

November 22, 2009
Christ the King

"Are You Ready to Meet Jesus When He Comes in the Clouds?"

REVELATION 1:4-8

John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father-- to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. ⁷ Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. ⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

"Look, he is coming in the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced." Every eye will see him! When Jesus comes in glory on the last day, he will be fully visible to all people, including all those he raises to life again in the twinkling of an eye. His appearance will be like lightning flashing across the sky. There will be the loud shout of an archangel and the loud blast of the trumpet. I see nothing in my Bible that says Jesus will come secretly and silently and snatch up his church with some hidden rapture. But I do see Jesus coming on the last day on clouds of glory to take us home to the place he has prepared for us.

What if we could live each day of our lives on this earth thinking to ourselves that before the day comes to a close Jesus may return on clouds of glory? What if we could live each day as if Jesus rose from the dead yesterday, is coming tomorrow, and with us today? Oh, my dear Christian friends, on this Christ the King Sunday, if we could live each day as if we were on the cusp of Jesus' return in glory, how small and insignificant our problems and troubles would be in comparison. We would have the energy and zeal of the Apostle Paul to proclaim boldly to all, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Are you ready to meet King Jesus when he comes on the clouds of glory? This morning I want to assure you that you are ready for this most important day of your life because you know who Jesus is and you know what he has done for you.

You are ready when you know who Jesus is

Yes, dear Christian, you are privileged to know who Jesus is. These words from the Revelation of John are not something strange and foreign to you. You are not repulsed or turned off by them. You relish what they tell you about your King. "Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth." Jesus is our eternal God, who was and is and he is to come. He is the Lord whose grace and mercy to his people never change. "O

give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endures forever." There is not a segment of your life where his undeserved kindness and love for you do not give you a peace this world cannot give you. John speaks of the seven spirits before the throne. We believe and confess that the Holy Spirit is the eternal God, and the Father is the eternal God and Jesus is also the eternal God.

Jesus your King and your eternal God will not change or let you down even when everything else fails you. He is the eternal Shepherd of the sheep whose goodness and mercy follows you every single day of your lives. Jesus says of himself through John, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is and was and is to come, the Almighty." Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. From A to Z we believe Jesus will be the same in every facet of our lives.

Oh, what a king we have in Jesus. Look again at what John writes about him. He is "the faithful witness." We are privileged to read in the Bible the very words Jesus speaks to us about his heavenly Father. Jesus has given us information about his heavenly Father that we cannot get by walking along the beach and seeing beautiful sunset, or meditating on top of a mountain, covered with flowers and snowfields. Jesus takes us into the very heart of our heavenly Father with his simple life changing words about love. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Oh, what a king we have in Jesus. John tells us he is the first born from the dead. Jesus is the first person, the first born, who ever died and then raised himself back to life again. See his body taken down from the cross, washed and wrapped in linen clothes, and placed into a tomb. Our King, your King and my King, he raised himself to life again just as he said he would do. He even kept the nail prints in his hand as the supreme evidence that he was nailed to the cross and died, but then came to life again. And when he comes again on clouds of glory, we will see him as the one who was able to raise our bodies back to life again.

Oh, what a king we have in Jesus. We are eager to see him again in glory. "He is the ruler of the kings of the earth." We believe he is King of kings and Lord of lords. We believe he holds the whole world in his hands. Listen to these comforting words from Ephesians chapter one. "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." Every day of our lives on this earth we know that Jesus is working out everything for our good and for his glory. He is that kind of King with that kind of power.

I once knew a young man who owned an upscale knife shop in Tucson. One day I made the mistake of asking Brian how his business was doing. He said somewhat solemnly at first but then with chuckle in his voice, "Oh, pastor, it is on the edge." I wonder how often he used that line when people asked him about his business. Think about living your life on the edge, on the cusp, always looking up, always hoping and always praying that you might soon see King Jesus. You have come to know as your Lord and God, the Alpha and the Omega, the faithful witness, the first born from the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth.

You are ready when you know what Jesus has done for you

You know who Jesus your King is. You also know what he has done for you and how much he loves you. John writes, "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father-to him be the glory and the power forever and ever!" You have a King who has loved you in a very special way.

We heard about Pontius Pilate in our gospel for today. Pontius Pilate could not believe Jesus was a king when he asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" There was our King. His face has been badly beaten and his hair covered with spit. Jesus told him, "My kingdom is not of this world." Pontius Pilate did not have the faith eyes that you possess this morning. You know your King as someone who stood before Pilate in this pitiful condition because he loved you and was determined to free you from your sins by his blood. Listen to how Romans 5 describes this unique love our King has for us. "You see just at the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this; While we were sinners, Christ died for us." As we sing in the hymn "What Wondrous Love Is This": "When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down, When I was sinking down, beneath God's righteous frown, Christ laid aside his crown for my soul, for my soul."

Jesus your King freed you from your sins. Picture yourself living in Africa about 200 years ago. You are enjoying a meal outside of your grass hut along with your family and friends. The laughter and joy of that moment is shattered when Arab slave traders swoop down on your village, haul you away in chains and put you on board a ship. For three months you live in the hold of the ship under extreme conditions of filth. Then you are taken to a new world where you are sold, and forced to work in cotton fields, separated from your family and loved ones. As bad as this was, it does not compare to the slavery of sin into which we were born. We are spiritually dead, without God, and without hope. We once had no hope of freeing ourselves from our sin and escaping the judgment that we have deserved. A glimpse back at your life here on this earth this past week shows shameful sins that deserve the full punishment of holy and perfect God. But then our King came to our world, saw our need, had compassion on us and gave his life to ransom us with his blood. Every time we look up to the cross, and see the nails, and see the crown of thorns, we can say, "That's my King. That's my Jesus giving his life so I can be free."

There is a story from the civil war time about a wealthy Northerner who went south to purchase a slave girl. As they walked away from the auction, the man turned to the girl and told her, "You're free." With amazement she responded, "You mean, I'm free to do whatever I want?" "Yes," he said. "And to say whatever I want to say?" "Yes, anything." "And to be whatever I want to be?" "Yep." "And even go wherever I want to go?" "Yes," he answered with a smile. "You're free to go wherever you'd like." She looked at him intently and replied, "Then I will go with you."

Jesus has freed us to from our sin to live for him in his kingdom. He "has made us to be a kingdom of priests to serve his God and Father- to him be the glory and power forever and ever!" Yes, we are free. We can go where ever we want, do what ever we want, and be whatever we want to be. And with one voice we joyfully say, "I want to go with my

King Jesus and live with him and serve him in joy and gladness. Martin Luther said in his *Small Catechism*, "That I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness."

"Look he is coming in the clouds and every eye will see him." You are ready to meet him because you know who he is and what he has done to rescue you. When he comes we will be able to joyfully say to each other. "That's my King!" "That's our King!" Let's live life on the edge this week looking forward to seeing our King when he comes in the clouds of glory. Amen.