

“Heaven’s Eternal King Is Our Savior”

(Revelation 1:4-8 – Christ the King – November 24, 2024)

Revelation 1:4-8 – ⁴*Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. ⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

Dear Redeemed in the name of Christ the eternal King:

When we try to think of God’s eternal nature, it is beyond our finite understanding. Our text describes the God “*who is and who was and who is to come*” (vs. 4, 8). He has always existed from eternal realms of the past. He will always exist into the eternal future. Yet, He is forever the same unchanging God.

How different life is for us, as we spend our years against the backdrop of eternity in this little time segment called human history. We are so used to thinking in terms of passing time and the ever-changing nature of life in this world. Psalm 90 puts the difference into perspective: “*The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years.*” But by contrast, it says of God: “*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.... For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night*” (vs. 10, 2, 4).

Yet, our text says that He who reigns in eternal realms has made us part of His eternal Kingdom; for He has come to us as our Savior. Let us contemplate the fact that “**Heaven's Eternal King is Our Savior**”: **1) Who was, 2) Who is, and 3) Who is to come.**

1) Who was

Our text describes the God who always was from eternity, existing in the three Persons of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

“*Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come*” (vs. 4). There is the eternal Father seated on His throne, proclaiming a message of grace and peace. For in the name of His Son, He graciously saves us sinners. He replaces all fear of condemnation with the peace of forgiveness, paid for by the blood of His Son.

“And from the seven Spirits who are before His throne” (vs. 4). There is the Holy Spirit, also described in Scripture as a sevenfold Spirit (Isaiah 11:2). He brings the truth of God’s salvation in Christ to us through the Holy Scriptures. In the following chapters, the Church is pictured as sevenfold, with letters to seven congregations, each ending with the refrain: *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”* (Revelation 2:7 ff.).

“And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth” (vs. 5). There is the Son, who lived, died, and rose again for our salvation; who rules at the right hand of His Father in heaven. The book of Revelation describes His almighty rule as *“KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”* (19:16; 17:14).

At front and center, the text draws our attention to this Son of God. In verse 8, He says: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, says the Lord, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty’”* These words reflect the description of the eternal Father in verse 4; yet they equally describe the eternal Son. In Revelation 22:13, Jesus applies the same words to Himself: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last”* (cf. 1:17). Hebrews 13:8 says: *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”* The Son has existed eternally with the Father and the Holy Spirit as one God. He always was; there was never a time when He was not.

John’s Gospel tells us that Jesus was present in the beginning at Creation as the eternal Word, who was with God and was God. He spoke and all things were made (John 1:1-4). Colossians 1:16-17 says: *“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”*

Jesus is the eternal King of heaven who always was, together with the Father and the Spirit. Yet it was prophesied that He would come into time and be born in the world as the Savior. As God promised, He would be David’s Son according to the flesh, but also God’s eternal Son. God said: *“I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever. I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son”* (2 Samuel 7:13-14).

2) Who is

Many a king has lived and died and is nothing more than a “has been” in the history books. But by contrast, our text describes this King of heaven *“who was”* from eternity as the King *“who is.”* Jesus is our Savior who lives on, graciously ruling for our good as members of His eternal Kingdom.

“*Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth*” (vs. 5). Those words describe our Savior in His threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and King.

As Prophet, Jesus is “*the faithful witness.*” As the eternal Word of God in our flesh, He came from His Father “*full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14). He has revealed God’s salvation to us faithfully. He continues to reveal His faithful and true witness through His chosen prophets and apostles in Holy Scripture. Therefore, we can trust His words of eternal life and live by them.

As Priest, Jesus is “*the firstborn from the dead.*” Why should He who lives in eternal realms die? It is because God was dealing with our sins. We all committed treason against His divine Majesty. Every sin of ours is rebellion against the commandments of God, punishable by death. Even so much as our impure thoughts and desires would have kept us out of His holy presence for all eternity. But while His Majesty is just, He is also loving. So heaven’s King took on the role of our great High Priest. He came in our flesh and blood to offer Himself on the cross as the one sacrifice for all our sin (Hebrews 9:11-12). In place of our sinful life, Jesus presented His perfect life to His Father to count for our righteousness. Then He rose as the firstborn of the dead, to declare us forgiven and to give us eternal life.

And as King, Jesus is “*the ruler over the kings of the earth.*” He has ascended to heaven’s throne to take His place at His Father’s right hand. From that position of power and authority He governs all earthly rulers, using them to carry out His purpose in history. Though Jesus’ Church on earth often is oppressed by rulers of this world, He rules over all things for the good of His Church and the spread of His saving Gospel in the world (Ephesians 1:20-23).

Now, heaven’s King has brought to us all the benefits of His salvation in His Kingdom of Grace. Through His gift of Baptism and faith, He has cleansed us of our sin and united us with Himself in eternal life. Therefore, we can truly praise Him and say: “*To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen*” (vs. 5-6).

He who is our King and High Priest has made us a kingdom of “*priests to His God and Father.*” Since God is counting us holy for the sake of His Son, we have the privilege of approaching His throne directly. 1 Peter 2:9 says: “*You are... a royal priesthood, a holy nation... that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*” As His “*royal priesthood,*” we can come boldly before His throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16), praying for our needs and interceding for others, knowing He will answer the best way. We also have the privilege of proclaiming His forgiveness

and salvation to others. As His kingdom of priests, we can use our position to serve God and our fellow man, confidently calling on His help and sharing His love.

3) Who is to come

And finally, our text describes this King of heaven *“who was”* from eternity, and *“who is”* now ruling for our good, also as the one *“who is to come.”*

“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.” (vs. 7). On the Last Day, the eternal Son of God and Son of Man will return much like the way His disciples saw Him ascend from the earth visibly in the clouds (Acts 1:9-11). But this time, *“every eye will see Him.”*

“Even they who pierced Him.” This includes not only those who took part in His actual crucifixion, but all who crucify Him anew by unrepentant sin and unbelieving hearts. Since they cared nothing about His sacrifice for their sins, they will mourn at the sight of the only Savior whose love they spurned. On that day, the words of Hebrews 10:26-27 will become all too clear: *“There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.”*

But for all who belong to heaven’s King through His cleansing baptism, repentance, and faith, it will be a day of rejoicing. How could it be otherwise? For this is our Savior, *“who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood”* (vs. 5). To see Him will be to hear His most welcoming words: *“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”* (Matthew 25:34).

Then, we will experience unending joys in the presence of Him *“who is and who was and who is to come.”* We will see Him *“who was”* – who from eternity always loved us, chose us as His own through faith, and planned wonderful things for us in His Kingdom. We will see Him *“who is”* – who presently is loving us in His Kingdom of Grace, giving and strengthening our faith through His Word and Sacraments, and working all things together for our good. We will see Him *“who is to come”* – who for all eternity will continue to love us in His Kingdom of Glory, where it is said: *“In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore”* (Psalm 16:11).

Therefore: *“To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*