

REVELATION 1:1

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Date: 08 September 2013

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[0 : 00] Father, thank you, Father, that we can meet in the presence of Jesus and think about his word.

We acknowledge before you, Father, that it's Jesus' word. Jesus is the Savior. Jesus is the Lord. And I ask, Father, for myself that you help me to bring glory to you and serve this people as I try to lead us in reading and thinking and applying your word, that you might help all of us, Father, to be good soil so that we will hear your word and receive your word and bear fruit in our lives to your glory through hearing and receiving your word.

So, Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us gently but deeply. And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. I was once the model for the Antichrist.

I don't want you to stop. This isn't some type of dramatic conversion story. But it was when I was in my 20s and I went to church this one Sunday.

And so I was a visitor in the church. And I didn't realize that I didn't know much about the church. I was just going to go to church on a Sunday morning. And they were having a prophecy conference with a special speaker.

[1 : 28] And the speaker had like a flip chart. He was doing drawings to illustrate things. And it was a prophecy conference. And back in those days, I used to have hair down to here.

And I had a big beard. And I was dressed in a really, really rumpled shirt and jeans. And it looked like everybody in the church looked like they could have been Mormon missionaries or the parents of Mormon missionaries.

And so I looked a little bit different than everybody else. And I still remember the guy up in the front. He's talking and talking. He said, we're going to drive the Antichrist. Looks around.

Let's make him a hippie. So he made him with long hair and a beard. I wonder where any of them are in this congregation other than me. Anyway, people all moved a little bit away from me in the seats.

No, I'm just making that up. I think a lot of people felt really embarrassed that he went ahead and did it. That was one of those take no prisoner types of churches. And that was sort of an interesting thing.

[2 : 31] I know a fellow who fervently believes that the pope is the Antichrist. So that when the pope dies, he says, well, I guess that wasn't the pope that's going to be the Antichrist.

I wonder if this next pope will be the Antichrist. And he's very, very firmly convinced of that from his reading of the Bible that the pope is the Antichrist.

And we all know that the book of Revelation attracts kooky people. It's probably before most of your times. But a very, very early in terms of media sensation serial killer was a guy by the name of Charles Manson.

And he was completely and utterly besotted with the book of Revelation and actually put phrases from it in the blood of his victims after he and his followers butchered people in a house and sort of wrote it, some of the things from the book of Revelation on the walls.

And so it's a very, very controversial book. In fact, I was just talking to a person from the congregation who said that when they heard that I was going to be preaching through the book of Revelation, that they were wondering if they would go to a different church for the next three or four months.

[3 : 48] Because I guess in some ways they didn't think that much good would come out of it. It's a very difficult book. And, you know, one of the things, and this is going to be something that you're going to maybe learn about yourself, a lot of Christians don't read the book at all because it's just like, whoa, whoa, what on earth does that mean?

And others read it lots and lots and lots and listen to lots of tapes on it and everything like that. And without realizing it, they always hear people who basically say the same type of way of reading the book.

And so we believe that we're very biblical in reading the book this way. And if somebody reads the book or interprets it in a way that's outside of this way, then they get very upset.

And they'll end up thinking that that person maybe isn't taking the Bible very seriously, doesn't believe the Bible or whatever else. So it arouses strong emotions.

It's a confusing book to read. And we're going to read it together over the next few months. Bit by bit by bit, there'll be a few weeks where we take off ramps and look at other texts.

[4 : 54] I mean, we're Christmas. We're going to talk about the Antichrist on Christmas Eve. Although that might be interesting to do. I don't know. So we'll have different off ramps. So just pray for me week by week by week that as we as a congregation open the Bible, and we're just going to look at it.

We're going to begin at Revelation 1, verse 1. And week by week, we're going to go verse by verse throughout the Bible. We're going to study this book, which either is completely and utterly neglected and abandoned by Christians, or is almost like a fixation for Christians.

And it seems like there's very few of us who can sort of find somewhere in between where we can read the book. So this week and all weeks, hopefully you bring your Bibles. And there's always extra Bibles up here.

You're welcome to always come and take a Bible. Keep it if you want or return it afterwards. And it would be a great help to me now if we begin to see whether, in fact, the Pope is the Antichrist or whether the rapture is going to come in 10 minutes and all of those other topics, if you would join with me in looking at Revelation 1, verse 1.

And the book of Revelation is an easy book to find in the Bible. It's the very, very last book. Just turn to the end, and there it is. And let's read the first three verses. I'll read them, and you can listen.

[6 : 04] The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant, John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. We're just going to pause here, and we're going to spend some time looking at these three verses, which open the book, which introduce the whole book and the topic of the book to the reader.

One of the things which is really important to remember when we read a book, a book of Revelation, is that it, in fact, was a book. It is a book. But if you could go back in a time machine and see John as he wrote it, he probably wrote it on something like a scroll, and he would have started up here, and it was, and then he would have just, you know, he couldn't cut and paste and click and do all those things we do with the internet, you know, with Word today, and he would have just kept on rolling it, and then rolling it, and rolling it, and rolling it, and just keeping writing, and writing, and writing until he was finished.

And so it begins a certain way, and the way it begins is very important. And here's the first thing that we have to understand about the book of Revelation. The first thing for us to understand about the book of Revelation is that Jesus reveals himself to me.

Now, by the way, normally when I do my notes, I put it, Jesus reveals himself to me so that if you're making the notes and you're reading it, then you're to take it that Jesus reveals himself to me.

[7 : 44] But in other words, to you, I try to avoid plural words often just to try to make it so that it becomes very, very specific to you. But that's how the book begins.

It's going to be a book about Jesus, and ultimately by Jesus. And that comes, it's not obvious when we read it in English, but the very, very opening five words in English, the revelation of Jesus Christ, in the original language, it could be the revelation of Jesus Christ, the revelation from Jesus Christ, or the revelation by Jesus Christ.

grammatically in the original language, all of those are completely valid possibilities. And so I would take it that John, under the inspiration of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, after the angel speaks to him or comes to him, that John specifically wrote that type of ambiguity into the text.

Not to be ambiguous, but to have something which is a very, very rich phrase which only uses a couple of words. So, even though, if you went back in the time machine, and you were able to find John, on the island of Patmos, you would see him there writing, it's his hand, the claim that John is making, that the ultimate person responsible for the writing of the book is Jesus.

And that the topic of the book is Jesus. This is a bit of a surprise to a lot of us. We probably expected, many of us expected, it's going to begin, you know, this is the revelation of all the things that are going to come in the future.

[9 : 23] The revelation of the rapture, and the tribulation, and the millennium, and the, you know, and all that. And, and actually the rapture isn't in the book of Revelation, but many, he's going, there's going to be a whole lot of things that are going to be talked about in the book, but the book just says at the beginning, the way we have to understand the book, whenever we're reading it, whatever chapter we're in, is that it's, it's something that Jesus, right, has ultimately caused to be written for us, and it's going to be about him.

It's going to be about what he's done, what he's doing, and what he will do. But you see, here's one of the things, one of the things that's really struck me in my, it's one of the things in my summer, that time, sort of, during the summer, it's something that's really struck me in a new way.

I know it's old hat for a lot of you folks, and, you know, but a lot of times in the Christian life, you sort of forget things, and then it really comes home to you again. And one of the things that's really struck me this summer, is that God has an assignment for each of us.

God has an assignment for our church. And that, the way that we get to know God, is as we keep the assignments he gives us.

And that we are to understand that the assignments that God gives us, will always be assignments that are beyond our strength, beyond our wisdom, beyond our resources. And therefore, part of the way that we get to know who God is, is that as we keep the assignments, as we walk into the assignments that he gives us, we realize that we can only walk into those assignments, if we get the wisdom, and the strength, and the resources that only he has.

[11 : 05] And so it is here, that in the book of Revelation, it's ultimately a revelation of Jesus, from Jesus, and as we're going to see, it's about the things that Jesus has done, is doing, and will do.

It's about what Jesus is doing, and how he changes lives. And, and, and that's what the book is always going to be about, no matter what else it's talking about.

And, and, and, and the other thing about this, well, some of you might say, George, if, if Jesus is revealing it, then why on earth is it so weird? Like, are you saying that Jesus is weird?

Like, why is it so weird? Now, maybe some of you, if you've never read the book, let me tell you right now, the book of Revelation is weird. Okay? But, but here's the thing.

I have a friend, I am not making this up. One of his hobbies is reading canon law. If I was to send him an email and say, whoa, this denomination or this church just posted their whole canon law online, and you can read it, it would be as if I gave him the best Christmas present he'd had all year.

[12 : 22] He would probably play hooky from work, because he couldn't resist the temptation to go and read canon law. He's weird. Yeah, I know.

If he was here in the room, he would acknowledge that he's weird, you know? You know, he'd even have a Bible verse to support it. You know, God loves peculiar, you know, God's calling us to be a peculiar people.

It's from the King James Version of the Bible. And, but, you know, there's all sorts of different people. Some of us, we love poetry. Some of us, we love stories. Some of us, we like law. Some of us, we like, I like more philosophy.

And some of us, no, philosophy. Just go to sleep. Law, sleep. But then I say, I'm going to tell you a story that have dragons, talking birds, angel armies, seal, seal things, eating scrolls, birds that fly in the heavens and announce doom, and your ears pick up.

Dragons? Talking birds? Strange beasts? Angel armies? Demons? Whoa! Now we're talking.

[13 : 34] And you see, if the Bible as a whole is always, you see, what is always about God revealing Jesus, and what, in the case of the Old Testament, it's about what Jesus is going to do.

You know, but for us, it's after the crucifixion, the resurrection, it's what Jesus has done, what he's doing, and what he will do. If God wants to speak to all of us, and for those of us who just love the symbolic, you know, those of us who are more mystically inclined, or who are painters, or into theater, you know, or into sculpting, or those who love fantasy novels, the book of Revelation is going to really speak to us in a very, very powerful way.

Jesus will become more real to us by reading such a book. So it's not that Jesus is weird, it just is that Jesus wants to speak to all sorts of people, even those of us who just, the idea of dragons is really, really fantastic.

Now, there's another thing about this book, is that these three verses that I just read, you might not realize it, but it's actually, it's bringing up a perpetual revolution that the Bible brings into the world.

And it's going to continually talk about very, very controversial subjects, but we might not realize it. For instance, verse three, which I'll read again in a moment, has a lot to say about same-sex marriage ceremonies in churches, and same-sex blessing ceremonies in churches.

[15 : 03] And you go, what? George, I wonder if you're going to get that from verse three. I'll read it again in a moment. But here's the thing. On one, well, let's read it right now.

Verse three. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. So here's the summary point. I did this on Friday.

If I could redo it this morning, I would have done it a little bit different. But the summary point here is that Jesus promises me blessing. Jesus promises me blessing. But it needs to be a bit unpacked.

Here's the thing. In the pagan world, in the time that John was writing this, there was the gods, and there was right and wrong.

[16 : 07] And the gods had, in a sense, nothing whatsoever to do with right or wrong. And right or wrong, on one level, had nothing to do with the gods. They were completely separate.

And so, you could know all sorts of things about the gods, but knowing things about the gods wouldn't actually tell you anything about right and wrong. And you could know all sorts of things about right and wrong, but that actually wouldn't help you to know anything about the gods.

And when the gods speak to you and tell you to do something, well, what they speak to you to do and tell you to do hasn't necessarily anything to do with right or wrong.

It might be, I'm feeling grouchy and grumpy do a sacrifice. I'm feeling grouchy and grumpy do some heroic act. It might be that I, you know, actually, you're basically nothing more than an ant to me, and I'm really, really pissed off at this other god, so could you go and do something against this other god or this other goddess?

And so it might be something liturgical. It might be something in terms of a sacrifice. You know, it might be something good, by the way. It doesn't, it's not always, it wasn't always evil, but, you know, when a god speaks and tells you what to do, first of all, you couldn't be at all confident that what the god wants you to do is all connected to your blessing.

[17 : 24] Because as far as you know, the god might be treating you like an ant, and you're just part of, a little bit of a pawn because he's mad or she's mad at what some other god has done. You have no idea whether it has anything to do at all with blessing, and you have no idea at all whether it has anything to do with right or wrong, and it's just something you've got to do because the gods are the gods and we are not, and it's just something you have to do.

And so the world described here, where in verse 3 it says, blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it for the time is near.

There's Jesus is speaking to us, and Jesus is saying that ultimately I'm going to speak to you. This book of Revelation is a word to you, my servants, and I want you to hear the word, and I want you to keep the word, I want you to live the word, and you have to understand that all of my words are for your blessing.

But here's the thing it's connected to for same-sex blessings and same-sex marriages. Maybe this is something you're familiar with, maybe it's just, it's going to sort of boggle your mind, but one of the ways that churches allow same-sex marriages or blessings to happen is they say that, you know, as long as we affirm creedal things in the creed and core doctrine about God, that's something that we can't change, but things like how we live our lives are right or wrong, that's never core or creedal.

We can differ on it. And so, well, I don't see same-sex blessing or marriage is happening in churches. I don't see that anywhere in the creed, like we just read the creed.

[19 : 15] It doesn't mention it. You know, therefore, you know, we all understand who God is. He's the creator and, you know, Jesus, you know, God of God, light of light, and the Holy Spirit.

We all understand all that stuff. And that's just all good about God. And then there's, oh, doesn't that sound like paganism? That's pagan. There's the God.

You know all about the gods. Right and wrong are way over here. It's paganism. That's what it is. Paganism.

It doesn't matter if the person claims to be evangelical or charismatic. It's pagan. What does Jesus say? Jesus is saying that my words are going to demand, not that you perform certain liturgies, not that you perform heroic deeds, not that you have to wonder whether anything that I say is ultimately going to hurt you because ultimately you're just an ant and I don't care if you get squished.

I am not at all like the pagan gods. I'm not at all like the pagan world. I am, I actually speak and you can hear and I want you to hear what I say.

[20 : 31] I want to hear what you say in the book of, I say in the book of Revelation. I want you to heed it and keep it and live it and it's going to involve different things in ethics and how you actually live your lives in an ethical and moral way.

It's going to change what you long for, what you fear, what you need to repent of, what you're going to pray that you're able to actually keep. It's going to affect your life.

It's going to affect your life in a way that is connected to me and Jesus is only good. God is only good. See, that's in the biblical world. In the biblical world there's God and God is good.

That's the biblical world. It's the biblical revolution. The constant revolution whether it's into an Indian culture or a Confucian culture or a Buddhist culture or a post-capitalist Western culture and all of those attempts to try to separate out morality from whom God is in all of those that constant human desire and drive to separate out morality from who God is and what is ultimate in the midst of this constant drift of human life the Bible provides this constant revolution.

God is good. There's not goodness in God but God is good and Jesus speaks so that we will hear and keep it and in keeping it we'll be blessed.

[22 : 01] Here's something which is very, very important for us. A couple of years ago I was talking to a woman she was the head of a Christian organization well-known Christian organization her family were in fact her family members were Anglican ministers was an Anglican minister and you know she heard about our stand for the gospel and for the Bible and she started to talk to me and she said oh well you know George the problem is that this is such a complicated issue and she went on and on and on for me for a few minutes about how it was complicated and then you know I read the book how to win friends and influence people and you know those of you who know me I just always practice that you know and you know and some of you know I have a counseling degree so you know I practice you know unconditional positive regard and to be non-judgmental and all that no actually I don't so I mean actually a lot of us would be better off if we read

Norman Vincent Peale a bit let me tell you some of us could take off some of our rough edges okay but I listened to her it was one of those things and I said you know you got it completely wrong you know me I'm all into gray and ambiguity I said you got it completely wrong the problem is that the issue is too simple and clear cut and you don't want to do it boy there was an awkward pause in that conversation and it actually ended after a couple of minutes after that because you know she pushed back and I said no no no no the problem is you read the Bible on this the Bible is very clear it doesn't give us an out and you don't want to do it some of you have heard this story before it was one of those really one of those times in my life where God just so humbled me and spoke into my life in a way that really has you know hasn't changed my life as much as it needs to and I'm still working on it but it's really changed me and it's the story of I think it was in

Colossians or something like that and I was struggling with trying to prepare my sermon and I was out for my run and it was as if God just spoke to me directly and he said George the reason you're having so much trouble with your sermon is that the Greek and the text is really clear and you are afraid to say it and so you are using all of your cleverness and all of your IQ and all of your linguistic resources to try to create nuances and off ramps and shadings and images to try to fool the congregation so they don't actually hear the clarity of the text you know what the problem was those of you who have heard the story before the problem was it said the Bible text said that if you're outside of Jesus you're a corpse and I was afraid to say it I wanted to nuance it and make it more relevant and all that stuff and the second I realized that that's what was going on

I realized I had to stand up on a Sunday morning and tell the congregation that apart from Jesus they were a corpse and by the way the sermon was easy to do after that here's the thing that we get from this when we hear verse 3 when we hear verse 3 and it says blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it for the time is near here's the thing as I walk the Jesus way by God's grace I obey my way to clarity as I walk the Jesus way by God's grace I obey my way to clarity I don't think my way to clarity I'm not denying thinking by the way but you know at the end of the day if you sort of know what the word is saying and you don't want to do it you refuse to do it you refuse to accept it then all of your cleverness and all of your skills will just be they'll just be spinning your wheels we need to obey our way to clarity we need to obey our way to clarity

I mean you know to the man who's thinking of committing adultery on his wife or has committed adultery with his wife and now starts to tell me all about his conflicted emotions about his wife or anything like that I mean the fact of the matter is is you have to stop sleeping with the woman who's not your wife you just you gotta stop well I don't know if my needs will be met I don't know if this I don't know if that well you know what goodness is good for you and I don't know all the different ways that God's gonna work in your life I'm not God I don't know what's gonna happen but I know that you need to obey your way to clarity and you have to obey your way to seeing the good things that God is gonna work in your life something like tithing is completely and utterly counterintuitive how is it that giving away 10% of our money could possibly be good for us doesn't God know how tight things are I mean how could that possibly be how is it that God could possibly still meet my needs if I did something like that well we can try to think it through and think it through all we want but the bottom line is we need to obey our way to clarity and there's so much in the Bible that just requires us to trustingly take those at least first steps of obedience as God brings clarity to our hearts and minds and lives as we try to follow what he teaches so here's the first two things that are very very big things about the text of the book of Revelation the first thing is that whatever it is whether we're reading about birds that fly in the heavens announcing doom or whether it's about weird beasts or whether it's about a dragon or whether it's about weird creatures bowing down before the throne of God or circling angels dancing and singing and all those other weird things is that as we read the book it's always about

[28 : 08] Jesus what he's done what he's doing and what he will do and there's something in there for us to live the book of Revelation is always contemporary to my life it's not just so God will tell me things about when Jesus returns whether that's in a thousand years or in a week's time or in fifty years there's things about that I'm not saying there isn't but it's not just about that it's always about things that will affect my life day to day a couple of weeks ago I think it was my first week back from holidays it was the gay pride parade and I have a coffee shop that I go to after the church service and on my way home I treat myself to a dark roast coffee on the way home and it was right on the gay pride parade route and so I pulled in the spot I was going to park to go and walk and get the coffee and there was a lone man standing there with a cross and on the cross all it said was are you ready he looked nervous

I had to say to myself gosh you've got guts and he just stood there all the rainbows and all that going by he just stood there didn't say anything just holding a big wooden cross says on it are you ready and that's a really really hard thing to do we can all debate later on whether it's the right thing to do or not but you know whether it's the wisest thing to do we can have honest debate about that maybe we have to obey our way to clarity on this one by the way friends I'll just tell you one other story I can't remember what the issue is it might have been about the very very first steps towards same-sex marriages but it might have been something to do with abortion I'd only been in this church about two years or something like this when I came to this church people didn't want me as their pastor there was lots of complaints about me it wasn't a church which was used to having the

Bible preached on Sunday mornings and inviting people to give their lives to Jesus and somebody called me on a Friday and said George you've got to call it was a bit of a phone train you've got to call your congregation to pray on Sunday this issue is going to be it's being snuck in it's going to be debated in the house on Monday or Tuesday and we're trying to mobilize Christians to pray and I have to confess I am not I am embarrassed about this but I have to confess the first thing that went through my mind is I wish they told me about this after Sunday because now I'm stuck if I'd read about it in the paper on Wednesday I could oh you know those bad politicians and oh you know if I had known I would have done something and oh blah blah blah but the second I knew I knew I could not evade my responsibility it was I you know it was sleepless I'm not saying that obeying our way to clarity is an easy thing to do I'm just saying it's the biblical way to do it it's what Jesus is telling us to do he's telling us to hear the words and to keep them and as we keep them

God will bless us that's what it's telling us so here's the thing back to the guy the lone guy on the parade route for the gay pride parade standing holding a big wooden cross like this with on it are you ready we're honest when we look at the world it looks like there's all sorts of things going on in the world which are way too big for us to do anything about that are just overwhelming like if we're honest there's a whole pile of things like tsunamis which are just coming in overwhelming it struck me lately how many modern create praise choruses make references to chaos in it it shows that for many of us Christians we have this sense of something engulfing us which is not Christian which is causing problems and so if we're honest whether it's this juggernaut that seems to want to allow legalized doctors to put people to death legally or all these other things and then you can pick your own favorite one or the march of global capitalism or the march of Islam or you know just you take your pick maybe if we went out and had coffee or something afterwards we'd all have maybe we'd have some common things which are overwhelming and maybe we'd have different ones that maybe reflect our political beliefs or something like that but it's a very very common sense that things are overwhelming us that there are all these big things going on in our culture and I don't know if that's worse now than it was 30 years ago or 50 years ago or 80 years ago or 90 years ago

I can't remember 30 years ago very well I mean I was alive and everything but I can't remember that very well I'm probably going to get my memories all mixed up and every age think they're different than other ages just like every age think that the young people are slackers and will never amount to anything you know those who are 10 years old now they're going to say that about their own kids or grandkids I mean that's just a common human problem and so there's this conflict that's true right come on all you boomers right okay you know there's other you know anyway so and those people who've been stuck with boomers as parents we have this view that there's all these overwhelming looming things and if there's one other thing for us to get out of the book of Revelation as we go into it in the week by week by week and as we remember week by week by week there's always about Jesus it's always about what he's done what he's doing what he's going to do and it's always there's going to always be something in here that we can keep that we can obey it's going to speak into our lives and one of the things that's going to speak into our lives is this

[34 : 12] Jesus is big and people are small and in him there are no little people Jesus is big and people are small and in him there are no little people turn and look at verses four to eight if we don't get this week by week by week that the book of revelation is not talking about images that give us insight into our unconscious it's not just talking about it's not just metaphors for social processes it's not just political code to encourage us under oppression it's not it's not it is talking about immensities it is talking about the living God it is talking about the redemption of the human race it is talking about things that shake and shape the planet and the stars and the cosmos it's talking about angels and Jesus dying and God taking little tiny people like us and fitting us for heaven it's talking about immensities and God knows that we spend our days thinking that those involved in capitalism or those involved in socialism or those involved in Islam or those involved in this movement that they're really big and we all feel like we're little tiny it'sy bitsy people and the book of revelation is all about

Jesus is big and people are small small but in him by God's grace there are no little people there are no little people I'm not about leprechauns okay there I don't think there are leprechauns by the way okay hobbits didn't sort of survive whatever happened with the big people winning and now anyway you know in a world where people are big and God is small the world is filled with little people but in the world where God is big Jesus is big and people are small it's to change how we look we are not to read and understand events from the perspective that people are big and God is small but that Jesus is big and people are small but there are no little people listen to what verses 4 to 8 say and it's going to be all the way through the book part of the reason it uses dragons and beasts and angels and scrolls and a third of the earth dying and blood this high and going that far it's giving us big giant images so that we will get that

Jesus is big listen to verse 4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia grace to you and peace from him and how's he going to refer to God who is and who was and who is to come who is and who was and who is to come who's the true and living God the true and living God is the one who's always been who's here right now who always will be and capitalists or socialists or islamo-fascists or pick your group we can shake our hands and do whatever we want but God has always been is here right now and always will be way bigger than time way I will come and go all those other movements will come and go God is the one who is and who was and will be and the seven from the seven spirit who are before his throne I'm going to talk about this next week more but that's actually just a poetic way of referring to the

Holy Spirit and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness the firstborn of the dead what's that saying Jesus has died on the cross he's died as a substitute for ordinary people he's risen from the dead and he's now the firstborn of the dead it means that when we get in him we are part of a new humanity that has a completely different now origin it's not that my origin that I'm determined by the genetics of my mom I'm not determined by my caste I'm not determined by my social class I'm not determined by my sexuality I am not determined my true origins isn't that I was born in Canada or that I had the child of Irish immigrants is that when we get into Jesus there is a completely new identity and destiny which is now mine because Jesus is the firstborn he is the first born and that means it implies that there's others who are born after him and that I am now part of when I get in him that what happens is

I am now in that lineage of the first born of the dead that death no longer has dominion over me that death is no longer the final word about me that it is not the primary descriptor of me that the primary descriptor of me is now going to come from Jesus who gives me a new beginning and a new destiny and that that destiny is absolutely secure and that this is not just for me this is for an untouchable in India this is for the person who lives in the worst slum of the the worst part of the worst slum in Kenya this is for the person who this is for the person who is living in Syria and that every single side keeps kicking them this is for the rich this is for those who are same sex attracted this is for soccer moms this is this is a new identity a new way of living and a new destiny comes from being in

[40 : 17] Jesus see that that's why I'm going to keep reading this that's why when Jesus is big and people are small there are no little people the worst handicapped person the person with the worst Alzheimer's that's what they're now enduring but they are if they have actually come into a relationship with Jesus and they are in Jesus and he is in them they are now of the lineage and the life of the firstborn of the dead and that's their destiny that's their ultimate identity and the ruler of the kings on earth verse 5 again and from Jesus Christ who is Jesus he's the faithful witness the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of the kings on earth the ruler of socialism socialist leaders capitalist leaders gay pride leaders those who don't like gay pride take your politics I don't want to be left or right in this it's not a left wing sermon it's not a right wing sermon it's a

Jesus sermon left and right they'll all ultimately have to do this left and right are political categories not Jesus categories and the ruler of kings on earth to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom a kingly people priest to his God and father to him be glory and dominion forever and ever amen behold he is coming with the clouds and every eye will see him even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of them even so amen I am the alpha and the omega says the Lord God who is and who was and who is to come the almighty Jesus died to save he lives to rule and he will certainly come again Jesus died to save lives to rule and will certainly come again and week by week as we go through the book of revelation it's always going to be about Jesus it's always going to be about the fact that he died that he lives to rule that he's going to come again and it's always going to be a present word to us that invites us to obey and as we listen and obey he will bless please stand let's just bow our heads in prayer father you know even now that some of us here maybe

I mean all of us in some way father but some of us maybe are mightily struggling with an area in our lives of obedience father you know that there are some people here even now that the holy spirit is moving in their lives and moving in their hearts moving in our lives and our hearts about a particular area of obedience father I just ask that your holy spirit would gently but deeply come upon those of us at this time that you would help us father to trust the word of Jesus and that you ultimately will bless us if we keep your word maybe it's about forgiving something for the past maybe it's about taking a step of faith maybe father it's about resisting some temptation maybe it's about making some sacrifice to take a step in the future father you know what it is you know that you know the word that you've spoken into our lives and we just ask father we give you permission we encourage you father to bring the convicting power of your holy spirit to bear in our lives we might hear what it is that you're leading us to do that we might have the courage to obey and understand that you will bless all this we ask in the name of Jesus your son and our savior amen to from men and and he h and and and and uh and i