

## 02. Jesus is the One!

*Letters from Jesus*

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**Bible Text:** Revelation 1:4-8  
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How's that? Alright. Not many preachers have the ability to follow that kind of a, you can turn off these monitors up here too. Donald, I can do without them. Not too many people have the ability to follow that kind of a musical act. That's quite something. I'd love to take them on the road with me. I'm always impressed with the combinations they come up with because I never figure out when, I can't tell you when these two found time to practice together and I wonder how this stuff happens without my notice and we are blessed with so much musical talent here. I was just recently given a CD that has my girls and the B. girls on it singing together and playing together and that's been a wonderful blessing for me and so I have thoroughly enjoyed that.

Well, I want to ask you to turn in your Bibles first of all to Revelation chapter 1. By the way, just a little clue for you biblical scholars in the group: it's not Revelations. That's how people say it all the time but it's singular, it's Revelation. The actual title of the book is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" so you can turn to the Revelation of Jesus Christ chapter 1. We're going to be looking at verses 4 through 8 this morning and kind of share with you my heart and also we'll probably have you open your Bibles and turning to Hebrews chapter 1 in a little bit so if you want to go ahead and find that and stick a ribbon in it, that would be fine for you to do.

What I want us to focus on this morning is and I guess I've picked a topic, you know, the secret to picking a topic that you can cover in a reasonable length of time is to pick a very narrow topic and I picked Jesus so it's not going to happen. I found out there's a whole lot you can say just about him but John focuses on Jesus first and before we get to the letters to the seven churches, I think we need to focus on what the Bible focused on first and while you're finding Hebrews 1 and Revelation 1 in your Bible, I want to talk about this red case that I brought up here. Melody, this is just for you. Look at this. Do you see this? Can you remember this in your mind? Okay, well, you get a good look at it because when your mother and I die your job is to burn this before any of the kids can get into it.

Alright, so let me tell you a little bit about the old days and I'm sad that I'm old enough to speak to what the old days are but back in the old days we didn't have the Internet. Now, go ahead all you young people, you can go, "Ahhhh," because you know life can't exist without the Internet. I'm going to make it even more astounding to you, we did not have

cell phones. Go ahead, "Ahhhh." It's shocking, isn't it and the fact is, the only mobile phones were in the cars of rich people and they had cords and there was a big antenna on the back of the car so there was none of this mobile phone stuff that we have today. So what we resorted to do was a very lost art now except to just a very few people and that is we wrote letters and we would write these letters and we would do it by hand. Yeah, I know, we didn't have computers that printed back then and so you wrote things by hand and when we did term papers for school, we used a typewriter and when you try to write footnotes at the bottom of your term paper, you had to figure out where to stop typing so that you would have the footnotes come up just far enough that they would stop and still leave a margin at the bottom of the paper and that required you to calculate how long your footnotes were going to be before you typed them and you would use a ruler and use a little pencil to make a mark. And anyway, life was a lot harder back then. The other thing though is that back then there was a lot more evidence left laying around of the past because people did write stuff down. So some of our family memories are in this case.

So for example, well, it's going to be hard to get the whole paper bag out here but let me just pull some inserts out here. These are some phenomenal things. These were known as aerograms and you would go down to the post office and you would get these pieces of, they really were a single sheet of paper, and you would write a letter on them written front and back and you would fold it up and it was gummed at the appropriate place or sometimes you would apply a little tape or something to shut it and it was very light weight and you had to mail it and, of course, it went in the very old days, it went snail mail over a boat and then later it would go air mail. But still sometimes you would write somebody and it could be anywhere from 3 to 6 weeks if they were overseas before you'd hear a reply. And so, a lot of these, this one is from the the old Thorton when he was living in Taipei and he was writing to our pastor's wife's father, Brother James Stringer and so there's a lot of the ones like this. There's a whole collection in here of ones that Judy's parents sent us from the mission field and we've got some we sent them and so those are some of the letters that are in there.

Then I notice I was looking this morning and found letters from Judy's grandparents that were written to Judy while she was over here as a college student and I couldn't just pick up the phone and call her because, and this again is another foreign concept to all of you young people but we used to have this thing called long distance and the phone company billed you for making a charge when you made an out-of-state call and it was by the minute and during the week it was very expensive so you had to wait until after 9 o'clock at night or for the weekends when the rates were cheaper and if you talked very long you had a big phone bill and I can remember one time shortly before Judy and I were married that I managed to run up \$60 in one phone call. That was an ugly thing. You don't have these problems anymore with the advent of cell phones and the Internet and Skype and email and all those things. That was about how it was back in the old days.

I brought this up here against my wife's objections because a lot of what is in here are letters that we wrote to one another during our courtship. Now mind you, we didn't understand courtship as well as we do today when we wrote those letters. So I tried reading a few of those letters last night and after erping two or three times and being too

embarrassed, I thought, "No, I'm not going to read that." I did pick one that I have to read to you because it's the one that messed up my wedding and so here it is. Donald, it is not moving the slide when I move the little thing here so something is on the screen maybe interfering with me. Okay, so if you can fix it. There we go. Thank you.

Here's an excerpt from August 14, 1980. To give you some perspective, we married one month later on September 13 and this is the one that messed up our wedding. I'll explain that in a minute. It says, "With my whole heart," this is Judy writing to me, "with my whole heart I love you and I'm thoroughly convinced that God made me especially for you and you for me. My place is at your side as your life." Now I've underlined that because that's what messed up my wedding. "Do you know what makes me so happy? I know that I'm fulfilling God's will for my life." And I remember, it's a funny thing how when a word gets in you, I remember calling her that weekend when the rates were low and I said, "Judy, did you realize that you refer to yourself as my life and not as my wife." I said, " You know, wouldn't it be funny if that got into my wedding vows?" Well, sure enough, without my actually trying, it came to that part of the ceremony where I was supposed to repeat after the pastor and I said, "I, Robert, take thee, Judy, to be my lawfully wedded life." Then I tried to fix it so it came out sounding like lawfully wedded life and at that point, Belinda started laughing right in the middle of the ceremony. We actually have a tape of our ceremony you can hear her cackling on the tape and I must tell you that in the 34 years of ministry since then, weddings terrify me when I get to that part of the ceremony. I look down in my book and read very slowly and deliberately, "Do you take her to be your lawfully wedded wife?" because I know one of these days I'm not going to look at that book and I'm either going to make the same mistake or I'm going to say something like, "Your awfully leaded wife," and that would be even worse. So it is important...but what was in my heart came out of my mouth.

Now, the amazing thing about this red case though, is we haven't spent a whole lot of time reading it. In fact, I said to Judy last night, "Go get me the red case," and she had to think about where it was and she came back in a few minutes and retrieved it and, of course, it still has a little bit of dust around the zipper so it hasn't been opened in a while. But the reality is that we don't spend a whole lot of time sitting around reading that letter because we have each other. Now, of course, as I read through some of those letters, I did come to realize that I don't think she tells me quite as often how intelligent, witty, charming and handsome I am as she used to. I'm hoping that's just that marriage gets more comfortable as you get older and not that she doesn't believe those things anymore. I'm going to have to go back and read those things and remember what it was like to be young and in love again. For that reason it may be...but anyway, Melody, the reason you're looking at this is just throw this on fire when your mother and I have both passed. Don't let any of your siblings look in there.

I think the real reason we don't read them is because we have each other. The letters are fun but I'd much rather sit down across the table from my wife and talk to her or sit in our bedroom in our recliners and talk to one another. I'd much rather just be with her. I'd much rather go somewhere holding her hand and spend time with her. It's just a lot more fun having her in person than it is the letter but the letters are important. They are a

treasure. I was reminded of things and the fact is I've got to go back and figure out what in the world we were doing in August of 1981 because apparently we were apart for a little while and I can't remember what that was. So there's a lot of things I've got to go back and read and see if I can re-create some of the family history in my mind so maybe that'll be my next spare time hobby.

When I started thinking about this series, I just had a real burden that God had something that he wanted to say to us as a church because I think that while there are many wonderful things about this church, I think that we're not beyond the need for revival. I see indications that we need revival. I hear things that people say that let me think that maybe we need revival, that maybe we're getting too complacent in what we're doing here. So I wanted to go straight to the letters to the seven churches and that was my original intent but I started a couple of weeks ago in Revelation chapter 1 and as I was looking at Revelation chapter 1, I got bogged down in the first three verses. Then I began looking at it again and I think Monday morning I got up at 4:30 in the morning and spent 3 1/2 hours in Greek just looking at the next few verses, 4 through 8, and I thought, "Well, we can't pass that up." And it occurred to me that if you look at Revelation chapter 1, the letters don't start till chapter 2 and verse 1. That's where he deals with the church at Ephesus, the church that had lost their first love. But before he ever gets there, he spends an entire chapter just focusing on Jesus.

So I think it's probably worth some time that we do this thing. That maybe before we hear what Jesus says to the churches we just need to remember who it is that's talking to us. That we just need to focus on that because after all, if you really are in love with Jesus, the chances are pretty good that you are not going to need all the correction that comes in those letters. You know, I've noticed that the more I love Jesus, the less I have to confess my sins to him because I don't want to do those things. I have noticed that the strongest thing you can do as a parent, dads, I'm talking specifically to you guys here, the best thing you dads can do to be an effective father is cultivate a relationship with your children so that they love you because if they love you, you don't need rules and regulations and laws and timetables, all you really need is that you have such a strong relationship with them that they never want to disappoint you and that will be what keeps them faithful. That'll be the thing that will keep them from backsliding, the thing that will keep them from sinning.

Now, on a level with you, I just want to ask you this question: do you ever kind of sense sometimes that your Christian life is just going through the motions? You know, you're going to church, maybe you have family devotion a couple times a week, you manage to say a prayer before every meal and, of course, the prayers end "in Jesus' name" like it's supposed to, you know, because that's how we're supposed to end all the prayers. But do you ever get the sense that you're just going through the motions and you're not really connecting with God? Or do you ever get the sense that you don't really get a grip just on Jesus himself? That you don't sense his presence? Because after all, you're caught up in the busyness of activity rather than walking in the moment of his presence. Then when it comes to our church, do we ever get the sense that, "Yeah, we love it here. The fellowship is great. It's a comfortable place to be. We're around like-minded people and

we enjoy talking about all the subjects over lunch, whether it's politics or it's firearms or it's kids or it's jobs or anything else," and we love talking about that but do you get the sense that there are times that you come here and you hear from God's word but you don't necessarily meet with Jesus? Isn't that what it's really supposed to be about? Isn't it supposed to be that when we come here we are supposed to leave as the psalmist said that we can say, "It was good to be in the Lord's presence." To know that he was really here? To know that he was in our midst and that our prayers were energized by his presence.

You know, I know we haven't gotten to the letters of the seven churches but you're all familiar with the letter to the church at Laodicea and that's where we address the issue of lukewarm Christianity and I'll wait till we get to that part of Revelation 3 to say more about that but just off the top of my head, listen to these symptoms of lukewarm Christianity. And by the way, today I'm just going to tell you, I haven't opened a crafted commentary yet. I was just looking at these verses so this may not be the most scholastic sounding sermon you'll ever hear but I'm hoping you'll just hear my heart. But I think these are some symptoms that maybe we need revival. I think one of them is when Christians in the same fellowship just get more easily irritated by one another and I've heard that. I've heard some of you getting irritated with some of the others of you because maybe there's a particular point of view maybe you don't share or something happened in interaction between two of you and rather than handling it in the Christlike love and forgiveness and remembering to, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice and be ye kind towards one another tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you," you lose that spirit. I wonder sometimes if we don't just get a little, maybe a little more irritable in our marriages or at home with our families where it's easiest to let our hair down and be ourselves. Or what about we really like the fellowship, that we're kind of comfortable with the way things are. We don't want to really attempt any great new things for God. We're happy with the status quo. Now, if you don't know what status quo is, those are Latin words. This is why they are italicized on your screen. They're Latin for "the mess we're in" and it means that we get to a place where we get happy with the mess we're in and we liked it just fine and we've given up really seeking something deeper and better with God.

I also think that our lives should be about showing the world that there is a radically different better way of life in Christ and all of you to some extent pretty much everyone in this church that has kids, you're home schooling so you're obviously already doing something that looks radically different to the world but are we that radically different? When people look at us and say, "There's something different about that family."

I also think a sign of needing revival is when our Christianity becomes more characterized by our talk rather than our walk. We say all the religious words. We say the right words. We voice the right paragraphs to people. We know the Christian buzz language and we think if we say it enough and smile enough that people think, "Oh, they've got their act together," and yet are we living in that love? Are we living in that mercy? Are we living in that care and concern for others? Are we living in that sharing of

the Gospel? Are we living in remembering that everything that we have belongs to Jesus and we're just stewards of it? Are we really living that out and fleshing it out in daily life?

Maybe another saying is a loss of passion for Christ that's reflected in our attitude towards prayer and towards the word of God. I've got to tell you, the word of God thing is easier for me because I just love this book and I love studying it and I enjoy getting here and sometimes I'm running behind trying to get my own act together or doing the bulletin on Sunday mornings something like that, but I love getting here and hearing Richard teach from the Old Testament because I just crave the word of God being explained to me. I enjoyed it so much this week just spending time in the word of God. It was so wonderful but I wish sometimes I had that same fervor for prayer. I don't always have that, just a desire to get on my knees and open my Bible and pray through a passage of Scripture and let God talk to me. But I think what happens when we get lukewarm is that, "Well, as long as we get there by the time the pastor is introducing the sermon or within the first few minutes, we're okay," and we listen and we're polite about it and then we leave and if somebody asks us on Wednesday what the pastor said on Sunday, we wouldn't even know because we didn't take notes even though what the word of God says is far more important than what you have in your bank account. It's far more important than any other earthly treasure you'll ever possess and yet sometimes we just don't pay attention to it as we should.

Then of course in the letter to the church at Laodicea, Christ said, "You don't even see your own spiritual need." One of the things that happens to me when I'm really looking in the word of God and I'm really getting something out of it, it's like every verse points out a shortcoming in my life. The more I spend in it the more of my own need I see and yet when you grow lukewarm, not only do you get kind of cold and indifferent towards the word of God but you just kind of think that you've got your act together. You kind of think that you are a good Christian and you're good enough. I wonder if the Apostle Paul, what he would say to us if he heard us think or he heard us say that, "Hey, my Christian life is good enough." I seem to remember him saying something like, "It's not as though I had already attained or were already perfect but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind. I push forward toward the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." He says, "There's something better. Don't sit on your laurels."

You know, I love our church. I love the fact that we're family integrated. I love that we're home school friendly. I love the fellowship here but I want more than that. It's like that old song, I don't think we've sang it here, maybe Richard can find it, but I know it's in the old Broadman hymnal and it said, "Mercy drops round us are falling, but for the showers we plead." What I want is not just a church that matches our convictions and that we're comfortable at and we feel like our children are protected when they come here, I want a church where we see God's power on display. I would really love to see us build a new building even if it wasn't to grow the church. I think it would be nice for us to have more facilities for some of the things we do here without being crowded and without having to say, Okay, you have to be out of this part of the building by 2:30 because we don't have a room for somebody to meet in." I'd love to see us do that but one of the chief reasons I'd love to see us build a new building is I'm just personally under the conviction that

churches really shouldn't borrow money. "The borrower is servant to the lender." I'd rather that we didn't serve First National Bank but that's a big deal especially in today's... how do you do that? Are we going to plant another church, a new cell? Where can we find a facility to worship and if so can we do that without going into debt? If we build a new church, could we do that without going into debt? How long would it take? How much of the work would we do ourselves? But I'd really like to do it just so that God could show the world that a church can build out of debt. Put his power on display. I am convinced that if he owns the cattle on 10,000 hills then he can come up with the funds for a church and he can glorify himself. You see, I think we ought to be in a church where God puts his power on display frequently and that you want to come to church not because you are eager to see the people that you have a bond with, but you want to come to church because, "What is God going to do today?" That's the church that I want to be in. I marveled over the years that we've had a few times that someone would come and visit for a few weeks and I know my kids can think of one person I'm talking about that she came down and was here to visit her brother for a few weeks and after about two or three weeks here, she got saved just because there was something so different about the young people here that she couldn't find in any of the people she had ever known. That's what I want. I want people when they are visiting to say, "Man, there's something so different here. Something so radical here. I want what they have." I just want to see God's power on display.

Now, look with me in your Bibles at Revelation chapter 1 and we'll begin reading at verse 4,

4 John, to the seven churches in Asia: grace to you and peace from the one who is and the one who was and the one who is coming, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne.

We talked last time about who the seven spirits are,

5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To the one who loves us and released us [or you may have a translation that says "washed" and that's fine] washes us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father - to him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

By the way, this next verse is in poetry form so that's why I have written it this way on your screen.

7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds,  
and every eye will see him,  
even every one who pierced him,  
and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him.  
Yes, amen.

Now we hear Jesus himself speak. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, the one who is and the one who was and the one who is coming, the All-Powerful." The Pantocrator is the word in Greek, the All-Powerful. And just look at the terms in this passage that John ascribes to Jesus and that Jesus ultimately gives to himself. He is your God. He's the faithful witness. He's the firstborn from the dead. He's the ruler of earth's kings. He's the one who loves us. He's the one that released us from our sins by his blood. He's the one who made us a kingdom. He's the one that made us priests to our God. He's the Alpha and the Omega.

As I said, I didn't read any commentaries so I'm not going to say anything particularly profound but could we just look for a few moments at this description of Jesus. First of all, I think it's interesting because when I refer to the three kinds of time, I always say it's past, present, and future. That seems like a logical order to me because, you know, the past is where I begin, the present is where I am now, the future is where I'm ongoing and yet when Jesus declares his name, he starts with the present and when John talks about him, he starts with the present and the present is "the one who is." I mean, if anything else, we need to focus on the fact that Jesus is right now. He's the one who is and he's the one who was and he's the one and it's not just that who is to come, literally it says in Greek "the one who is coming." In other words, in fact, it actually says in Greek: he's on his way; he's about to step back into time; his return is imminent; he is nearly here. That's pretty awesome.

So he's Lord of the present. So John's reminding us of a few things. First of all, he's here now. The amazing thing is that when we get together on Sundays, we are in the presence of God. Jesus himself verified this, he says, "For when two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them." He is here right now and when we leave this place on Sunday and we go away and think about how the fellowship was or how good the food was or you got in line too late to get any food, or you think about how wonderful the music was but you go away and you don't really think about the fact that Jesus was there then I want to impress on your heart and on your mind the problem isn't that Jesus wasn't here, the problem is you didn't recognize it. You didn't spend time with him. You did church but you didn't do Jesus when you came. He is here and he reigns right now.

You might think that your life is spinning out of control and sometimes I feel like I live life from Monday through Saturday as a reaction. I don't really have any control. I just have to react to things that other people plan and other people do and the demands of work and the demands of ministry and the demands of family and I'm just kind of reacting to it all and I'm out from any illusion that I'm actually in charge of anything and yet Jesus is on his throne. I don't like what they're doing in Washington. I have a T-shirt I work out in, I have a lot of T-shirts I work out in and a lot of them have sayings. Tom and I have one T-shirt in common. I've got a T-shirt and it's got a big picture of the capital building and it says, "Never underestimate the stupidity of people in large groups." I get lots of comments on that T-shirt. But in spite of what they're doing in Washington, King Jesus is still on his throne. He is still in control. He allowed some of those idiots there to cause us to wake up and realize that our nation is not honoring God as it should.



He upholds all things by the word of his power. Would you look at Hebrews 1 for just a minute and I've already got to tell you, we're going to take a detour through Hebrews 1 because there is just so much stuff there. But let me just read these first three verses. You've got the first two in your bulletin, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Did you see that? Upholding all things by the word of his power.

Now, this particular church property was built in 1970 and most of the furnishings, I'm sure, have been here since then so if you do a little math, this pulpit is probably about 44 years old and the fact that it's here 44 years later means that I didn't build it. It's sturdy but do you realize that no matter how good the construction on this pulpit, it would not be here right now if Jesus were not upholding it by the word of his power. Jesus is so sovereign that he literally holds the coalescent bonds between atoms together to form molecules and they are held together by his power. We're told in 1 Peter 3 that when God is done with this world, that they will be loosed with a fervent heat and the word "loosed" actually means that the molecular bonds of this world will be disintegrated. Now, I like Randy Alcorn and I like his books but he's got one part of his theology that he wrote a book about, earth and heaven and being redeemed. He's got one thing wrong that I can see and that is that he talks about the redemption of earth and it is true that earth is redeemed in the sense that Christ is going to remove sin from it but the way he's going to remove sin from the earth, if you read the Bible, is he is not going to do a retread job on this planet, the elements will be loosed with a fervent heat. Everything on this planet will be burned up and there will be, I think it says in Revelation, the book we're studying, a new heaven and a new what? Earth. That doesn't mean a retread job. It doesn't mean renewed, it means new.

So there's going to be a totally new earth. He is that sovereign that he is going to do that. He upholds all things by the word of his power. He judges. Right now, Jesus knows every thought and intent of your heart. He knows every word that you speak. He hears every idle word and it means that he chastises his children and ultimately he will punish the ungodly and I'll say more about that in a minute.

He intercedes for us. Now, do you realize that Jesus is praying to the Father for you? I'm glad because I know at least one person praying for me who will get his prayers answered. I don't know about you, but I know Jesus will do it. Okay? Awesome. And he sees everything in your life right now. Nothing is hidden from him. Luke 12:2 says, "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be known." He's got it all. Now, I don't know about you but that makes me feel just a wee bit uncomfortable as he hears my thoughts and sees what I'm doing.

Jesus is Lord of the present. We need to understand that Jesus is not an historical object of our faith. We're talking about somebody that was here 2,000 years ago and he's an academic subject to be mastered. He is here. He feels our pain. He knows our thoughts. He comforts are hurts. He examines the thoughts and intents of our heart. Don't ever forget that when John starts talking about Jesus, he says, "Jesus is now."

He's also the Lord of the past, the one who was. He coexisted with the Father before creation. Don't let that word "begotten" throw you, that Mary begat Jesus. He didn't start there. Hebrews 1:2, "But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom He appointed heir of all things by whom also He made the world." When the planet was being formed, when the stars were being cast out across the cosmos, when the sun was being lit on fire, Jesus was there. Genesis 1:26, God says, "Then God said, 'Let us,'" and he wasn't talking to the angels, he was talking to God. God the Father talking to God the Son and God the Spirit, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." He made us a Trinity just like he's a Trinity. He is Father, Son and Spirit. We are spirit, soul and body. We are made with free will and a consciousness.

Jesus is also the Lord of the future. If you have Jesus as your Savior, you have something the rest of the world doesn't have, you have a future with unhindered fellowship with God. Now, the wicked don't have that. There are a lot of people and some of you have experienced this in the last few weeks as you've been witnessing to relatives and friends, there are people who have this mistaken notion that there are multiple paths to God and one is just as valid as another and there is a whole host of things you could go down and get at Barnes and Noble to prove that point. But the Bible is very clear. He says, "The wicked," now, in Psalm 1, it says the righteous are like, "a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." But then he says, "The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous: but," listen, "the way of the wicked will perish." God is a God of wrath. Now, you may not like that. We've gotten into the last 40 years of Christianity and we just like to tell people that God is love, God is love, God is love. And I'm glad he's love and yes I know what 1 John 4:8 says, he is love. But I also read in the book of Hebrews that our God is a consuming fire. He has wrath against sin and against those whose sins have not been covered by the blood of his Son because they have rejected him as Savior and there are no two ways around that. John 1:12, "But as many as received him," it's not enough to believe, not enough to think about, not enough to mentally know about, not enough to say that he is one of many possible ways to God, "But as many as received him," Jesus, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name," and he doesn't give that to anybody else.

Jesus is not only in our future, he is in our imminent future. The word ??? In Greek means he is coming. It's like he's thrown open the door from heaven back into earth, he has already lifted up one foot and he is stepping across the threshold and at any moment now Jesus will come from glory into the present time here on earth and it will be like a thief in the night, without warning. He will come in an hour that we think not, at any

moment. Now, if you belong to him, it's like the bridegroom coming for the bride. Several of these letters in here were written just weeks before we were married and they expressed the fact that we were really looking to see one another again because we were about ten hours apart at the time. I'm looking forward to seeing Jesus and the older I get, the more I look forward to it. But for the wicked, he's coming as a Judge. By the way, that word "coming" in Greek is a middle passive verb that means "that he determines the time of his coming."

Now, I want to point out that while Jesus was on earth, he had to empty himself of a few things so that he could live a life as a man so that he could be a perfect human sacrifice for our sins. He did not exercise all of his powers because he actually said while he was here on earth living as a man, "Apart from my Father I can do nothing." When someone asked him about the time of his return, he said, "No man knows the day nor the time nor the hour, not even the Son but only the Father." Why? Because when he left heaven, he left that knowledge behind because knowing exactly when that time was would have changed and made him less or more, actually, more than human. But he is not emptied of anything now. He determines the time of his coming. He has all power. He can do anything that's consistent with his character.

Now, Jesus also is the faithful witness. The word "witness" there is the word "martyr," which we mean someone who dies for one of God's causes or for the cause of their faith. But let me dig it in just a little bit more. Back in Hebrews 1 there is a phrase. It says this in verse 3, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." Now, you'll read a lot of commentaries and you'll read those words and you can get totally fouled up on this if you're not careful because some people think that what that means is that Jesus is a human, visible representation of what God is like but that's not what it's saying. It says he is the radiance. You see, if you want to understand the phrase "the express image of his person," you need to look at the previous phrase which he is the "radiance of his glory." Now, I don't want any of you trying this experiment when you walk out of church except maybe Olivia, she's brought the right equipment, she's wearing them right now. You'd have to have a super, super dark glasses on to even try this but if you go outside and look at the sun and, again, don't do this. If you did it and you go blind, it's your fault and your mama's fault for not putting more sense into you. But when you look at the sun and when it's down around sunset, not quite so harmful then, but the reason that we see the sun is because the rays off of the sun, the radiance of the sun is what we're seeing. We're not actually seeing just the physical ball there, we're seeing the radiance that comes off of it. When we see the rays streaming off the sun we say, "I see the sun." In the very same way, when you see the radiance of the Son, you are seeing the radiance of God the Father. You're seeing the radiance of God the Father. In other words, Jesus said in John 14:9, "Have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." He didn't say that they had seen a picture of the Father or a representation of the Father or an ambassador for the Father. He says, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. You've seen God." Then he says to Philip, "How can you say show us the Father?"

I wasn't praying, I was trying to pick up the remote control.

He is the faithful witness. Hebrews 1:8. Listen to what God the Father says about God the Son, "But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness,'" or righteousness, "'is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.'" The writer of Hebrews is saying that when Jesus rose from the dead, he ascended back into heaven and the Father said to the Son, "God, you sit here at my right hand." So God the Father says to God the Son, "Sit next to me. We are co-reigning together. We are God." Do you know what? These people say there are a bunch of other paths to God, to whom else has God ever said that? To whom else has God ever said, "Sit here on my throne"? And I know they are good-looking and clean cut and they've got the nice navy blue slacks and the white shirts and their pretty little white and blue name-tags but nobody ever said to Joseph Smith or the Angel Mormon, "Hey, sit down at my right hand." God only said that to himself when he said it to God the Son. Hebrews 1:13, "And to which of the angels has he ever said, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?'" He's only said that to Jesus. They are co-regents together. Jesus is God. He glorifies the Father. He represents the Father to the world. The Spirit points people to Jesus but they are all God.

He is the faithful witness. Jesus' life depicted God's righteousness. We looked at how Jesus lived and you sought righteousness in action. When you heard his words, you heard God's mercy being offered to people. When you see him die, it was the ultimate demonstration of God's love because he says, "Greater love hath no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends," and yet Paul said in Romans 5:8, that God "showed his love toward us that while we were yet sinners," while we were the enemies of God, "Christ died for us." That's ultimate love.

But I do want to correct one thing in your theology: the cross is not the ultimate symbol of God's love. Christ dying, the shed blood of Christ is the ultimate symbol of God's love but the cross is the ultimate symbol of God's wrath. It was the most excruciating form of death and it's where God vented his wrath. It's where Jesus became sin for us. And God so judged sin that his own Son said, "Father, Father, why have you forsaken me? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

He is the faithful witness. It's interesting in Greek, ??????. It's like he is the martyr, the faithful one. It emphasizes it. It reminds me of Lamentations 3 where it says, "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." Jesus isn't just a good Rabbi, he's not just another path to God, he's not just a prophet, a teacher or a good moral man, he is God the Son who faithfully represents the Father in every sense.

The next title that John describes of Jesus is that he is the firstborn from the dead. Jesus died in the most agonizing form of death ever invented by mankind and that was the cross. In fact the Latin word for cross is "crux," that is at the heart of the word "excruciating." That's where we get that word from. Excruciating means something that's not just painful, it's painful to the point that you can't bear it and that is the pain that was

of the cross. You see there some pictures and from left to right, actually the first and the third picture from left to right is a heel bone of a crucifixion victim that still has the spike that was on the cross driven through it. They drove it right through your heel bone. Yeah, and the fact is usually the way they did it on the cross when you hung there, is that they put your feet on the sides of the cross, not the front like you see in all the pictures, and they drove the spike through the side of your heel bone into the cross so that both of your knees faced forward and you would have to push up to let the air out of your lungs and as soon as you collapsed, then the air would come back into your lungs and you pushed up and down, up and down on that spike through your heels. You see there a scourge, a nice bit sturdy stick with long bits of cord and bits of glass or lead at the end and a skilled executioner would know exactly the right distance so that when they whipped that at you, they could first put bruises on your back with the first blow and then they stepped just a tad closer and the next blow would shred the skin off your back and they stepped a tad closer and it would begin digging out bits of muscle tissue until you finally got to the place where you no longer resembled a man but a chunk of meat. Isaiah said, "His visage was so marred that he had not the form of a man." He did that for you. He did that for me.

You see there on the far right a picture of an ossuary, that's a box that people's bone were kept in. They would lay a body in a tomb for about a year and bacteria, bugs, everything would come and eat of the flesh. A year later they would go back and there was nothing but bone and hair and they would put that into a box, seal the bones up and write the person's name on the side. That happens to be an ossuary of a man by the name of Yochanan who was crucified and that's his heel bone that you see there in the pictures.

He's the firstborn from the dead. Now, you can think of some other people that rose from the dead, right? When Jesus died, the earthquake and it says the graves were opened. People got up and they went into town and witnessed but they died again. Lazarus, that's obviously the best example we know of. He had been dead for four days. Jews used to believe that a person could come back to life after two or three days because they believed that the spirit of the person hung around the body. I think they believed this because they probably saw people go into comas and they thought they were dead. People would come out of the coma and suddenly they would come back. But the Jews said that you can't have one past three days. Lazarus was in the tomb for four days. Every Jew knew he was dead. The fact is when Jesus said, "Roll back the stone," they said, "Oh no. He's been dead four days. It will stink by now. Don't do that." Then he said, "Lazarus, come forth." He had to say that or all the tombs would have opened and everybody would have come forth because that's who he was. He's God. By the way, Jesus was not at Lazarus' funeral. Did you know that? I'll tell you how you know: because every funeral Jesus went to he ruined. He ruined every funeral he went to because the people came back to life. It's like, "Oh shoot, we paid the hired mourners for nothing. Our daughter is alive again." He ruined all the funerals.

But Lazarus comes out but you know he's dead again. Do you know how we know that? Because we found his tomb. There is an ossuary, kind of like the box on the left though that's not their ossuary. I'll tell you who that is. It's very interesting. But there is an ossuary that they found in Israel in 1940 and on the side, it's a mile outside of Bethany

which is where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived, and on the ossuary it says, "Mary, Martha and Lazarus, followers of Christ." Next time somebody tells you this book is not true say, "I'll just go turn over a shovel of dirt in Israel and I'll prove it is." By the way, that box on the right. That guy is still dead. Come resurrection day, I'm pretty well convinced he's going to find himself on the wrong side of the great white throne judgment. That happens to be the ossuary of Joseph Caiaphas, the high priest that helped send Jesus to his death. He's still dead.

You see, the thing is, before any of us could be resurrected and never die again, someone had to pave the way. We needed a pioneer to blaze the trail and Jesus was that pioneer who blazed that trail so that we, when we resurrect, we will never face death a second time. But nobody could do it until he did. By the way, in Psalm 2:7, it says, "This day have I begotten thee." God talking about the Son. It doesn't mean that Jesus was born into existence, it's referring to the day of his resurrection when he became the firstborn from the dead. "This day I have begotten thee," and then he says, "now sit on my right hand." Jesus ascended into heaven after death and after the resurrection to sit at the right hand of God the Father.

Then he says, "the ruler of earth's kings." One of the last titles that John applies to Jesus, he says, "the rulers of earth's kings." I still don't know how some of these knuckleheads got into office, quite frankly. It boggles my mind. But I do know none of love them there were the absolute power, that every czar, every king and queen, every prime minister, every president must ultimately bow to his authority. I actually believe that this title is really about Revelation 19 that when Jesus returns again, he is going to rule and reign over the earth for 1,000 years. He will be recognized by every king on earth as being the King of kings and the Lord of lords. I think it's talking about the title that we're going to refer to him when he comes back but I want to assure you that he is on a throne right now. I think it's interesting that in Europe, you go to England, you go to Germany, you go anywhere they used to have kings and queens, France, but on top of the crowns you will see a ball. That ball represents the globe and on top of the globe you will see a cross. It was a reminder to kings and queens that no matter how much authority they thought they had, they were still under the authority of Christ who was King over all of creation and to this day, the English crown still carries that symbol. I wonder and maybe I'm making too much of this but I wonder if there is not a little correlation between all these titles and the one who is, the one who was, the one who is coming? The one who is, he is the faithful witness. He's the exact representation. The one who was, he's the Creator. He's the martyr that died for our sins. He's the firstborn from the dead. The one who is coming, he's the ruler of earth's kings.

Then John says, "Yes, and he's the one who loves us." He's the one who loves us. Boy, that's pretty awesome. He is still right now loving us and he is serving us. You don't ever think about Jesus as being a servant now that he's in glory but he is. The fact is, I think at the wedding supper of the Lamb that's going to go on for seven years in heaven while the tribulation is going on here, I think that he's going to be serving us. But he's ministering to us right now. He's interceding for us. You know, I found out I'm going to have to quit saying bad things about lawyers. Of course, I know Dave Trudeau so I know one now

personally. But Jesus himself is a lawyer. He is our advocate before the Father. Every time Satan is the accuser and accuses us, we have a lawyer in heaven standing up for us. It is a godly occupation after all. Too bad most men have ruined that.

But he is our advocate and he desires to bless us. By the way, let me show you how much he desires to bless us. You all have read Matthew 5 and the first section of Matthew 5 is called the what? Somebody say it louder. The Beatitudes. Do you know Revelation has Beatitudes? Here they are. Revelation 1:3, "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near." Revelation 14:13, "Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."' " Revelation 16:15, "Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." Revelation 19:19, "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb. These are the true words of God." Revelation 20:6, "Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for 1,000 years." Revelation 22:7, "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book." Revelation 22:14, "Blessed are they who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city." By the way, there are seven if you are counting. He's still trying to bless us.

Then John says that he is the one who released us from our sins by his blood. Now, if you read the King James, I believe the King James here says "the one who washed us." There is a very close similarity between the word ??? which means to loosen and the word for "wash" in Greek and some Greek manuscripts have "washed" and some have "loosed." I don't think we need to worry about it. The Greek manuscripts only differ in about one out of every 1,000 words and it never makes a difference. He loosed us from our sins by what? By washing us in his blood. He freed us. And Christ frees us from sin in three different senses. He frees us from the penalty of sin, Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." We are freed from the penalty of sin but we're also free from the power of sin. If we look at Romans 6:1, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Verse 7 says, "For he that is dead is freed from sin." But guess what? He's going to free us from the very presence of sin when we get our glorified bodies.

Then he's the one who made us priests to God. You know, we weren't saved so that you could warm that pew, you were saved so that you could serve him like a priest. What did a priest do? Well, he worshiped God. I don't know what you think worship is. It's not attending a service at a Baptist church. Hopefully worship happens while you're doing it but you should worship at home. You should worship while you're out walking in the field. You should worship all the time. You should recognize how awesome and great God is and attribute praises and magnificence to his name.

Then the priest were the ones who brought the offerings to God. Part of our job as priest to God is that we bring our tithes and offerings to the Lord. Why do we do that? Because we're grateful for what he's done and we are acknowledging that everything came from him. The tithe was given to teach the fear of the Lord. Now, the tithe came before the law. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek. The emphasis of the New Testament is not on tithing, it's on sowing seed but I want you to understand the whole purpose of giving to begin with is to acknowledge that everything we have comes from God. It's a reminder to fear God and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. By the way, if you do tithe, money spent wisely, 90% of your paycheck spent wisely goes a whole lot further than 100% spent foolishly, doesn't it?

We're to bring him thanksgiving. This does not mean turkey and stuffing. When is the last time you just spent some time really thanking God for his blessings? I've got to admit to you, I forget to do this. What I typically do is I get up or as things arise through the day, I tell God what I need. But how many of you parents, let's just take a quick poll, how many of you parents like it when your kids come and thank you for something? Let me just see that. That's awesome, and how many of you like it when they come and thank you for something and bring you an offering? I like that too. We used to have in our family what we called daddy tax which meant that if somebody gave you candy in church, part of it had to come to daddy. That was just a tax but it was a fun thing.

Last night I got to watch something fun that we're all getting ready to go to bed and we had to call a family meeting because Christiana wanted a family meeting and I had gotten a bar of chocolate but she came into me two days ago and said, "I want you to take the money for that chocolate out of my account." I thought, "Okay, I'll do that." Then last night we called a family meeting and she opened up her bar of chocolate and gave all of her siblings part of her bar of chocolate because she obviously understands at age 9 how should you give that which cost you nothing. She gave that to them because she loved them and if we love God, we bring what we have and we lay it before his feet not because it's under compulsion to do so, not because it's a requirement or a regulation but because it's our joy to give to the one we love.

We are to intercede for others in the kingdom. Part of my job as priest of my family is to pray for my kids and pray for my wife. Part of my job here as pastor is to pray for you. Part of your job is to pray for me, to pray for the one sitting next to you on the pew and on the pew in front of you and in the pew behind you. It's to represent him in the world. Priests were the representatives of God and wherever we go, we need to remember our role as his representative and we need to remember our role to evangelize those that are not yet in the kingdom.

Finally, do you notice how John ends this whole thing? He says, "To him be glory and power forever." He literally says, "To the ages of the ages." We just translate that "forevermore" because it's easier but to the ages of the ages.



Now, I just want to point out one more thing here and that is so far all we've been doing is reading descriptions of Jesus and now we're going to get to the first command. I think when you're reading a book of the Bible, it helps if you will look for the commands in that book. The first command you actually come to in the book of Revelation is in chapter 1 and verse 7 and basically it says "behold." In other words, "pay attention to this Jesus I've just described to you." If you did nothing else this week spiritually but think and meditate on Jesus and read passages about Jesus and make your focus Jesus, it will be the best week you ever had spiritually. Quit worrying about election and free will. Quit worrying about whether the followers of Calvin or the followers of Arminius were right. Quit worrying about how a particular Greek verb is defined and just think about Jesus. You see, he's really who it's all about. Behold, pay attention to him. Look at Jesus.

Faith come up here a minute. I'm almost done. Faith came into my office this morning, my girls do this often, and I'm seated at a computer. You're on this side, remember? She hasn't rehearsed any of this. I'm seated at the computer typing away and Faith comes in and she puts her hand on my shoulder. I have this little game I have to engage in because they come and they stand behind me where I can't see them and I have to guess which one it is either by the smell of their perfume or...Hope is kind of obvious because she comes up and puts her hands over my eyes and says, "Guess who?" She's the only one that does that right now. It's kind of obvious, you know. Faith comes and I turn and I just looked up at her and saw this beautiful face, this beautiful smile and I said, "Good morning." She said, "Dad, do you see my new dress?" So I'm very busy getting ready to come and speak and I looked and I said, "Oh, that's beautiful. Lovely," and I went right back. What I just did is I glanced at her but now if I stop and go, "Wow, my daughter is awesome." I'm gazing at her and she's a lovely thing to gaze at.

Don't just glance at Jesus. Do you all do that? Do you just give him a quick glance every now and then? Stop this week and gaze on him. Go ahead and stop and gaze at him. Look at him. Meditate on him. Think of his greatness. Now, interestingly, in Hebrews 3:12, we get the first imperative verb there for the book of Hebrews. Now, there are some other imperative verbs but they are part of quotes to things God was saying to the angels or things God was saying to God but the first imperative verb to the readers in chapter 3, verse 2 is he says, "Take heed," which means "listen and obey." I think in those first two imperatives of Revelation and Hebrews, we have the basic essence of what we need to focus on if we want to see revival. Behold Christ intently. Listen to him. And obey him. In those two verbs, I think we have revival, don't you?

As Richard makes his way up here to lead us in a song, I want to ask you to do something with me. I appreciate the fact that you've been so patient. You are always so good to listen to God's word. You're an encouragement to me. I think it would be fitting for those of us who know that we need revival as a church or for those of you who know you need revival individually, to just come to the altar as an encouragement to others to do the same and you just pray, "Lord, I would see you this week. I want to see Jesus this week. I want to gaze upon you. I want to meditate on you. I want to ascribe glory to your name. I want this week to be about you more than it's about anything else."

Would you stand?

Hymn 162, "Fairest Lord Jesus."

1

2

Jesus is the One!

3  **The red case....**

- Back in the old days....
  - People wrote letters
  - Long distance phone calls cost lots of money but were some cheaper on the weekends
  - You wrote the one you loved and lived to be embarrassed by it years later when the letters showed up again
- Ours are in an old red case....

4  **Excerpt – August 14, 1980**

- *"...With my whole heart, I love you! I am...thoroughly convinced that God made me especially for you and you for me. My place is at your side as your life. Do you know what makes me so happy? I know that I am fulfilling God's will for my life."*
- That was the letter that caused me to mess up my wedding vows
- What was in my heart came out of my mouth

5  **Not too often...**

- Judy and I don't read those old letters too often.
- Why not?
  - Why read the letter when you have each other right there?
    - We do still write each other notes from time to time
  - Maybe there are other reasons, too....

6  **The letters to the 7 churches**

- The original intent: a series of sermons on the letters to the 7 churches
- But before John conveys Jesus' words to the 7 churches, we are first told who it is that is speaking to us
- So before we get to the letters, it is appropriate to spend a few weeks just focusing on Jesus
- After all, falling in love all over again with Him will mitigate the need for correction

7  **What about you?**

- Do you ever sense that sometimes you just go through the motions of the Christian life, but that you aren't really seeing Jesus in your life?
- Do you ever sense that our church is a comfortable place to be, but that there are some Sundays that you leave without really hearing from God?

8  **Lukewarm Christianity**

- Christians more easily irritated by others
- Christians enamored with fellowship and comfortable with the *status quo*
- Christians failing to show the world a radically different way of life
- A Christianity more characterized by talk than walk
- A loss of passion for Christ that is reflected in our attitude toward prayer and the Word
- Failure to see our own spiritual needs

9  **What about our church?**

- Family-integrated, homeschool-friendly, loving, good fellowship
- But I want more than that, don't you?
  - I want to see God put His power on display on a regular basis
  - I want this to be a church that when visitors come here they feel the need to repent and receive Christ in wholehearted commitment because they sensed the spirit of God in this place

10  **Revelation 1:4-5**

- *John, to the seven churches in Asia: grace to you and peace from the one who is and the one who was and the one who is coming, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,*
- *and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To the one who loves us and released us from our sins by his blood*
  - KJV="washed"; Greek word means "released" or "loosed"

11  **Revelation 1:6-7**

- *and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father—to him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.*
- *Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even every one who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him.*
- *Yes, amen.*

12  **Revelation 1:8**

- *I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, the one who is and the one who was and the one who is coming, the All-Powerful.*
- - Harris, W. Hall, III et al., eds. The Lexham English Bible. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012. Print.

13  **He is the ONE**

- Your God
- The Faithful Witness
- The Firstborn from the Dead
- The Ruler of Earth's Kings
- The One Who Loves Us
- The One Who Released Us from our sins by His blood
- The One who made us a kingdom
- The One who made us priests to God
- 

14  **Jesus is Lord of the Present**

- Instead of past, present, and future, we are given the order:
  - Present = The One Who is
  - Past = The One Who Was

– Imminent Future = The One Who is coming!

15  **Jesus is Lord of the Present (2)**

- John reminds us:
  - Jesus is here now
  - Jesus reigns now
  - Jesus upholds all things by the word of his power now (Hebrews 1)
  - Jesus judges now; He knows every thought and intent of your heart; He hears every idle word
  - Jesus intercedes for us now
  - Jesus sees everything in your life now

16  **Jesus is Lord of the Present (3)**

- He is not the historical object of our faith. He is not merely an academic subject to be mastered so we know what our spiritual heritage is.
- He is here at this moment feeling your concerns, comforting your hurts, and examining the thoughts and intents of your heart.
- Never forget that Jesus is NOW!

17  **Jesus is Lord of the Past**

- “The One Who was”
- He coexisted with the Father before creation
  - Hebrews 1:2 -- *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*
  - Genesis 1:26 -- *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”*
- You are here because Jesus sustained you through your past.

18  **Jesus is your future**

- Unhindered fellowship with Him is the future for all of us who have received Him as Savior
  - Not so for the ungodly: *The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*
  - The wicked are those who have not received Christ (John 1:12).

19  **Jesus is your imminent future**

- “The One who is coming”
  - The Greek means that Jesus stands at the threshold of history about to step from glory back into this world. His foot is lifted and He is on the way. His timing is self-determined.
  - He can come at any moment; He will come at a moment when no one expects Him, like a thief in the night.
- For the righteous, He comes as a bridegroom; for the wicked He comes as Judge.

20  **Jesus is the Faithful Witness**

- Witness = *martyr*
  - Jesus is the exact representation of God
    - *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.*

- You can't see the sun except for the radiance of its light. When you see the radiance of its light, you say, "I see the sun."
- *"Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" – John 14:9*

21  **Jesus is the Faithful Witness (2)**

- Hebrews 1:8 – *"But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."*
- God the Father calls Jesus "God." When you've seen Jesus, you've seen God!
- No other religious leader can claim this!

22  **Jesus is the Faithful Witness (3)**

- Hebrews 1:13 -- *And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?*
- Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father on the throne of heaven. Jesus and the Father are co-regents together.
  - Jesus glorifies the Father and represents Him to mankind. Jesus is God.
  - The Holy Spirit dispenses the Gospel and moves on the hearts of men to receive Christ.

23  **Jesus is the Faithful Witness (4)**

- Jesus' life depicted God's righteousness
- Jesus' words convey God's mercy
- Jesus' death as the Martyr is the ultimate demonstration of God's love (John 15:13)
- The cross demonstrates God's wrath against sin

24  **Jesus is the Faithful Witness (5)**

- καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός  
– The martyr, the faithful one
- Lamentations 3:22,23 – "Great is thy faithfulness"
- He isn't just a "pretty good" prophet or teacher or good moral man or rabbi
- He is the completely faithful representation of the Father. He is God in every sense.

25  **The Firstborn from the Dead**

- Jesus died the most agonizing form of death ever devised by men. The Latin word crux (cross) is where we get the word "excruciating."

26  **The Firstborn from the Dead (2)**

- Jesus is the first person to rise from the dead and stay risen.
- Lazarus was resurrected but died a second time. We know because his ossuary has been found.

27  **The Firstborn from the Dead (3)**

- No one could be permanently resurrected until Jesus – the Pioneer of our faith – had first "blazed the trail."

- His resurrection paves the way for the rest of us.
- He is first in priority, first in preeminence, and first in time.
- It is the resurrection referred to in Psalm 2:7.

28  **The Ruler of earth's kings**

- I do not understand how some people came to power or are still in office. But I do know that none of them reign with absolute power.
- Every czar, king, queen, dictator, prime minister, and president must bow to the ultimate authority of the king of kings – Jesus Christ!
- This role will be more fully revealed after His return (Revelation 19).

29  **The Ruler of earth's kings**

- Most European monarchs have a crown that features a cross on top of a globe. It is a reminder that Christ rules over all nations.
- The devil offered Jesus the kingdom, but Jesus bought and redeemed the kingdom by His death.

30  **A correlation**

- The One who is
  - The faithful witness
- The One who was
  - The Creator
  - The Martyr
  - The Firstborn from the dead
- The One who is coming
  - The Ruler of earth's kings

31  **The One Who Loves Us**

- Literally, "to the One who is loving us"
- Christ is still:
  - ministering to us with his angels
  - interceding for us
  - serving as our Advocate (lawyer) defending us against the accusations of Satan (the accuser and Apollyon, destroyer)
  - desiring to bless us as we follow His ways

32  **The Beatitudes of Revelation**

- *"Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near" (1:3).*
- *"Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them' " (14:13).*
- *"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed" (16:15).*
- *"Then the angel said to me, 'Write: "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" ' And he added, 'These are the true words of God' " (19:9).*

33  **The Beatitudes of Revelation (2)**

- *"Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years" (20:6).*
- *"Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book" (22:7).*
- *"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city" (22:14).*

34  **The One Who released us from our sins by His blood**

- Some Greek manuscripts have "washed" while others have the word for "freed, released, or loosed."
  - There is no difference in meaning.
- Christ's blood washed away our sins and freed us from their hold.

35  **Christ's blood frees us from sin**

- From the penalty of sin (Romans 6:23)
- From the power of sin (Romans 6:1-7)

36  **The One who made us priests to God**

- We are saved to serve as priests in His kingdom:
  - To worship Him
  - To bring Him offerings and tithes
  - To bring Him thanksgiving
  - To intercede for others in the Kingdom
  - To represent Him in the world
  - To evangelize those not in the Kingdom
- John closes with attributing praise, honor, and glory to Jesus
  -

37  **The imperatives**

- BEHOLD
  - Pay attention to Jesus
  - 1:7 is the first imperative verb in Revelation
  - Look at Jesus
    - Not just a glance
    - A long, meditating look
- TAKE HEED (LISTEN & OBEY)
  - Hebrews 3:12 – first imperative verb addressed to readers
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38  **The One who made us a kingdom**

- You and I are in a kingdom
- A kingdom has
  - A king (authority)



- Laws (principles to guide us)
- Citizenship
- Resources
- Next week we will focus more on this King of ours
- Will you join me in praying that we will see Him better?