

Family Devotion: The Prince's Bride (Week 2)

Read Together: Revelation 1:4-10

Big Ideas:

1. **Grace and Peace from the Trinity** (vv. 4-5a)
 - God the Father: "The One who is and who was and who is to come" (Remember Moses and the burning bush? "I AM")
 - The Holy Spirit: "The seven Spirits" (Isaiah 11:2 lists seven aspects of God's Spirit)
 - Jesus Christ: Gets three titles because He's the main character
2. **Jesus's Three Titles Matter** (v. 5)
 - **Faithful witness** - He stayed true even when it cost Him everything
 - **Firstborn from the dead** - He conquered death and promises the same for us
 - **Ruler of kings** - He's the real King, not Caesar or any earthly power
3. **What Jesus Did For Us** (vv. 5b-6)
 - He loves us
 - He released us from sin (like untying a rope that held us captive)
 - He made us priests and priestesses in His kingdom

For Discussion:

- John was exiled to an island for following Jesus. What does it cost us to follow Jesus today?
- We're citizens of heaven living as "aliens" here. What does that look like in our family this week?

Pray Together: Thank Jesus for loving us, freeing us, and making us part of His kingdom—even when life is hard.

Personal Devotion: The Threefold Portrait of Christ

Scripture: Revelation 1:4-10

Opening Prayer: Lord, pull back the curtain between heaven and earth. Let me see Jesus as John saw Him—not cut down to my size, but in His full glory, power, and gentleness. Speak to me through Your Word today. Amen.

Context: John wrote to seven churches in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) facing real persecution under Roman rule. He wasn't exiled to a brutal prison camp—recent archaeology shows Patmos was a thriving island community. But John suffered *relegatio*—banishment reserved for influential dissidents Rome couldn't safely execute without creating martyrs. This tells us something: John wasn't just a random fisherman. He led seven major churches, had connections

to Jerusalem's elite, and as the last living apostle, commanded a massive following. Rome feared his influence more than his life.

The Greeting: Grace and Peace from the Trinity (vv. 4-5a)

John wishes the churches "grace and peace" from three sources—Father, Spirit, Son. Notice the deliberate phrasing:

God the Father: "The One who is and who was and who is to come"

- Direct echo of Exodus 3:14: "I AM WHO I AM"
- The eternal, unchanging, covenant-keeping God
- He was faithful to Israel; He'll be faithful to His church

The Holy Spirit: "The seven Spirits before His throne"

- Isaiah 11:2 lists seven aspects: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, fear of the Lord, and the Spirit of Yahweh
- Represents the Spirit's fullness and perfection
- The same Spirit that rested on the Messiah now rests on His church

Jesus Christ: Three titles, because He's the book's main character

1. **The faithful witness** - martyrs in Greek, root of our word "martyr"
2. **The firstborn from the dead** - both sovereign over death and prototype for our resurrection
3. **The ruler of the kings of the earth** - Direct challenge to Caesar's claim as "king of kings"

Pause and Reflect: If you were suffering under hostile authorities, watching friends arrested, and facing economic persecution, how would these titles land on your ears? John isn't just giving abstract theology; he's reminding embattled believers that Jesus is the ultimate faithful witness who endured worse than they're facing. He conquered death itself. And He (not Rome) holds ultimate authority.

What authorities or powers in your life tempt you to compromise your witness? Career pressure? Social acceptance? Political powers? Financial security?

The Anthem: What Jesus Has Done (vv. 5b-6)

John breaks into worship with three declarations:

1. **"To Him who loves us"** - Present tense. Not loved (past), but loves (ongoing). This is Revelation's most overlooked truth. The whole book is wrapped in love.
2. **"Released us from our sins by His blood"** - *Lusanti* means "untied, set free." We were bound, enslaved. His blood broke the chains. This isn't just forgiveness; it's liberation.

3. **"Made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father"** - Echoes Exodus 19:6 and 1 Peter 2:9. We are:
- Citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20)
 - Aliens in this world (1 Pet 2:11)
 - Destined to reign with Christ (Rev 5:10; 20:6)

The Now and Not Yet: We live as kingdom priests *now*, even though the kingdom hasn't fully come. We represent God's reign in a world that doesn't acknowledge it yet. When Christ returns, the kingdom becomes visible, physical, and we reign with Him on a renewed earth.

Reflection Questions:

- Do you see your faith as primarily about personal salvation, or about being part of God's kingdom that's breaking into this world?
- What does it mean to live as a "priest" today? (Hint: priests mediate God's presence to others)
- How does being a citizen of heaven change how you approach work, relationships, money, or politics?

The Vision Announcement (vv. 7-8)

"Behold, He is coming with the clouds" - Allusion to Daniel 7:13, the Son of Man receiving dominion and glory.

"Every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him" - Both universal recognition and specific vindication. Those who killed Him will face Him as Judge.

"All the tribes of the earth will mourn" - Not just grief, but recognition of a terrible mistake. Too late, they see who He really was.

"I am the Alpha and Omega...who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" - God declares He is the beginning and end of all things. History is His story.

The Setting (vv. 9-10)

John positions himself: "Your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus."

Notice the three-part package:

- **Tribulation** (thlipsis) - Pressure, crushing opposition, persecution
- **Kingdom** (basileia) - God's reign, our citizenship in heaven
- **Perseverance** (hupomonē) - Patient endurance, standing firm under pressure

Grant Osborne writes: "Enduring affliction and opposition means a lot more than just gritting your teeth and getting through it. It means overcoming temptation and remaining faithful and true to God when the world has turned against you."

This is the lens. John suffered relegation for his witness. The churches faced economic boycotts, social ostracism, and threats of death. Revelation wasn't written for comfortable Christians speculating about end-times charts. It was written for believers under fire who needed to know: Does Jesus see us? Is He still King? Will faithfulness cost us everything?

The answer: Yes. Yes. And yes—but He's worth it.

Personal Application:

Western Christianity has largely lost this package deal. We want the kingdom without the tribulation. We want Jesus as Savior without Jesus as Lord demanding our complete allegiance. We've domesticated Revelation into either a puzzle book about the future or inspirational quotes about heaven.

But here's the truth: "Through many hardships we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Jesus said, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Hard Questions:

- Have you eliminated tribulation from your understanding of kingdom life?
- What would it look like to truly live as an alien in this world?
- Where is Jesus calling you to faithful witness, even if it costs you?
- What compromises have you made to avoid persecution—subtle or otherwise?

The Challenge:

John wrote from exile to believers facing persecution, economic ruin, and death. His message: Jesus is the faithful witness who endured worse. He's the firstborn from the dead who guarantees your resurrection. He's the true King who holds ultimate authority.

If this message sustained them through Roman persecution, what does it mean for you today?

Closing Prayer: Jesus, You are the faithful witness. Give me the courage to follow Your example. You are the firstborn from the dead. Anchor my hope in resurrection, not in comfort or security in this life. You are the ruler of kings. Help me live as a citizen of Your kingdom, even when it costs me. I'm Your priest—show me how to represent Your reign today. Amen.

This Week: Identify one area where you've compromised your witness to avoid tribulation. Pray for courage to be faithful. Remember: you're a kingdom priest serving the real King.