

Revelation 1: 4, 5; “Grace to you and peace”, Sermon # 2 in a series entitled - “The Faithful and True Witness”, Delivered on November 20th, 2005 in the Morning Worship Service, and again on October 3rd, 2010.

Truly we have a great and awesome God. I am always amazed by churches which do not have a least one full time pastor. There are people who seem to believe that there is no need for at least one person among them to study the Word of God so that the greatness of God and the greatness of His truth and grace can more clearly be apprehended by the rest of the people in the church. It should be the prayer and desire of all true Christians that grace and peace come to all of Christ’s true churches and that each church and every Christian in them come to apprehend the greatness of the God who gives us grace and all the high privileges that He confers upon us. You notice that I used the word apprehend in relation to the greatness of God. I did not use the word comprehend. For I think that there is much that we cannot comprehend in relation to God. There is mystery in His being and in His ways that we cannot fathom. Romans 11: 33 gives us an indication of this when Paul exclaims, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” I do not believe that the Bible teaches us that we can comprehend God. To comprehend is to understand, and in regard to God it is impossible for us to plumb the depths of His being or His grace. But I believe that with His help that He can be better apprehended by us. That is that we would pray for each other that we would begin to grasp, that we would begin to take in, that we would begin to conceive, if the Spirit work in our minds, the greatness of God through the study of passages like this one.

How can we better apprehend the greatness of the Triune God who gives to His people such grace and high privileges? Well, I believe that we can better apprehend the greatness of God and the blessings of grace that He brings to us by our thinking together of how our Almighty God is described in these verses. We will look at how He is described in these verses and we will have cause to worship Him all the more. This afternoon we will take up the first 2 descriptions and next week we will take up the 3rd plus the description of ourselves as believers.

1st- Let’s see that the Father is described as being eternally present.

John is writing to the seven churches which are in Asia, seven being the complete number or the number symbolizing perfection, as we shall see it referenced again at the end of verse 4. The number of churches being

written to, as being 7, would seem to indicate that John is writing to these 7 directly and immediately and to all other true Christian churches as well. He doesn't mean to limit it to them only. John's prayer and desire is for the believers in those churches to have grace and peace from God. Grace is not only God's unmerited favor to them based on the finished work of Jesus Christ, but something purposed and given to us by God the Father in covenant with God the Son in eternity past. (2nd Timothy 1: 9) And it is also God's actual working in us to enable those who believe in Jesus Christ, to live to His glory and to do His will by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. (Philippians 2: 13) John's prayer and desire is that anyone reading this book may see what grace will bring us. It brings us salvation from sin and a relationship with God that establishes peace between God and ourselves and then God through our prayers brings the kind of peace that sustains and calms our hearts and the hearts of others in all of our trials and difficulties when we are trying to live the truth and witnessing to our faith. (Philippians 4: 6, 7)

This is why John proceeds to give us a description of the Father. We need to remember the Father's role and purpose in relation to the giving of grace and peace. John says, "Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come." At first glance you may think that he is writing about the Lord Jesus, who is to come, to return again a second time. But this does not appear to be so. Because after this description, and the next, comes an "and." "And from Jesus Christ." So the description here, it seems to me, must be of the Father. When we stop to consider the description it fits the Father well. The Father is described in 2nd Corinthians 1: 3, 4 in this beautiful way. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." The Father is the Father of mercies. The Father is the God of all comfort. In 1 Peter 5: 10 it says, "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect establish, strengthen, and settle you." "To Him be the glory forever." The Father is the One who purposed grace to us in Christ, the Father is the One who called us to be His people and the Father's purpose is to perfect us through sufferings in our identification with Jesus Christ.

"He was," in eternity past before the world began, purposing the creation of all things through Jesus Christ. He has in past history, and He is presently, working all things after the council of His own will for His own glory and the salvation of His Elect. He was, is, and ever shall be the One

who, as the Shorter Catechism says, is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His Being; power, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. He is the Eternal, unchangeable "I am." This is what Moses heard when He was called by God to lead the children of Israel out of their bondage. Moses asks in Exodus 3: 13, "When I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" "And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'" "And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.'" He is "the God who was, and is, and is to come" because all His purpose and plans will be fulfilled in perfect faithfulness. He is ever present and always the same in His working to accomplish His eternal purpose. This John prays that the churches would apprehend.

2ndly- The Holy Spirit is described as the seven Spirits who are before His Throne.

"Grace to you and peace from Him who was and is and is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne." We need to understand that in the book of Revelation that there is no mention of the 3rd person of the Trinity as the Holy Spirit. It speaks of the Spirit, but not the Holy Spirit. Instead, the description of the Holy Spirit's work and ministry in regard to God's people, on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ, is pictured as "seven spirits who are before the throne." This is the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son who will be sent in Christ's name. We need to look into this phrase a little more. You find it used in Revelation 3: 1, 4: 5, and 5: 4. In Revelation 3: 1 it says, "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: 'I know your works, and that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.'" Revelation 4: 5 says, "And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." Revelation 5: 6 says, "And I looked, and behold in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth."

Now we need to understand that Jesus Christ "has the seven spirits" and they are always "burning before the throne." And they are "sent out into all the earth." The Lord Jesus Christ is risen, ascended, and ruling in the "midst of the throne." His accomplished work of redemption is being applied to His people and for the advancement of His kingdom upon the earth. In order to see that work prosper and advance He must have the power to accomplish it and the perfect discernment of the plans of His

enemies and the hearts of His people. He has both. The seven horns represent His perfect power which He will demonstrate through the weakness of His church being made strong to overcome sin, the world, and the schemes of the Devil by His grace. The seven horns and the seven eyes are the seven Spirits. The seven eyes represent His perfect discernment of the thoughts and intents of his people, the weakness or strength of His churches; and all this is continually monitored by Our glorious Lord through His sending out the seven spirits into all the earth. Let me open this up a little further to you.

Turn to Zechariah 3: 8-10. Here we have a vision given to Zechariah of Joshua the high priest of the people of Israel. Joshua is in trouble because Satan is at his right hand to accuse him of being sinner. And if he is a sinner how can he be a faithful high priest to minister on behalf of the people who are also sinful. Joshua is wearing filthy garments. His calling and intention has been to represent the people before God so that by the offering of gifts and sacrifices that this ministry would please God and atone for his own sins as well as for the people. But now Satan is standing at his right hand to oppose him. The Lord knows that Joshua cannot stand in his own works and righteousness, he and the people cannot have their iniquity removed without special help. That special help is spoken of here. "Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, you and your companions who sit before you, for they are a wondrous sign; for behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the Branch. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua: upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription, says the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." "In that day says the lord of hosts, everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree. The Branch here is Jesus Christ, God's righteous and holy servant. He is the stone that is laid before Joshua. He is the "stone which the builders rejected." Through Him the iniquity of the land, the iniquity of the Elect among the nation, would be removed at the cross in one day. On this stone are seven eyes. This is the Lord Jesus sending His Holy Spirit to be his eyes in the hearts of men. That is, the Lord Jesus sees perfectly not only what He would have to do to save men from sin, but He also sees perfectly what it will take to see the gospel go forward to save and cleanse and empower His people to live the Christian life; so that people would invite others also to come to Him for the cleansing from sin and receive power to become children of God.

Now look at Zechariah 4: 6-10. Here we find Zerubbabel the governor at the time of Israel's return from Babylon attempting to rebuild the temple. God knows that it is going to take more than good intentions and

determination to accomplish it. There was a mountain of opposition in his way. Verse 6 says, “So he answered and said to me: This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of hosts. Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of Grace, grace to it!” So here we see that it is going to take more than Zerubbabel’s efforts and the efforts of the men dedicated to rebuilding the temple in order to accomplish this great work. It will take the Spirit’s wisdom, grace and power. Then in verses 8-10 it continues, “ The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish it. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you. For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the Lord, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.” Once again here, we see that the seven spirits, the seven eyes, are the eyes of Jesus Christ looking out through the Holy Spirit’s ministry in discerning the hearts and efforts of God’s people in guiding them in building His church which is the temple of the Living God. The Spirit enlightens them, convicts them, empowers them, leads them, helps them and comforts them. He fills them with the fullness of the grace of Jesus Christ. These are the seven spirits of God before the Throne. Next week we will look at the description of Jesus Christ and see what He has made us to be to His God and Father.