

## Revelation 1:4b-8

### To Him Be Glory and Power For Ever and Ever

1. Because he is the Alpha and the Omega (all power is his)
2. Because he has made us his kingdom (he uses that power for our good)
3. Because he is coming on the clouds (he will return to take us to heaven)

### Christ the King Sunday

November 22, 2015

*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.*

*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 glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

*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.*

*"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (NIV84)*

Once upon a time, a very young son said to his father, "You know what I think about sometimes when I'm lying in bed?" (The father thought, "Well, no. But I'll bet it has something to do with trains.") The son went on, "I like to think about how Jesus is king." It's a nice picture—a preschool boy lying in bed enjoying the thought that Jesus is king. But it's also a picture in which we would do well to place ourselves. This morning, let us think for a bit about how Jesus is king, how Jesus is a better king than all other kings, and how that thrills and comforts us as we lie in bed tonight.

#### 1. He is the Alpha and the Omega

When I think of powerful kings I think of Alexander the Great. While still in his 20's he built a war machine that moved with amazing speed. Soon he'd conquered nearly the entire known world. He, and he alone, ruled an unbelievable amount of land. The men who were administrators in those lands were appointed by him and were answerable to him—because he was the king.

Or maybe I should say that he was **a** king. He certainly wasn't **the** king. People in China had a different king. He wasn't the king of people in the southern parts of Africa. He had what we might call a limited sphere of authority. His power did not extend for ever and ever. But Jesus' power does. Jesus surpasses the kings of this world in the extent of his power, in how far his power reaches.

Jesus says, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.*" Even if you know very little about the Greek language, you may know that Alpha is the first letter in the alphabet, and Omega is the last letter. Jesus calls himself the Alpha and the Omega later in Revelation, and follows it up with, "*the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*" (22:13). Combined with "*who is, who was, and who is to come*", the meaning of Jesus is clear. He's saying, "I am The King. My power existed even before the creation of the world. I reigned before time began, and I will reign long after this world comes to an end. I have authority over everything, both in heaven and on earth. There is no limit to MY authority."

#### 2. Because he has made us his kingdom

Still, the fact that a king has power and authority isn't always very comforting for the king's subjects. Louis XIV of France was evidence of that.

There is no denying that he had great power. That's evident by the wealth displayed in and the sheer enormity of his palace in Versailles. Thousands of workers took years to build it. To build a comparable structure today would cost billions of dollars.

But although Louis was a wealthy and powerful man, he didn't receive glory from his people, and that is because he wasn't loved. He wasn't loved because, although he had power, he didn't use it for the good of his people. He crushed them with heavy taxes. He made no effort to free them from poverty--because he didn't love them. He did a lot of powerful things, but he didn't use that power for the good of his subjects. Instead, he used it for his own good.

Jesus our King was different. We have already seen how he is the Alpha and the Omega. We have seen that he has all power in heaven and earth. The next question is, "How did Jesus use that power?"

We might think that the correct use of a king's power is to reward and protect those who are good to you and to punish all those who are hateful towards you. It would hardly do a king any good to reward those who hated him. What kind of power would that be?

But Jesus had some subjects who hated him. Jesus had some subjects who never missed an opportunity to spite him. In fact, they had never done one loving thing for him. Decrees from him were spit on and destroyed. Demands to bow before the king were met with proud refusal to submit.

These subjects were you and I. Jesus makes it very clear what we deserve for such behavior in Matthew. *"Then [the King, Jesus] will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'" (25:41-43)* That is exactly how we were.

Our enemies, sin and Satan, held us captive, and our souls were doomed to death in Hell. But in spite of our complete hatred for him, Jesus loved us. And Jesus our King didn't just help us out by giving us food and shelter. Jesus defended us against our enemies. A good king was supposed to lead his troops into battle and even be willing to die for his people. But even King David didn't always do this. At the time of his adultery with Bathsheba, his troops were at war. But David had stayed behind in Jerusalem. It's as though he were saying, "I think I've done enough. I've pointed out the enemy. I've gotten you organized. I've taught you some things about how to fight against your enemies. Now you go do the rest. I'm not going to do everything for you!"

That's the sort of a king that many people make out Jesus to be. "Well, I saw that you were held captive by sin so I came to earth to make you aware of what a mess you were in. Then I showed you how you should have lived in order to avoid being taken captive. I've given you words of encouragement in the Bible. Now you go do the rest! I'm not going to do everything for you!"

But what kind of a king would Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega, the Almighty, be if he had the power to help his helpless people and didn't use it, but instead gave them solutions which they could never carry out?

He would be no king at all—and really, not even a very good teacher!

Unlike David, he gave his life for his people. The text says that he has *"freed us from our sins by his blood"*. Through his death and through his blood poured out as a sacrifice for sin, Jesus defeated our enemies. He released us from the chains of sin.

Now, by that act of loving us and freeing us from our sins, he has brought us into and made us a part of his kingdom. In his kingdom we are safe. Freed from sin, we are free to serve and honor him and to give him glory.

### 3. **Because he is coming on the clouds**

And we give him that glory “for ever and ever.” We do this because his reign and the results of that reign last for ever and ever.

King Solomon was a great king for the people of Israel. He did much more for his people than Louis XIV had ever done. He defeated Israel’s enemies. Not only peace but also prosperity prevailed.

But then Solomon died. And within a very short time Israel had split into two kingdoms. Peace had departed. Less than 500 years after Solomon's death, the two kingdoms had been defeated and deported to Assyria and Babylon. Prosperity had departed. And there was nothing Solomon could do about it. There was no glory left to give to Solomon because the results of his reign had been only temporary.

But Jesus continues to rule to this day and he will continue to rule until Judgment Day. Verse 7 tells us, *“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.”*

On the Last Day, Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead—all the peoples of the earth. Now perhaps it seems strange to hear that when he returns “all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.” Good—I’m glad that it seems strange to you!

I’m glad that you don’t expect to be mourning on Judgment Day!

But some people will. And it won’t be the king’s fault. It won’t be because he failed to love them. Actually, they’ll end up mourning because they will realize just how much they had been loved, just how perfectly he had freed them from sin, and how foolishly they had rejected that freedom until it was too late.

Picture a man who had been a slave in the South during the 1850's and throughout the Civil War. When President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, that slave was freed. The President had said so. He had the power and the authority to do so.

But if the slave didn't actually believe it, he would have gone right on being treated like property, he would squelched any talk among his children and relatives about this hopeless promise of freedom that people were talking about, he would have allowed his chains to continue to bind him and rob him of his freedom and life.

Imagine, then, if on his deathbed, that slave had been visited by President Lincoln. It wouldn't have been a joyous occasion, would it? No, it would have been cause for mourning, because that slave would have seen how he had rejected his freedom--and now it was too late.

When Jesus declared the world to be free from its sins, the world was indeed freed. He has the power and the authority to do so. But when people reject it--either by refusing to believe that they are slaves in the first place, or else by believing that they could eventually free themselves from sin--when people reject the freedom that Christ offers, they make themselves slaves again.

And when Christ the King returns in all his power and glory, when those people see that he did indeed have the power and the authority to free them, they will most certainly "mourn." Because it will be too late. Because they refused to be his faithful, believing subjects, Jesus will not be their loving, saving King. Instead he will judge them and send them to hell.

But it will be a different story for us. The Holy Spirit has created faith in us. We have joyously accepted that freedom and begun living a life of thanks to God. And we know what the result will be for us on that day when we come before the Judge. We know that we will be declared not guilty because of our King's work for us. We know that there will be no enemy left for us to

face. We will be taken to heaven to reign with our King for ever and ever, where we will serve him and his Father for ever and ever.

So what effect does this have on you today? I have already hinted at it, but John sums it up beautifully in just five words. The very first verse of our text says, "Grace and peace to you." John isn't expressing here a future wish for the people he writes to. He is expressing a reality. Because of the grace, or undeserved love, that has been shown to us by Jesus our King, we have peace. We have peace here on this earth, knowing that Jesus is the King of all the powers of this earth. We have peace knowing that not only does our King protect us from the enemies who can affect our life here on earth, but we have peace knowing that our King has freed us from the enemies who can affect our eternal life. Because of this certainty, we have the peace of knowing that heaven is not some future hope that we have--if everything goes right, but that heaven is something that is ours right now, because we are living in the kingdom of Jesus. We have peace by knowing that Jesus keeps us in his kingdom--not by something as fragile as human power, but Jesus keeps us in that kingdom every time we hear his Word by strengthening our faith--and nothing is more powerful than the Word of Jesus our King.

Earthly kings come and earthly kings go. They all have a limited amount of power for a time. Even the greatest of leaders finally must yield to a different kind of enemy--death. Isn't it good to know that our life, and especially our eternal life, doesn't rest on some mortal king who makes mistakes and commits sins like everybody else? Let's give the honor and glory to where it belongs. Let's give it to our King, Jesus Christ. He is the first and the last, he's made us into a kingdom; and he will be coming back in the clouds to bless us forevermore. Think about that when you're lying in bed tonight! To him be glory forever and ever! Amen.