

Revelation 1:4-6 – Unchangeable God

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[0 : 00] So, if you have a Bible, turn with me, Book of Revelation.

And we are starting to make our way through this book, slowly but surely. We've just started and we have seen that John is now writing.

And what we're going to see this morning is that he is going to give us in verse 4 and 5 this common greeting that we often find at the beginning of a letter. And then probably written last.

We think that introductions or greetings were always written after the body of the letter. So, this would have been the last thing to have been written. And oftentimes, as with Paul, the writers will give a summary or synopsis of the whole book within that greeting.

And that this is no different really with John. And then at the end, again, that is quite often we get a doxology verses 5 and 6.

[1 : 15] So, we're going to walk our way through this text and just see what the Lord has for us. And so, he begins there in verse 4 by saying, John, to the seven churches that are in Asia.

Now, remember verses 1 to 3 weren't written by John. They were written by someone else. We're not too sure who. They were written by maybe a scribe. But here in verse 4, John now starts the letter proper and he identifies himself as John.

And this book is written by John the Apostle. And John the Apostle was an interesting guy because, like, you know, sometimes in church circles, we focus on Peter and how far Peter had come.

You know, and how God had changed Peter's heart. And, you know, Peter had this major kind of public falling out with Jesus, didn't he? Do you remember? And we make a lot about how Peter kind of found his way back and Jesus met him on the beach and kind of restored fellowship with him and all of that.

But we often don't think in the same terms with John. But we should. Because John was a handful when he was young.

[2 : 24] So, like, he was probably in his 20s, right? When he was called by Jesus. He was a fisherman. Jesus found him mending nets.

And that then became his life work. To not mend nets, but to mend people. As Jesus was mending him, he was then mending others.

And it was the Lord's lifetime work on him, mending him. And I think that that is something that we should consider as we launch into this book.

That, yes, this is John the Apostle. He was a capital A Apostle, if you like. He was one of the 12. And yet God still had to work on him. Like he works on us each and every day, right?

And he still stepped up to the plate and he still kind of said, Lord, I want to serve you wherever. And that brought its own hardships. But this man was far from the man that we read about in first century history.

- [3 : 25] In terms of where he started. And it should be an encouragement to us that the Lord continues to work on his people. You know, John and his brother at one point.
- And I'll just kind of paint a picture of how this guy was a bit of a handful. John had a brother called James. And at one point they asked Jesus, get this, if they should cool down fire from heaven and consume those people who were going to reject Jesus.
- That's hardly capital A Apostle stuff, is it? Right? That's hardly, you know, the Apostle of Love that we know from 1 John, 2 John, 3 John. But God had to work on him.
- And actually Jesus, humorously in Mark chapter 3, gave them the nicknames Boanges, which means sons of thunder. Like you get this picture that these two lads in their early 20s just were just ferocious.
- Lord, they're going to reject you? Let's nuke them. Should we do that? They weren't the epitome of what you might look at and go, well, these were apostles.
- [4 : 40] In Mark chapter 9, John is recorded as saying to Jesus, teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name. And we tried to stop him because he was not following us.
- Jesus replied in effect, relax, don't worry about what they're doing, worry about what you're doing. He had to learn some lessons on the way. At times, John had the completely wrong idea about Jesus.
- In Mark chapter 10, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask. Now, I know that none of us have ever prayed that prayer.
- John and James did. Lord, whatever we ask you to do, would you do it? And he said to them, what do you want me to do for you? And they said to him, grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left in your glory.
- Quite a presumption. And John had to repent of naked ambition. Jesus said to him, verse 38, you don't know what you're asking.
- [5 : 49] Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or be baptized or the baptism with I'm baptized? And they said to him, yeah, sure. We can do that. Like they had completely the wrong concept of Jesus.
- And so he said to him, the cup that I drink, you will drink and the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized. But to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant.
- But it is for those, it is for those for whom it has been prepared. And when he, when he, and when the 10 heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.
- So like, here's a guy whose words got him in trouble. Right? He was like, we, we and my brother, we deserve to be right, the left, the left and the right, the 10.
- No, no, no, no. The one and the two. Yes. And so the other 10 were like, well, what about us? And Jesus called them to himself. You know, that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles, Lord over them and their great ones exercise authority over them.
- [6 : 51] But it shall not be amongst you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant. And whoever would be first among you must be slave at all. And, you know, we get the idea that as we read about John later on, John got that.
- He eventually understood that. For even the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. And John walked in those footsteps. But as he started, as he started to grow in the things of the Lord, you know, what you see is that Jesus was, was really keen for him to be around.
- I don't know why. I mean, it's just God's grace, isn't it? Like, here's a guy just getting in trouble time and time again. And Jesus would, how often you would read about Jesus would say, and he called them close.

That's what you do with a kid. You're one of your kids who, you know, is a little bit disruptive. You call him. You're going to, I'm not going to let you out of my sight just in case. And that's what I think Jesus did with John.

And so John became part of the 70 that Jesus sent out and given them authority to raise the dead, heal the sick, preach the good news. He was part of that 70.

[7 : 54] He was part of the 12 Jesus prayed all night long for before appointing them. I don't know. But if it'd be me, Jesus would be praying, Lord, is this a God? Is this a good idea? Like you heard what he said.

So he prayed all night to make sure that that was right. And on a few occasions, you know, John was even given access to things that I guess just made a much just made must have made his heart kind of explode.

You know, he was one of the four with and with Andrew, James and Peter who sought Jesus out and asked Jesus about the end times. And from that, Jesus gave the Olivet discourse, which John doesn't record in any in his gospel at all.

But he was there listening. He was part of the inner inner circle of three taken into the house of Jairus. Do you remember that story? Jesus says, no one else come in but you three.

Now, I don't know whether it was like I need to keep you three next to me just in case you get in trouble or whether he was saying I'm going to be gracious to you three. Watch. But it was part of that three that witnessed Jesus raising the daughter of Lazarus from the dead.

[9 : 02] The same three who went up the Mount of Transfiguration, talked with Moses and Elijah. The same three who were taken to Jesus close at the night of his betrayal. So close that they heard Jesus weeping for Jerusalem.

John was only a handful of disciples at the crucifixion there with his mother Salome and the mother of Jesus. When when Mary was actually placed into his care, he had gone from a guy who had a big mouth and a big ego to a guy who could be entrusted with the mother of Jesus.

Like, how does that happen? Well, I think it happens by being around Jesus. John was probably with Mary when she died around 35 AD, 41 AD, depending on who you read.

John was, of course, part of the 120 in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. When they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Later, John would write about himself in John 13, saying that he was the one that Jesus loved.

And he was the one that sat next to Jesus at the Last Supper. He was part of the 500 who witnessed Jesus resurrected from the dead that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

[10 : 18] John was there in the temple when his brother was arrested and then martyred by Herod in 44 AD. John is described as Paul as a pillar of the church in Galatians chapter 2.

And then, you know, the story at 90 years old, Emperor Domitian orders John to be boiled in oil before the Porta Latina in Rome.

Then exiled to the Isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, just off the coast of Greece. And there he receives this, what we're reading. And then we think that in around 90 AD, Emperor Chagin comes to the Roman throne and releases John.

And we know from church historians such as Eusebius of Caesarea that John went to live in Ephesus. And from Ephesus, John would write this book that we're now looking at.

And then, Ireneus, who was the bishop of Smyrna before planting churches in France, wrote extensively about John, getting his information from guys like Papias and Polycarp, who worked with John and lived with John.

[11 : 23] And he writes how on his return to Ephesus that he was bedridden and how the people would carry him through the city and all along the way, people would leave their houses and stand in ovation to John, the last living apostle.

And so now, no longer an immature follower of Jesus with a big mouth and a big ego. The Lord had been working on this man. And by the time we get down to write this book, the sons of thunder now just go by the singular name, Bronto, Phono, Thunder Voice.

And 10 times in this book, John will record the sound of thunder. And I wonder if he stopped to think as he's writing how much God had worked on him over those years.

And God is working on us. Slowly but surely. Sometimes we don't see the development, do we? We don't see the outcome of that sometimes for many years. But one thing that we can be assured of is that the Holy Spirit is working on us.

And sometimes that's not an easy process, is it? Sometimes that involves, well, a good dose of humility to be swallowed. Sometimes we get in trouble and God has to ask us to repent.

[12 : 50] But the Lord always, what did he do? How does he do that? He says, would you come close? Would you come close? Be with me. Learn from me. Take my yoke upon yourself. And so this is what, this is who John is.

And he is writing to us. And so he introduces himself as John. And he says that he's writing to the seven churches who are in Asia. And of course, that's Asia Minor.

That's not India, China. It's Turkey. And we don't really know why these seven churches are being written to as opposed to the other eight churches in Asia Minor.

So Galatians was in Asia Minor. Colossae was in Asia Minor. We know that there were churches in Heriopolis and in other places in Asia Minor. So why these seven churches, we're not sure.

But it could be that just John had a special relationship with those churches. And that's why he's writing. But if you look on this map, if you can see, you'll see that the churches kind of form a circle.

[13 : 59] And we think, you know, obviously the symbolism of the number seven is that that represents completion probably should be significant. And it will be significant in John's writing.

These churches there represent something for all of the churches. There's something in those churches that we can we can all agree as Christians, as part of the church.

We can say, yeah, that's true. That's true for me. And so he would write to these seven churches in chapter two and three individually.

And at the end of each letter, he would say, he who has an ear to hear, let him hear present tense. Let him hear now what the spirit is saying to the churches, plural.

And so while this book is written to seven churches, it's also written to us. God has something to say to us. And so here's how he opens his letter.

[15 : 00] And you will see that it's a familiar greeting, grace to you and peace. It's a greeting used by Peter and Paul. And what is amazing is that he's writing grace to you and peace.

Because these churches that he's writing to would have started to experience persecution. And John, being a good pastor, as he is, what he's doing is he's preparing his people for what is coming.

And he's comforting them for what has already taken place. So we know that Emperor Nero's persecution started in around 64 AD.

Where he blamed Christians with arson, right? So the big story with the Great Fire of Rome, the Christians were publicly blamed for that.

And then publicly executed for that, many Christians. And then after Nero came Emperor Nerva, who we don't hear much about, mainly because he was a good emperor.

[16 : 09] Right? So in history, we don't really get to hear about the good guys, just the bad guys. And he reigned for two years and was generally quite favorable of Christians. Then Emperor Diminshon, who is certainly on the throne as John is receiving the vision, who began the widespread persecution of Christians for being Christians.

So Nero persecuted Christians and he blamed it on other reasons, for arson. Right? But Diminshon started the widespread persecution of Christians for being Christians.

He insisted that Christians were okay so long as they sacrificed to Roman gods. Right? So he said, you're okay. Don't mind you're a Christian, but you've got to sacrifice to Roman gods.

And so the persecution came to Christians, not because they were Christian necessarily, but because they didn't sacrifice to Roman gods. Does that make sense? Yes. So they were then, you know, if they didn't sacrifice to Roman gods, then the main way actually they were persecuted was that they were beheaded.

But in their terms, they weren't beheaded for being Christian. They were being beheaded for being anti-Roman. And then after Diminshon became Trajan, who is the guy that actually is part of the releasing of John from Patmos.

[17 : 38] But he was the first guy to make Christianity illegal. Not for any other reason, but just simply for being Christian. And many of the people in the churches that John is writing to would know people close to them that would have been martyred.

Some would have been taken to Rome to the Circus Maximus, who, if you've been to Rome, it's a fairly underwhelming, right next to the Colosseum, but the strip of land where they believe that most of the games actually took place in the Colosseum.

A lot of the idea that Christians were fed to the Lions in the Colosseum probably actually isn't true. It's the Circus Maximus where most of that took place. Anyway, that's by and by.

It's there that they were fed to the Lions. And during the next 200 years, the churches went from meeting in schools and synagogues to meeting in houses and caves.

And John is able to say to those people, grace to you and peace. And that's extraordinary.

[18 : 48] But I think the reason that he can say that is because the death of Jesus, we can experience the forgiveness of sins as a gift to us. That's grace. And thereby know that we have peace with God.

And it's always in that order. It's always in the order of grace and then peace, because you can't have peace without the grace of God.

And so to experience the peace of God, you have to experience the grace of God. And so he says, grace to you and peace.

From. And he's going to give us three characters, if you like, where this grace and peace comes from. From him who is and was and is to come.

Now, that's a super interesting phrase because it refers us back to Genesis Exodus chapter three. The source of grace and the source of peace comes from Exodus three, where Moses says to God, if I go to the people of Israel and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me.

[19 : 52] Who? What name do I give them? Basically, what is his name? What should I say to them? And God says, I am who I am, which is that that great that the Greek translation as him who is and is who was and is to come.

So you might want to put in there grace and peace from the I am. And so what John is stressing in the midst of this turbulent period of time for these Christians, for the churches, for John himself, what is stressing?

And this is something that we need to stress also is the changelessness of God. That in all of the changing world and the changing things and the changing circumstances, there is one who doesn't change.

We need that, don't we? Like, I can't keep up with the news, with changing things. Like, some of you guys tell me stories about what you're doing.

And then the following week, I'm like, well, how are you doing? And you tell me the same stories. That's not because I haven't listened. I just can't keep up. Like, you know, my gals would tell me, you know, so I have four daughters. Now tell me something.

[20 : 59] And then, like, you know, I'll ask them again about something. And it's changed already. And I'm like, I can't. And it's only five minutes has gone past. And they're like, they're like, Dad, you're not listening.

I was listening, but it's changed four times in three minutes. And even, you know, with the concern, the worry, the anxiety about what's happening tomorrow, what's happening next week, where are we going to find ourselves in a year's time, in 10 years' time?

John doesn't say, well, you know, you just need to make sure that you've got your savings account in order. And, you know, I know that the energy prices are rising, but make sure you've got investments in sustainables.

And he doesn't say any of that. He just says, you know, the world is changing. But I know one who doesn't change. And it reminded you on Lamentations, where the writer talks about, you know, there are some things that change, and there are some things that just don't change.

And he talks about how there is the changing of the day, where every day we go from morning into evening into night. And he says that every day it changes.

[22 : 12] But as sure as the sun rises in the morning, even more sure than that, God doesn't change. God's love is steadfast.

And so John is a good pastor, as he does. He says, I get that things are changing. I get that we live in a world that it's hard to keep up. Fix your eyes on the one who doesn't change.

I am. This is from him who is and who was and who is to come. Everything is covered in that statement. James says in James chapter 1, Every generous act and every perfect gift is from above.

And it comes down from the Father of lights with him. And this is beautiful in this version. But with him, there is no variation or shadow cast by turning.

You only get a shadow if you are less than the light that's shining on you. But Jesus is the light of the world.

[23 : 18] And so there is no falling shadow with him. God is generous and his gifts are perfect in the good times and the bad times.

When the light is shining and when the light is not shining. Because God doesn't change. But the grace and peace that John speaks about, listen, isn't only from God the Father.

It's also from the strangest phrase that we're ever going to read. From the seven spirits who are before his throne. That's where grace and peace comes from. Now, what does that mean?

Well, let me just say, and you'll hear me frequently say this phrase through the book of Revelation. No one really knows. I'm happy to live in that tension.

Like I can tell you what I think it means. I'm going to tell you what I think it means. But there's a whole bunch of stuff that... We just don't know.

- [24 : 23] We don't really know. We have a good idea about what it means. Like, you know, some people will say... I'm just thinking off the top of my head. Isaiah 11. The seven spirits.
- And, you know, they try to squeeze the Isaiah 11, I think it is, into the seven spirits. But there's only actually six in Isaiah 11. And, you know, and they're just...
- We think we know, but we don't really know. So, what is the seven spirits? Well, let me just tell you quickly that it most likely is referring to the activity of God through the Holy Spirit.
- So, rather than thinking about who this is, think about the ministry of God in the world.
- So, there are three occasions when this term is used in Revelation. And that's... These may help us, they may not.
- [25 : 28] Revelation 3. To the angel of the church of Sardis write the words of him who has the seven spirits of God and seven stars. So, that only helps us by showing us that Jesus has possession of the seven spirits of God.
- Right? Do you get that? Revelation 4.5 Got that?
- So, that doesn't help us at all. You're welcome. Revelation 5.6 Between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw the Lamb standing as though he had been slain with seven horns and the seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.
- This one helps us more. So, here we learn that the seven spirits of God are sent out from God into all the earth. That's what that text says.
- And so, going wider to the rest of the Bible, is there anywhere else that might help us? Well, the most satisfactory explanation for the title, the seven spirits, come from Zechariah chapter 4.
- [26 : 55] And we see there in verse 2. And I won't read it all to you because there's ten verses, but I would encourage you to read it, bookmark it.
- You can get all of these online if you want to know how to do that. Just let me know and I'll show you how to do that. But in verse 2, what we see are seven lamps.
- And in verse 10, we're told that those seven are the eyes of the Lord that range throughout the whole earth, just like we read about previously in chapter 5.
- So, the key verse is actually verse 6, where the Lord says that it's not by might nor by power, but by my spirit. So, what John is doing is acknowledging a vision.
- By identifying the eyes in Zechariah as the vision and ministry of God. And the way that the vision and ministry of God is carried out, is carried out by the Holy Spirit.
- [28 : 07] So, although I don't have a real conclusion for you to say, here's the seven spirits, here's who they are. I lean towards these being a picture of the complete activity of God through the Holy Spirit.
- Does that make sense? So, but, you know, you can read 10 commentaries come out with 20 different answers. So, what we do know is that grace and peace emanate from God the Father, the seven spirits, whoever or what they are, and they are before the throne.
- And, verse 5, from Jesus Christ. So, that's easy. We know who Jesus Christ is. And then Jesus Christ is characterized by three descriptive titles that all come from the same psalm.
- And, for those of you who like to dig deep, deep, deep, just make some notes real quick. We don't have time to go into this, but they all come from Psalm 89.
- Now, you might go, well, that's interesting. Woohoo, great. Psalm 89 is a commentary on 1 Samuel chapter 7. Now, you might go, well, great. What does that mean? Well, it means that 2 Samuel chapter 7 is where we find the Davidic kingdom or the Davidic covenant.

[29 : 31] The covenant that God made with David, that he would establish his throne that would last forever and ever. So, here's the point of that, is that the backdrop is that Israel, in that psalm, had suffered quite a few kind of setbacks, military setbacks and some religious setbacks that were really starting to threaten its existence as a nation.

And this caused some people to think that God had given up, like God had forsaken his promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 to preserve his throne forever.

People were getting worried about the tomorrow and the next month and the year after. And so, John uses the first title, the faithful witness, and he ascribes it to the reign of Jesus.

Like, you know, we've been talking about, you know, what God does with us and the remedy for anxiety and worry and concern as being how we have to fix our eyes on the changelessness of God.

But within the same sentence, John is saying, look, John, Jesus has not given up. Jesus has not stopped the, the, his promise.

[30 : 53] There is still a promise that is going to be fulfilled. And, and the psalmist uses it, this title, the faithful witness, in that way.

Speaking of the throne of David. Here's what the psalmist says in verse 36, Psalm 89. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne, as long as the sun before me.

The point is that rather than the sun being the witness to, to God, like, here's, here's how, here's how people think about, you know, the sun.

We probably don't think about it too much, um, uh, these days, but we do in kind of like sometimes our conversation or sometimes in our prayer. We, we, we thank the Lord for this new day. And how do we notice a new day?

Well, the sun has risen. The sun is the testimony to God's graciousness and mercy each and every day. Why? Because the sun has gone up. Right? And so this is what the psalmist is saying, that his throne, that God is going to establish his throne forever and ever.

[31 : 52] His throne, as long as the sun is before me. And so the point is that rather than the sun being the witness, Jesus himself is the witness to the covenant that God made with Israel.

Verse 37, the very next verse in Psalm 89. It shall be established forever like the moon, even like, and here's our phrase, the faithful witness in the sky.

And so in the context of reading that psalm, we would say that the faithful witness is the sun and the moon. Faithfully, every, every morning, every, every evening, the morning, the sun comes up.

Every evening, the moon comes out. And we're like, that is a witness to God's grace. He is preserving grace to us. But John says, no, no, no, no, no.

The faithful witness isn't the moon and the stars. Let's not place our hope and trust in those things. Let's place our hope and trust in Jesus. He's the faithful witness. He is the one to witness the covenant with God made with Israel.

[32 : 56] Much, much more definite than the sun and the moon, right? The second descriptive title of that is that Jesus is the firstborn from the dead.

Firstborn from the dead. Now, I love Jehovah's Witnesses coming to my door. They don't do it so much. They don't come around so much.

Maybe I should scare them away. I remember having to chase down the road once. They, they, they were coming down the road and I saw them coming down the road and I was ready. And they looked at my, they looked into my house and carried on walking.

And I'm like, how dare you? And so I chased them down the road. And I should say, I invited them back. It's probably a better way to put that. But they don't come around as much as they used to.

But when they used to come around, it was fun. Because what happens is this. If you, if you push them a little on who Jesus is, they'll show you this verse in Revelation 1 and others.

[33 : 57] Colossians 1, 15. And they'll try to tell you that Jesus was the first one that was born.

Got that? Like the first one that God created. And then they'll spin you up because Colossians 1, 15. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Hebrews chapter 1, verse 6. And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, let all God's angels worship him. And if they're good, and by that I mean bad, but if they're good Jehovah's Witness, and you know if you've got one of the leaders, because then they'll take you to Psalm 89.

And they'll show you verse 27. Verse 27 says, I will make him the firstborn. So this is all out of Psalm 89. This is all out of this, this messianic Psalm about the Davidic covenant that, that God is going to, going to establish.

And it's easy to come away from those conversations, thinking that, well, maybe Jesus was created after all. Maybe he was just a dude. Maybe he's just a man. Well, listen, there is nowhere in the Bible that talks of Jesus being created.

[35 : 14] I mean, quite the opposite. In every instance, we get this, this Greek word, prototokos, which is the firstborn.

And it's, it's, it's, it's the idea that the, the first risen one, not the first one to be created. The first risen one. Quite literally, he is the firstborn from among the dead ones.

Jesus is the first risen. Listen, Lazarus, he died and he was, he, he, he rose again from the dead, but he died again, right? Jairus' daughter, risen from the dead.

She died again. Jesus, risen from the dead, ascended. Still living today. Amen. Amen. So, so, so. Again, according to Psalm 89, this promised one, who is the faithful witness, will sit on David's throne as the firstborn from among the dead ones.

Crazy to think that the resurrection is prophesied in Psalms. But there it is. So, so John says that this is the faithful witness.

[36 : 28] The first one. And if you like, it's the first one of a new kind, the first fruits. Jesus. Who was risen from the grave and is still alive. Right?

And then the third descriptive title that Jesus is given is he is the ruler of the kings of the earth. I guess it's not enough that we have a witness and we have someone who's risen.

If they have no power to change stuff. And so John adds this title. He is the ruler of the kings of the earth. And if we had time, we would see these, these titles, these threads.

You know, I made mention that John probably wrote this introduction at the end after he had written Revelation. Revelation and you can see these, these three threads all the way through Revelation.

And all John is doing is taking those three threads and summarizing those threads for us in these verses. Right? So he says that he is the ruler of the kings of the earth. Again, Psalm 89, where the psalmist notes God's promise to make David's offspring the highest of the kings of the earth.

[37 : 31] Verse 27. So by drawing on images from Psalm 89 each time, John makes it pretty clear for us that all three of these titles are referring to Jesus' future reign over the earth.

He is directing our attention right from the beginning to the end. Like, God hasn't changed his plan just because there are some problems in the world.

Right? His plan is on course. He's not going to be derailed from that. Like, and as the Christians are reading this, and some of their friends are being martyred.

Some of their friends are being taken to Rome to being fed to half-starved animals. Families are being split up. They're now starting to meet in caves underground.

Reading this. Aren't you encouraged to know that one day Jesus is going to stand on the earth and he's going to rule and reign?

[38 : 35] God's promises haven't changed just because our circumstances have changed. He's unchanging. His plan is unchanging. Where God's righteous reign and fulfillment of his promises made to David regarding an eternal kingdom will come true.

Don't give up on God just because there are difficulties in this world. He's reminding us that no matter how powerful Domitian or Trajan are or any other ruler might be, they will one day all answer to Jesus.

and then at the end of verse 5 john finishes this greeting by giving us a doxology which is a hymn of praise um quite often uh you read about these doxologies being sung or um as part of the liturgy of the early church and so here he says um after he has kind of contemplated that verse and and all that god is and all that jesus is and all that god is doing in the world that god hasn't given up that god's plan is right on time he just breaks out in praise and he says to him who loves us and freed us like it's almost like he can't contain himself and so he summarizes what jesus has done for his people in three statements write these down these are important come back to these regularly to him who loves us this is the first thing jesus has done for his people notice that this statement is made in the present tense jesus loves his people jesus loved his people jesus will love his people but how important for us to be reminded that right now today sunday the fifth of june jesus is sunday the fifth of june right yeah great jesus loves us he loves you i mean we're pretty messed up just like john but jesus loves you he isn't finished with us his love for us led him to lay down his life for us and what jesus accomplished by laying down his life is identified now in the final words of verse five he has freed us from our sins by his blood it's the second thing that jesus has done for his people the blood of jesus frees us from our sins in the sense that his death cancels our obligation to pay the penalty for our sins to god in a redemptive kind of way we owe god nothing but we know him we owe him everything does that make sense he has freely given us all things we owe him nothing but we owe him our lives the bible says that the wages of sin is death and jesus died that death so his people could be brought back to god and find life you know the christian life is a life to be lived it should be a life of joy it should be a life of hope it should be a life of contentment it's a life to be lived we have been freed from sin and so then this idea of freedom is the ability then to live for god and in relationship with god which is what our next phrase focuses on verse six he has made us a kingdom which means that now we belong to king jesus our obligation is no longer to the prince of the power of the air the rule of this age satan but jesus has made us a kingdom we are his people and john says that as a result we are now priests to his god and father so what we do in response what do we do in response to what god has done for us two things we serve and worship god and we tell others about god that's what priests do i think sometimes we we make following jesus so complicated not that it's shallow but we make it we make it complicated when in actual fact it's pretty straightforward we we find our place and the gifts that he has given us and we set about using them for

his glory we worship him that's what priests do and then we tell others that we found a king and he's worthy of worship and we ask them to join us that's following jesus we see here the pattern of all worship that god reveals himself in the gospel that jesus loves us and has freed us from our our sins by his blood he has made us kings and priests we see that the pattern is god reveals himself in the gospel and his people respond with praise that is due to him and john responds with praise by saying to him be glory majesty is the word majesty we've heard a lot of that that word just this weekend haven't we majesty did anybody did anybody get that tv program about the crown jewels did anybody see that i like blingy things i i i can tell you uh it was fascinating they were shining they were blingy majesty but but john john john says that he is to him all majesty to him be glory all brilliance is the word and dominion power might strength forever and ever amen glory and dominion belong to jesus why number one he loves us number two he's freed us number three he's made us a kingdom and priests so the question for us is are we are we are you living like you belong to the kingdom of jesus today does your life attest that dominion belongs to jesus do you live like he is your lord is he lord over your money is he lord over your ambitions for your children is he lord over your conversations is he lord over your internet usage are you living like a priest worshiping god and helping others to know god let's pray together father we thank you for your word and what lord and encouragement it is to know that more sure than the sun rising in the morning setting at night and seeing the moon glowing in the evening is your love for us more sure than every day that goes past lord we can count on we can be sure of a love that is steadfast lord we thank you that you are unchanging lord that you never change lord thank you that even though we live in a world that is full of change and can cause us to be concerned and worry and think how things are going to pan out lord you that you never worry about those things lord your plan is right on course and we see that in a big picture lord but we also know that is true of our own hearts lord that we we would confess today that none of us are where exactly where we probably should be with you there's always something and yet lord we we're so thankful lord that you you say to us well and i i know that you're not there come close and let me work on you thank you for the testimony of john an immature believer with a big mouth and a big ego as a testimony to us lord that that you you you are you you don't you you're not finished

your work you're still working today lord would you encourage us today lord not only in the personal work of jesus through his holy spirit but also globally and your big picture how that pans out lord we have some idea but probably none of us really know lord but we look to you lord we want to trust you that that you know exactly what you're doing how you're going to do it when you're going to do it and our response is really just to come close to to worship you to tell others about you invite them to join us so lord would you keep our eyes fixed on you lord we we want to make we want to make our song about you lord it's hard to sing jesus only jesus lord it's aspirational more than it is actual right now lord but we know that one day the faithful witness the firstborn of the dead the ruler of the kings of the earth will reign righteously on the on the on the throne of david forever and ever lord so we look to you we want to praise you this morning for all that you've done in jesus name as

[49 : 41] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.