

## Revelation 1:5 to 8

1. Jesus gets three titles here:
  - a. All three terms can be associated with Psalm 89:19-37. “Faithful witness in vs. 37, firstborn and highest of the kings of the earth vs. 27. What is that Psalm about? How does John see the Psalm in the light of Jesus? What do you think of re-interpreting a Psalm in this manner?
    - i. Faithful witness: What commission is given in Acts 1:8? What commission is therefore given to these “seven” churches? What adversity are they facing? What are they tempted by? Who/what was Jesus the faithful witness of? How might this be an encouragement?
    - ii. “Firstborn of the dead”: what might this mean? Remember in the OT the “firstborn” has a different position than the rest who follow. Jesus is firstborn in a sense of Creation 2.0.
    - iii. “Ruler of the kingdom of the earth.” How might this bring comfort to John’s readers? This often in the book refers to the adversaries of God and their satanic overlords.
2. Here we have a doxology:
  - a. To him who loving us (part) and freeing (part) us from our sin by his blood made (ind) us a kingdom, priests to God his father, to him the glory and dominion into the ages of the ages amen.
  - b. “Loving” is agape, self-donating love, “freeing” is associated with the word “to ransom”
  - c. The key here is the notion that the result of this freeing is a kingdom. We often focus on the loving and the freeing for the value it gives us as individuals but we are not loved and freed simply to enjoy that freedom as individuals, there is a larger thing that is pursued with this.
  - d. This comes right out of the story of Israel. See Exodus 19:1-6. What is that passage about? What was Israel supposed to do? What is the nature of Israel’s calling? How is this calling fulfilled in Jesus and those who are brought into Israel through his blood?
3. The doxology is followed by a bit of poetry that we should look carefully at.
  - a. To understand this passage we should look at Daniel 7:13, 14 and Zechariah 12:10-14.
    - i. What’s happening in Daniel 7? Which direction is the “son of man” moving? Notice how he is “coming with the clouds of heaven”. How does this fit into the story? Do you remember what role “clouds” fit into in the Old Testament? See Exodus 13:21, 14:19, 19:9, 19:16, 24:15, 33:9, 40:34, Lev 16:2, (lots more in Numbers) 1 Kings 8:10.
    - ii. What is happening in Zechariah 12:10-13:1.
      - (1) Notice it is only in John’s account of Jesus’ death that we have the story of the soldier piercing the side of Jesus (John 19:31-37)
      - (2) Notice that the nations here do not mourn for themselves but they mourn over Jesus.
      - (3) Notice also where the ability to this mourning comes from (I will pour out my spirit...) and that it leads to repentance and then cleansing.

- (4) We see in this passage something we will see again and again in the book of Revelation. The context for many of the OT passages was specifically Israel. Notice that John will again and again broaden the scope of the understanding of the passage to include the entire world. “Every eye will see him...” See also Daniel 7:14 where the scope is very much universal.
- iii. Also compare this verse to Matthew 24:29-31.
- b. How do we understand this passage?
  - i. A universal impulse on the part of American evangelicals will be to understand this to be a “second coming” passage.
    - (1) “Coming with the clouds” will be seen as “coming through the clouds (sky)”...
    - (2) He’ll come in judgment causing the people of the world to mourn for their own misery and calamity
    - (3) “even those who pierced him” suddenly then becomes a problem.
      - (a) Did the Apostles get the timing of Jesus’ return wrong?
      - (b) Universalized to mean “those who stand against him”?
    - (4) Is this written to a dead generation who never got the comfort of seeing it happen? Or did they die in the frustration that it didn’t happen for them? What about for us?
  - ii. If we understand the passage in the light of the OT passages a few things begin to look different.
    - (1) The Daniel passage is about the inauguration of Jesus’ reign, think Philippians 2. Think about the resurrection and the kinds of statements Jesus made afterwards: “All authority has been given to me...”
    - (2) John seems to be universalizing the Zechariah passage. If he’s universalizing the mourning/repentance, doesn’t that also fit into the universalizing the Joel passage at Pentecost? And the “new covenant” in Jer 31:31?
    - (3) Could in fact this be a passage about the ongoing “coming” of Jesus throughout the history of the world in anticipation of the final coming.
      - (a) Multiple “comings” (figuratively) in reward and judgment will in fact carry through in the book as he gets into the churches. Again, this isn’t unusual in OT language where God came in judgment against Israel through enemy armies, etc. and came in deliverance through prophets.
    - (4) In this case “seeing” would be more figurative than literal, but that isn’t shocking for this book in which we are about to “see” Jesus all over the place. This “seeing” will also be in anticipation of a final “seeing”.
    - (5) The next verse reinforces the ongoing and pervasive nature of God’s work
    - (6) This does not undercut a literal second coming, but rather expresses the fact that he comes to every generation and every generation is called to “see” him and repent for the piercings they have perpetrated.