

PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING

Revelation 1:1-8

Dr. Doyle Sager, First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri

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Those of us who follow Jesus Christ never get tired of talking about him. There's always something new to experience in him. John wrote this book of the Bible called "The Revelation to John" to unveil to us Jesus in so many different dimensions. In this passage, as prophet, priest and king.

PROPHET. In this book of the Bible, Christ speaks directly to the Church (originally to seven churches, an area postal route in modern-day Turkey) but also to the world. And to show you what an amazing biblical preacher John was, there are 404 verses in the Book of Revelation and 518 references to the First Testament! [*Reverse Thunder*, by Eugene Peterson, p. 23]. These words are prophecy, but that doesn't mean prediction. It means telling forth, not foretelling. We often read Revelation for all the wrong reasons, and as someone said, it's not for the curious, but for the committed [*The Broadman Commentary*, vol. 12, p. 259]. Read v. 3 carefully. We don't need more information; we need to obey what we already know! **Jesus Christ is prophet, and we need to listen.**

PRIEST. Note v. 5 carefully. "...who loves us..." (present tense, ongoing): He always loves us, is loving us, keeps on loving us; and "...he freed us..." (some manuscripts read "washed us"—past tense, once for all, done). What a priest! In Latin, the word priest means a bridge. Jesus makes the path for God to come to us and us to God. When fear, shame, guilt or self-hatred erode the path, making a ditch, Jesus keeps rebuilding the bridge. A man was once asked to give his testimony. "Well, when fear, doubt and guilt come knocking, I say, 'Jesus, would you get the door for me please?'" **Jesus Christ is priest and we need to trust him.**

KING: Jesus Christ is King and we need to worship him. These eight verses shock us in two directions. First, the worshipping Jew was shocked because every First Testament description of God is now used for Jesus Christ. Second, the Roman culture was shocked because in v. 5, Jesus Christ is described as the ruler of the kings of the earth, quite a slap in the face to Caesar or any world leader.

He is Risen Lord (v. 5, the firstborn from the dead) and King of kings, Lord of lords. We'll be singing that and hearing that during Advent. Let me suggest a second angle on the Second Coming. German Pastor Helmut Thielicke told some of what it was like trying to pastor in the midst of WWII Germany, the bombing, the destruction of all that was good through the lies and evil of Hitler's Nazi vision. He reported that they learned the art of "letting go," of constantly expecting the end of life. Looking at things they valued, lovingly gazing at life's simple blessings. He said the awareness of the end of life filled life with an intensity and beauty. Every moment was beautiful and charged with what he called a "luminosity" [*The Autobiography of Helmut*

Thielicke—Notes from a Wayfarer, p.162]. Not a bad meditation for Thanksgiving weekend, right? Jesus is coming soon! Each moment is precious. Seize it.

Christ the King, the Alpha and Omega (v. 8), depicted in many ways in Christian art. The first and last letter of the Greek alphabet, A to Z. The Jewish rabbis used to say, “Adam transgressed the Law, A to Z; Abraham kept the Law, A to Z.” Now John declares, “Jesus IS the A to Z.” He is the Almighty, the Sovereign King, meaning he is free to be king any way he chooses and he chooses to be loving, forgiving and merciful.

John the Apostle wrote this while exiled on the Isle of Patmos (If you want to really mess with a preacher, just put him or her on an island, all alone, with no one to talk with or preach to!). Think about it. He couldn’t do what he used to do, go where he used to go. But one thing sustained him. This vision of the Risen Christ. Perhaps this morning, you’re living with new limitations, a new reality. Life has changed. You’ve been mistreated, disappointed? There are obstacles or you’re going through a difficult season? Do what John did. Look to the Risen Christ, as John sees him and describes him for us as prophet, priest and king.