNESS OF SECOND COMING

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

There is no stronger statement of the deity of Jesus Christ found anywhere in the New Testament. This is the first of seven such declarations about Jesus Christ found in the Book of Revelation. Jesus says, *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,”* that’s the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Notice Jesus doesn’t say I’m the beta. Again in verse 17 he says, *“I am the first and the last.”* Jesus is the one *“who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty.”* Yesterday, today, and forever Jesus is the same. He precedes you and of course He’s eternal — He says, verse 18, *“Behold, I am alive forevermore.”*

This is how John the Baptist could say about Jesus in **John 1:15**, *“John bore witness about Him, and cried out, ‘This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because He was before me.’ ”*

Jesus is dogmatically claiming that He is uncreated — that He always was and will be. He claims like His Father to have life in Himself.

John 1:1-4, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”*

And **Colossians 1:16-20** says, *“For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And 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. ¹⁹ For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.”*

Jesus is the alpha and the omega — **He** is eternal reality.

You're not the judge of the universe — **He** is.

You're not the king of the universe — **He** is.

Whatever you think about the origins of the universe — why I am here, how to get to God, how to save yourself, and what is right and wrong — is masquerading in our own intelligent pride **when God has already revealed** His ways and His Son to us in His book. Why would we think that we are the alpha and the omega and that we have the last word?

Yet, since the enlightenment — western thinking has been **dominated** by the thought that man is the measure of all things. God has been replaced and man has taken His throne. We'll determine for ourselves our alpha and omega.

Let me ask you this morning — what defines you?

What is your alpha and omega?

What are you living your life for?

What is driving you?

Who made you?

As Tim Keller says, we need to have the guts to admit that **if** our alpha is meaningless, **then** our omega will be meaningless too, and then we need to be honest with ourselves and admit that our life is meaningless. You won't discover true eternal value and meaning to your life until you put **the real** alpha and omega as the North Star in your life. From **Him** I get all of my bearings and direction. **He** is my compass. **He** is my all in all. I am going to live for something that will outlast **me**. I am going to live for **Him**.

I mean, how can you say your life is meaningful and your life is significant if you are an “oops” child in this universe — a cosmic accident with no planned creator, and your alpha is a monkey that I've seen at the national zoo reach out and eat his own poo. How can **that** be satisfying to you? Is it not a way to explain God so that you can do whatever you want when it comes to morals and living however you want?

Imagine somebody saying to you, ***“I am the first and the last, and the living one, I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys to death and Hades.”*** You would say, “What have you been smoking?”

If someone said that to you, it would never occur to you to say what the modern scholars say about Jesus, “What a great man and what a great moral teacher and I want to imitate his virtues, just like I want to imitate Gandhi and the Dali Lama and Mohammed, and Confucius.” But you see **Jesus is not in the same category** as those men. **They're all dead**. Jesus is alive forevermore and He holds the keys for all of these men. **Mohammed** has to answer to Jesus, **Confucius** answers to Jesus, **Joseph Smith** answers to Jesus, **Gandhi** answers to Jesus, **everyone** answers to Jesus.

He who holds the keys has all the power. I learned that from a profound theological movie called ***Night at the Museum***. In the movie, there's a monkey named Dexter who keeps stealing the keys and has the ability to let people out of the Museum while Ben Stiller tries hard to get his keys back so he can regain control of who comes in and who gets out.

Jesus has no rivals. He holds the keys. All come through Him. He controls your eternal destiny. ***“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”***

To our English speaking ears, this may sound strange. But to the recipients of John's letter, this would have made perfect sense. Another way to say this is, “I am A to Z. I am everything from aardvarks to zebras. I am everything from Albania to Zimbabwe. God is not

merely talking letters, He is talking reality.

Listen to the prophet Isaiah,

Isaiah 44:6, “*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.”*”

And again in **Isaiah 41:4**, “*Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am He.”*”

CONCLUSION: *The Lion was back!*³

One of the most stirring pages in English history tells of the conquests and crusades of King Richard I. While Richard was away trouncing Saladin, his kingdom fell on hard times. His sly and graceless brother, John, usurped all the prerogatives of the king and mismanaged the realm. The people of England suffered, longing for the return of the king, and praying that it might be soon. Then one day Richard came home. He landed in England and marched straight for his throne. Around that glittering coming, many tales are told, woven into the legends of England. (One of them is the story of Robin Hood.) John’s castles tumbled like bowling pins. Richard the Lionhearted laid claim to his throne, and none dared stand in his path. The people shouted their delight. They rang all the church bells. The Lion was back! Long live the king!

One day a King greater than Richard will lay claim to a realm greater than England. Those who have abused the earth in His absence, seized His domains, and mismanaged His world will all be swept aside.

Only those “*who have loved His appearing,*” who love Him and acknowledge Him as the rightful king, will enjoy the blessings of His kingdom.

The night before His cruel crucifixion, Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, initiated a new covenant by the breaking of His body and the shedding of His blood.

At the table, we remember the battered body and His splattered blood. But we also affirm a very powerful truth. **Jesus is coming back!** This is the whole theme of the Book of Revelation. Let’s celebrate the bread and the cup with the wonderful knowledge that we serve a victorious, returning King.

Think about that. You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I’ll close.

Heavenly Father, thank You for this revelation. Thank you that it does unveil to us our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray, Lord, that you will help us to understand these things and more than that, to take seriously what is written, to keep these revelations and let them adjust our lives to what they reveal. Lord, as we come to Your table, remind us that this table is about Your Son, the King of Heaven, and His triumphant return. May Your Holy Spirit have His way with us right now and lead us to repentance for all those times we don’t follow the true King. We ask that You would do this ... in the Name of the King, Jesus, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

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3 The conclusion is adapted from *Exploring Revelation* by Rev. John Phillips, pages 22-23.

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Revelation 22:13, 17, 20

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. ...¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. ...²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”