

17TH MAY 2020

FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



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John wrote in the Gospel, '**we beheld His glory and He dwelt among us!**' We today can behold the glory of Christ on this Lord's Day and know that the Lord dwells among us as we read His precious Word. May we rest in the fact that we didn't have to be there at the manger or at the feeding of the 5000, or be there at the mountain of transfiguration, or even to be at the cross or to see an empty tomb. We can know the fulness of Christ's redemptive love, forgiveness, mercy and peace when we turn to the pages of Scripture which brings a more-sure message than even being an eyewitness of Christ's Transfiguration.

HYMN

1 Behold th'amazing gift of love
the Father hath bestowed
on us, the sinful sons of men,
to call us sons of God!

2 Concealed as yet this honour lies,
by this dark world unknown,
a world that knew not when he came,
e'en God's eternal Son.

3 High is the rank we now possess,
but higher we shall rise,
though what we shall hereafter be
is hid from mortal eyes.

4 Our souls, we know, when he appears,
shall bear his image bright,
for all his glory, full disclosed,
shall open to our sight.

5 A hope so great and so divine
may trials well endure,
and purify our souls from sin,
as Christ himself is pure.

PRAYER

O Lord, may we find the joy of the Lord even in the midst of our trials. We pray that You would teach us what it means to see beyond our troubles, knowing that You are with us. Even so, Lord God, we see the challenges those around us are facing. We ask You to intervene, to be with those who are in need, to prompt us to participate with You as You care for your people. We pray that we would not be anxious, but that You would give us Your peace. We pray for all the key workers who continue to serve our communities so well. We pray for the new Moderator of the General assembly of the church of Scotland and ask that you would bless him and his family for the year ahead. Lord God draw near to us this day and may we know the power of Your word ministering to our lives, in Jesus Name we pray, Amen

SCRIPTURE READING REVELATION 1: 1 - 8

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,

2 who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.

3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

LORD'S PRAYER

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

SERMON

In Revelation 1:8, we come to the final verse of John's introduction to this remarkable book. The prologue gives useful information about Revelation, the most important is the purpose for which John is writing. The great purpose of Revelation is to provide Christians a view of history from God's perspective in heaven. The primary purpose of Revelation is to enable Christians from every age and in every possible circumstance to view what is happening in history from God's point of view, rather than from man's, and to be comforted and strengthened by it to live for Christ and His glory at all times."

Why does John's prologue conclude: "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty'" (Rev. 1:8). The answer is that since Revelation presents God's view of history, it makes sense for God to present Himself as the Sovereign who is able to hold all things together and accomplish all His purposes in Christ to save His people.


What Revelation teaches is that God is sovereign over all things, including the ups and downs of human history, and that He is working out everything according to His perfect will. In a world like ours, we will often feel like the prophet Isaiah, when the righteous king Uzziah died. Isaiah was reeling over Israel's loss and for the uncertainty of what would happen next. He did the right thing, however, by turning to God. There, God gave the prophet the vision that his faith needed: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple" (Isa. 6:1). Isaiah was reminded that God is the true Sovereign over His people, and that **while Uzziah may have vacated his throne God had not vacated His**. The Lord is "high and lifted up" above the affairs of the earth, and as God's robe "filled the temple," there is no room for any other sovereign.

Revelation 1:8 shows us the sovereignty of God with three statements, the first expresses the eternity of God: "'I am the Alpha and the Omega.'" The point is that God reigns over all, since He is before and after all things as the Alpha and Omega it also means that God is in control of everything in between. This statement echoes Isaiah 41:4, where God says: "Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he." When we speak of God being eternal, we mean that His being exists outside of time and history, which God created. A. W. Tozer writes: *"Because God lives in an everlasting now, He has no past and no future. When time-words occur in the Scriptures they refer to our time, not to His. Since God is uncreated, He is not Himself affected by that succession of consecutive changes we call time. God dwells in eternity but time dwells in God."*

Peter says "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8). Being eternal, God is One "who is and who was and who is to come" (Rev. 1:8). He has been the God of all who have trusted in Him; He is the God at this present moment who we can put our trust in; and there can be no event and no time in the future that can separate us from Him.

When we study the attributes of God, we find that they are all inter-related. Therefore, related to God's eternity is another attribute of God highlighted in Revelation 1:8. Repeating a phrase from verse 4, God describes Himself as the Alpha and Omega "who is and who was and who is to come."

These words reflect God's eternity but the first of them especially declares God's self-existence. He is the God "who is." Not only does the eternal God have no beginning, but the self-existent God has no source of life other than Himself. God's self-existence is highlighted at the beginning of verse 8 with the words, "I am." The classic illustration of God's self-existence is the one God gave Moses at the burning bush. Exodus 3:2 says, "the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed."



This shows that God does not stem His life from any source; the fire burned in the bush, but the bush was not the source of the fire. God's self-existence simply means that God is "from Himself." The Puritan Matthew Henry said: *"The greatest and best man in the world must say, By the grace of God I am what I am; but God says more than any creature, man or angel, can say - I am that I am."*

God's self-existence involves another attribute of God: his immutability. This means that God does not and cannot change. Being eternal, God's being is not subject to any chain of events. Being self-sufficient, there is nothing outside of God that is able to cause him to change. Paul wrote, "For from him and to him and through him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). Therefore, having His life entirely from Himself, the God "who is and who was and who is to come" always is, was, and will be exactly who He is. The immutability of God provides more good news for His people like the believers who John was writing to in Revelation.

It means, first, that God's character does not change. God is now exactly the same as He always has been and will be for all eternity. The Shorter Catechism teaches: "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth" (Q/A 4). This means we can count on God always to be the same as He is revealed in the Bible.

Along with God's character, God's truth does not change. The words of men are unstable things. But not so the words of God. They stand forever, as eternally valid expressions of His mind and thought. No circumstances prompt God to recall them; no changes in His own thinking require Him to amend them. Isaiah writes, 'All flesh is grass... the grass withereth... but the word of our God shall stand for ever' (Isa. 40:6 KJV).

Also, God's purposes do not change. Our plans change, simply because we do not know the future until it arrives, and we often lack the ability to do what we intended. Not so with God! Isaiah 46:9-10 says: "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not

yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'"

As sovereign, eternal, and unchanging, God's salvation is also sovereign, eternal, and secure. Jesus said, "I give them eternal life... and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (Jn. 10:28-29). When God forgives sins through faith in Christ, he does so eternally and unchangingly, saying, "I will remember their sins no more" (Heb. 8:12).

In proving the sovereignty of God by means of his attributes, we have considered the eternity of God, together with his self-existence, self-sufficiency, and immutability: "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is and who was and who is to come'" (Rev. 1:8). The book of Revelation brings a message of great solace to Christians, good news that is centred on the sovereignty of God over all things. The very truth of who God is provides good news for those who belong to him through faith. We would never know that good news, however, unless God first spoke to us.

When we think of God speaking, Christians should especially think of God's revelation through Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:1-2 says that while God formerly spoke by the prophets, "in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son." It is for this reason that when God says in Revelation 1:8, "I am," Christians hear the voice of Christ. God says, "I am the Alpha and Omega," an expression that Jesus will apply to Himself later on in this chapter: "I am the first and the last, and the living one" (Rev. 1:17-18). We also hear the voice of Jesus' in the great "I am" sayings in John's Gospel.

Friends, God called to Moses and he came, believed, and entered into a saving relationship with God. God now calls you through His Word. His unchanging word still speaks to us today, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," the Almighty sovereign who controls your destiny and offers you eternal life through faith in Christ. Jesus, the eternal, self-existent, and Almighty God speaks by the scriptures: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24).

HYMN

You are before me, God, you are behind,
and over me you have spread out your hand;
such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too high to grasp, too great to understand.

Then from your Spirit where, God, shall I go,
and from your presence where, God, shall I fly?
If I ascend to heaven you are there,
and still are with me, if in hell I lie.

If I should take my flight into the dawn
If I should dwell on ocean's farthest shore,
your mighty hand will rest upon me still,
and your right hand will guard me evermore.

If I should say, 'Let darkness cover me,
and I shall hide within the veil of the night',
surely the darkness is not dark to you,
the night is as the day, the darkness light.

Search me, O God, search me and know my heart,
try me, O God, my mind and spirit try;
keep me from any path that gives you pain,
and lead me in the everlasting way.

PRAYER

Gracious God, we thank you so much that you are unchanging in your perfections, your glorious attributes, in the eternal counsel of your wonderful will, but also in the unchanging love of your Son toward us, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. O Lord God help us to rest in your Triune immutability. And for those who do not as yet know you, may that immutability show them their need to take refuge in Jesus Christ for their own soul, and to find in him stability that nothing in this world could even come close to giving. Lord, remember each one of us and bless us in mercy for Jesus' sake. Amen.

BENEDICTION

And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all this day and evermore, Amen.

Christian Aid Week

10-16 May 2020

Christian Aid Week runs from 10th to 16th May. Normally we would be knocking on your door, rattling a collecting can in the Co-op or inviting you to a soup lunch, a Big Breakfast, a sale or some other event. None of these is possible this year, but the needs of the people Christian Aid supports are no less; in fact, they are greater, as fragile communities in Asia, Africa and South America face the threat of coronavirus, without the infrastructure or the resources to combat it effectively.



As the coronavirus spreads around the world, love rises up in response. People are showing incredible kindness to their near neighbours. Now is the time to reach out also to neighbours further away. Your love protects: from storms, from drought, and now from coronavirus. Your love protects our global neighbours, battling the spread of this illness - with soap, clean water and medical supplies.

I know times are hard for many, and there are many other requests for support at this time, but please take a look at the Christian Aid website (<https://www.christianaid.org.uk>), and contribute what you can, to save lives. By supporting Christian Aid this Christian Aid Week, you can reach out and protect more of your neighbours today.

Janet Winchester

Christian Aid Co-ordinator, Ferintosh Parish Church of Scotland