



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Text Revelation 1:4-8

Revelation

“Greetings from the Trinity”

TRANSCRIPT

This is our second lesson in the book of Revelation. We looked at verses 1 through 3 last week, and this morning we’re going to look at verses 4 through 8. Had an introductory lesson last week, and then of course the first three verses, and we continue with that with what I have entitled “Greetings from the Trinity.” I think you’ll understand why, because we deal with each person of the trinity in these next verses.

But if you have your Bibles open, follow along as I read beginning with verse 4.

“John to the seven churches that 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, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the 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 mourn over Him. So it is to 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.’”

May the Lord bless this reading of his Word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, it’s good to be here together with the saints on a Sunday morning. You tell us in the book of Hebrews not to forsake the gathering together of the saints, and there’s good reason for that. This is when we gain nourishment throughout for the week. This is where we fellowship with one another. And so, Father, we pray you’d bless our fellowship.

May it be truly around your Word, and may we be nourished by it. We are to be nourishing ourselves on your Word throughout the week individually by ourselves in private, but it is so important for us to be gathered together as the body of Christ, and worship together. We pray that that will be what our time together is, a time of worship and learning.

A time in which you are exalted in our minds, our triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as John presents your greeting to us in this text. So build us up in the faith, we pray. Strengthen us, equip us for the week to come. We are reminded that Christ was a faithful witness, and we pray that we’ll be that as we move among our friends and our colleagues, and those with whom we come in contact this week.

May we see those meetings that we will have as providential, and be prepared to be a witness to those we meet. So we pray that you’d fit us and prepare us for that with this time of study together. We pray, Lord, for our material needs as well. We pray that you bless us. We pray for those who are unemployed. We pray that you give them opportunity, open doors for them that they would be able to work.

We pray for those who are sick. We think of Mike Dickson in particular, and pray your special mercy and grace upon him and Linda. Encourage them, and give healing. We pray that for others as well, and we think of Sharon and her family as they grieve for the loss of her mother. We thank you that she’s back with us. We pray you bless her ministry in the weeks to come, and comfort her in the meantime.

And comfort all those who grieve, for whatever reason. We have much reason to be comforted as we consider our text this morning. When life is difficult, you come to us with the words of grace and peace, and that means something. These aren’t just nice words that the apostle wrote, but they have meaning for us.

And I pray that each of us, through our time together this morning, would experience your grace and peace, and that that would be what characterizes our lives. We have all of that through Christ. We pray that he be exalted this morning, and the things that are said, and the things that we will sing in this next moment, we pray you

bless us. May we sing with genuine hearts of worship. We pray these things in Christ’s name. Amen.

[Message] Living as we are in the first decade of the 21st century, we wonder what kind of century it will be. Various centuries have been given various names. We just sang “A Mighty Fortress,” that came out of the 16th century; I don’t know what the name of that century was, but it was the century of the Reformation. The 13th century has been called “the age of faith.” You might think that would be the name of the 16th century.

The 18th century was called “the age of reason.” The Enlightenment began in that time. The 20th century has been given different names; one of them is “the age of the tyrant.” Had many of those – Hitler, Stalin, Mao, just to name a few. Now, that wasn’t unique, of course, with the 20th century; every age has had its tyrants. But will it continue on into this century? What will characterize our new century?

Will it be the age of democracy? That’s what some hope. Or will it be the age of jihad, with the advance of Islam over the globe? We don’t know what is going to characterize this century. We don’t know what will happen. But the church should not be anxious, because we know who is in control. It is not the men of the West, or the men of the East; it is the Lord God, the triune God.

God is absolutely sovereign over the affairs of this world, and we are reminded of that in the greeting that John gives in Revelation 1:4-8. It is a greeting from the trinity. In it, God encourages the church with the assurance that he is presently ruling, and that in the future, perhaps the near future, perhaps in this century, early in this century, the King of kings will come.

Now, John begins by addressing the seven churches that are in Asia. Why seven churches? That’s a question that is often asked. There were more churches in Asia than seven – the churches of Troas Colossae, Hierapolis were just some of the churches that were there, and there were many others. So why is it that John addresses seven? Well, the number seven, as we will see in our studies of the book of Revelation, is a favorite number of John in this book.

It is symbolic. It represents completion. It represents perfection. We see that all through the Bible, so we have good grounds for understanding the word “seven” in that way. And understanding it that way, the seven churches represent all of the churches in the world. And each of these seven churches, as we will see in our future studies in chapters 2

and 3, each of these churches manifested a characteristic that is found in churches generally.

The book, then, while addressed to seven historical churches – and we should underline that fact. The fact that we say the number seven is symbolic doesn’t mean that the churches aren’t genuine historical churches – they are. And so while addressing the seven historical churches, he is also addressing us. He is addressing the church universal. This is a greeting for every church in every place.

John then gives a greeting to them, to those churches and to us, from God the Father. That’s how he begins. That’s the first person of the trinity who speaks. “Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come.” Many feel that this description that John gives there is a title or a name of God. Probably one that he develops from Exodus 3:14, where Moses is standing before the burning bush and God speaks to him and declares that his name is “I am who I am.”

And that is the meaning of the name Yahweh or Jehovah, “I am who I am,” which signifies he is eternal, he is self-existent. And here in our text, the description sets forth God as eternal. He has always been, he is, and he always will be. But he’s also the God of time and history. He is the Lord of the past, the Lord of the present, the Lord of the future. And as the church faced hard times, times of impending persecution – and as we pointed out last week in our studies, this book is written in that context.

John is a prisoner on the isle of Patmos because of his faith, so the church was undergoing persecution at this time. But whatever the case may be, whether it is from the emperor Domitian in John’s day, or some other tyrant in our day, this greeting that John gives us, that comes from the triune God, is intended to be a great encouragement to the church. All of the events that touch us are important to God.

In Psalm 56:8, David said that “He puts all of our tears in his bottle.” He’s very concerned for us. But all of the events of life, in all of these events and troubles and trials, as well as the pleasures and the blessings that we receive, in all of them he is working out his eternal plan and purpose. Now, there is an interesting irregularity here that can only be seen in the Greek text. It’s a violation of grammar, and it would’ve stuck out like a sore thumb to a Greek.

So John obviously wanted us to see it. Normally – and I’ll try to explain it as simply and as best as I can – but normally, after the preposition “from,” the word that follows, or in this case, the name, “Him who is and who was and who is to come,” would

normally change from the nominative form to the genitive. Now, many of you may know this, but Greek, like many other languages, has case endings.

And what that means is the last letters of the words tell you the function of that word in the sentence, and the nominative case is the case form that a word takes when it is the subject of the sentence; when it is the doer of the action. After the preposition, that normally changes, though, the nominative does, to a genitive case, a different case. It should change here, but John doesn’t change it.

Not because he didn’t know Greek grammar; he obviously does, because in the next statement that he makes, he makes the proper change, where he says, “And from the seven Spirits” – that’s grammatically correct in the Greek text. But John doesn’t change the form as we might expect him to do because he’s making two important points here.

And the first is the name of God never changes. God is the same, always the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And second, God is always the subject, always the doer, always the maker of history. And he’s underscoring these facts in this grammatical point. In other words, God is completely, absolutely sovereign, and this is the God, he says, who gives us greetings; who sends us the greeting of grace and peace in times of trial.

Well, then the same message comes from the seven Spirits, and that is more symbolism from John, designed to represent the Holy Spirit and the fullness or the completeness of his activity and power. That’s why he calls him “the seven Spirits,” and that’s an image that is taken from one of the Old Testament prophets, from Zechariah 4:2, where Zechariah the prophet sees a gold lampstand with seven lamps.

It’s the menorah, the lamp that stood in the holy place of the temple; it’s an image, a symbol of the Holy Spirit. And the Lord explains the meaning of that in Zechariah 4:10. He says of these lamps that they are the seven eyes of the Lord, which range to and for throughout the earth. And that’s the idea – the Holy Spirit is described in those terms, in that way, as seven Spirits, in order to express that he is omnipresent.

He is omniscient. He is omnipotent. He is at work throughout the whole world, and his work is effective, because he is the seven Spirits. He’s complete; he’s perfect. Zechariah 4:6 states, “‘Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD of Hosts.” He is the one who gives success. He is the one who gives grace and peace – the grace and peace of this greeting. He greets us as well.

But the great emphasis of this greeting is on the second person of the trinity, and in verse 5, John identifies him directly. He says, “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful

witness.” It’s a way of saying that he is the faithful prophet. In fact, John identifies Christ by his three offices of prophet, priest, and king. As prophet, he is the fulfillment of that statement that Moses made, that prophecy he gave in Deuteronomy 18:15, where he told Israel that God would raise up a prophet among them.

Christ is the prophet. He is the ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy. He is the Word made flesh. He is the way and the truth and the life. The truth is in him. He has, as Peter confessed in John chapter 6, the words of eternal life. And like the prophets of the Old Testament, the people rejected him and killed him. Still, he was faithful to the end; faithful unto death; the faithful witness.

But death could not hold him – he was resurrected, and he became the firstborn of the dead. That’s the next description that John gives of Jesus. He is the first, and so far, the only man to be resurrected. Not the only man to be raised – others have been raised from the dead. Lazarus was raised from the dead. Jairus’ daughter was raised from the dead. There were others who were raised from the dead.

But Jesus is the first man resurrected with a glorified body, and because of that, he is supreme over all. That’s what John said; “the ruler of the kings of the earth.” The world and its rulers don’t recognize that. They don’t recognize him as the king. But this is the confession of every Christian. It’s our confession, though it’s not our confession because of sight; it’s our confession because of faith.

Sight doesn’t tell us that he is the ruler of the kings of the earth. There is really little around us that would seem to support that statement. We look around us and we don’t see the evidence that Christ is the king. Human history down through the ages has been one of nations fighting nations, and the strong prevailing, so often it appears that it is the tyrant that is the ruler of the earth and the kings of the earth.

But the Scriptures are clear. Behind the great movements of history is Jesus Christ, seated at the Father’s right hand, ruling and governing the world. Now, that’s our belief. That’s what the Scriptures teach, and that’s what we know by faith. He is the ruler of the kings of the earth. He is the King of kings, and he will return to this earth. David prophesied that in Psalm 2.

He will shepherd the kings of the earth with a rod of iron. I mean with his strong arm he will force them into line, and he will rule us as well. He won’t shepherd us with a rod of iron, though; he will rule over us as a caring shepherd. He’s doing that now. In fact,

John pauses here at the end of the verse to tell us what Jesus has done, and what he is doing, and he does it in a doxology.

He stops to say, “To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood.” Now, some of you may be reading the King James version, and if so, then your text reads, “Unto Him who loved us and loosed us from our sins,” and that is a true statement, and that is good theology, because where we really see the love of God is in the cross of Christ. He loved us in the cross.

And there’s no greater demonstration, no fuller demonstration of the love of God and the love of Christ for us than that past, completed act. That’s good theology, but that’s not what John wrote here. The better Greek manuscripts have “love” in the present tense, and the word “loosed” or “released us from our sins” in the past tense. So it is “to Him who loves us presently.” Now, that’s a great truth.

Dr. Johnson illustrated that with a couple of stories that impressed me. He told about Samuel Prideaux Tregelles and his work with this verse. Mr. Tregelles was a very intelligent man. He was a self-taught man who learned Greek on his own. In fact, he learned it so well that he became a textual critic of some significance. A textual critic is one who analyzes the ancient texts, and through various systems of looking at the age, and the families of the text, determines which is the most accurate, the best text, the most reliable.

And he said that when he came to this verse and read the better Greek manuscripts, and I should say in those better Greek manuscripts, “to Him who loves” rather than “loved,” as in the King James version, he recognized that this is the only place in the New Testament where this verb is used in the present tense of God’s love for us. Realizing that, he said, “All my studies on the text were worth it if I had only discovered this one thing, ‘unto Him who loves us.’”

“Unto Him who loves us” – loves us constantly, he loves us eternally, he loves us always. Mr. Spurgeon told a story of going out to visit a man. As he did, he looked at the man’s house and he noticed that there was a weather vane on top of it with the words, “God is love.” Mr. Spurgeon had a sense of humor about him, and he said, “Well, I see that you believe that the love of God is changeable; as the wind blows, God’s love changes.”

The man said, “No, Mr. Spurgeon. What I mean is that whatever way the wind blows, God is still love.” So in the present, he loves us. That’s what John is saying. Loves us always, but it was in the past that he loosed us, he released us from our sins. He did that

at the cross. He did that by his blood. That’s the price that he paid, and that’s where he bought us and redeemed us, and how he did so.

Now, that’s where the issue, the whole issue – sin, and salvation of our right standing before God – that’s where it was settled. That’s where our salvation was gained. It was at the cross. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, your salvation was attained for you at the cross. That’s where the victory was won. It appears to men, it appears to us so many times as we look at the cross, and the bruised and bloodied body of our Lord, it appears to be a defeat.

But that is where he said, “It is finished,” and that was a cry of triumph. That is where the victory was won, and that’s why we celebrate the blood. It represents the violent death of a sacrifice that was made in our place by our substitute, who paid the penalty of sin in our place, and in so doing, cleansed us; loosed us from our sins, washed us at the cross. Not only that, but in verse 6, “He made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.”

That’s an unusual kingdom. Kingdoms of John’s day would’ve all had priests, would’ve had an exclusive class of men who occupied that position. They all had their priests, and of all the nations, only Israel had a true priesthood. But it was only for one tribe in the nation, and of that one tribe, there was only one family in it, the tribe of Aaron, that could really supply the priests.

All of the people could come to the temple, but only the priests could enter the holy place, and only the high priest, only one man, could enter into the holy of holies, and he could only do that once a year, and only for a brief time during that one day. Nearness to God in the Old Testament economy, in the religion of Israel, was increasingly limited. But that’s all changed in the church. We are a holy nation, a kingdom made up of priests.

All of us who have been loosed from our sins, we are members of that kingdom, and we are priests in it. Every believer in Jesus Christ has been justified, has been forgiven of all of his or her sins, has been clothed completely in the righteousness of Christ. We are qualified. We are acceptable to God. We are his children, and because of that, he has given us a high office. What a privilege it is when you think you’re clean – you’re accepted by God.

Isn’t that enough? Wouldn’t it be enough simply to be a doorkeeper in the household of God – to be a servant of that kind? But you’re not that – you’re children of his. You’re sons and daughters, and not only that, he’s made you priests. He’s given you that high position. And so we’re to carry out that office, men and women alike; we share it

equally, that office of priesthood, which essentially, for us, is that of intercession and prayer.

There is a sense in which we make sacrifices, because all of our deeds are sacrifices and offerings to God. But the great act of our priesthood is that of prayer. As saved people, we should be in prayer continually, giving God our praise, and bringing our petitions to him, and bringing our petitions to him constantly. A 19th-century Scottish minister, Horatius Bonar, wrote that “God has opened our lips and enlarged our hearts.”

And as a result of that, we cannot but pray; that’s our language as saints and as priests. The justified man and woman has, as Bonar put it, “ten thousand things to ask for; he has ten thousand things for which to give thanks.” We sometimes castigate ourselves for asking too much of God, as though that’s all we do. We cannot ask enough of God. Ten thousand things could be multiplied by ten thousand.

We are in debt to him. We are dependent completely upon him. We must continually be asking things of him. Every breath of life is a gift from God. But not only that, we need to be giving praise to him, because if we can ask for ten thousand things, and there are ten thousand plus ten thousand times ten thousand things to give him thanks for. Everything we have is a gift of his, and so I think he’s absolutely right. That’s what we’re to be doing.

We have been made priests, and these are the offerings that we give to God. This is how we’re to approach him. But we’re not only priests; we are a royal priesthood. We will reign upon this earth as kings. It’s one of the great themes that we have in this book, and that’s what John will repeat in 5:10. God has blessed us greatly. He’s blessed us with a past that’s been washed away. He’s blessed us with a present that is secure. He’s blessed us with a future that is glorious.

And that causes John to break out in praise to Christ for all that he has done for us. He says, “To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” This doxology that he gives here is an ascription of deity to Christ. Only God deserves such praise as that. Only he can get the glory, and have the dominion forever. John is so overwhelmed by who Christ is and what he’s done for us that he naturally exclaims this declaration of praise to him.

It just comes out, as it were, extemporaneously, naturally. But as with everything John wrote here, this was also for the comfort of the saints. He speaks it naturally, but it has a purpose as well, and that’s to encourage us, encourage the saints in his day, a time

when the glory that belongs only to God, and the dominion that belongs only to Christ, was being claimed by men. John wrote in a time when emperor worship was increasing.

All of the early emperors, from Julius Caesar to Augustus to Titus, had officially been declared divine, had been declared to be gods by the senate upon their deaths. But this emperor, Domitian, in the last decade of the first century, began requiring men to address him as “Dominus et Deus,” Lord and God. And emperor worship was particularly popular in Asia, especially in Ephesus.

So Christians were naturally, in that city and throughout the province of Asia, feeling the pressure to recognize this man, Domitian, as divine. So in the face of that threatening danger, John reminds them of the truth – the truth that must guide them, the truth that must guide all of us in the way that we think, in the things that we do – that it is Christ that is God. He gets the glory. He gets the dominion.

As we said last week, it may have been John’s refusal to call Domitian “Deus,” to call him “god,” that is the reason he was exiled to Patmos. But every man needs to stand firm in this conviction, and that’s just as true for us today, because we face an age that’s very similar. In some ways, it’s very different – couldn’t be more different today from what it was in John’s day.

We live in a materialistic age when men deny God altogether. And yet by doing that, really, they’re no different than Domitian. It’s just the same as he is, really, because to claim that there is no god, to claim that we are the masters of our fate, that we are the ones who determine the destiny of the world, is really to make a claim of independence of God. It’s to claim autonomy.

It’s to claim a self-directed, self-sufficient, self-governing life; that we are sovereign over our lives, and sovereign over this world, a law unto ourselves. And in making that claim, whether people articulate it like that or not, nevertheless, it is a claim of being divine. We’re our own gods. But what John reminds of us is that there’s only one God, and he is the triune God, and the Son of God will have the glory and the dominion.

Someday, everyone will know that, and everyone will acknowledge that. He will literally, physically, come back into this world, and everyone will see him. That’s what John tells us in verse 7. “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him.” Some say this is the theme of the book of Revelation. He’s coming in the clouds.

It is a combination of two Old Testament texts, Daniel 7:13, where Daniel in a night vision sees the Son of Man coming in the clouds, and then in Zechariah 12:10-14, there is

the prophecy given there of the Messiah’s coming. “Behold,” John says. That word is intended to draw our attention to what he’s saying. It means something like, “Look, note this very well. This is very important. Christ is coming.”

And his coming, as John puts it, is in the present tense. Now, it’s a future present – that’s how a grammarian would classify that – but it has the idea of putting this in a very vivid way to say, in effect, “He’s on his way.” That’s the image we’re given, and it’s a way of saying, “This is certainly going to come to pass. He is coming. It’s so certain that it’s as though he’s already on his way.”

And when he does come, John says, there will be a great outpouring of grief. “Every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him,” which is a clear reference to the crucifixion, “and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him.” In Zechariah, which John, as I said, is quoting here, that refers to the tribes of Israel, but it seems that John broadens it here to the Gentiles as well.

We all, Jew and Gentile, are responsible for the crucifixion. The Romans drove the nails into our Lord’s hands, but it was the Jews who gave them over to him, and said, “His blood be upon us and our children.” They took the responsibility for it. But all mankind is guilty of the crucifixion, and when he appears at his second coming, all will see him and recognize their guilt, and they will mourn.

Now, many commentators explain this mourning to be remorse for the lost opportunity of salvation; that they will see him, they will realize that their doom has been sealed, and so they will mourn in despair. But in Zechariah 12:10, the mourning of Israel is clearly penitential grief, followed by forgiveness. That text states that those who pierced him will mourn for him, not for themselves; they will mourn for him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over him, like the weeping over a firstborn.

And that will happen because, as the Lord says, he will pour out his Spirit on the house of David, and that Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, produces repentance and faith. That’s sovereign grace. Now, no doubt there will be much distress, and there will be dread on the earth when Christ returns, but the mourning described here is not for themselves, as I said; it’s for him, and it’s about repentance.

Many in Israel and among the nations will see Christ coming in the clouds, and they will believe in him. There will be a great revival, particularly in Israel. That’s the future. It is triumphant. Christ will certainly come, and he will have dominion. That is the hope that

we have. And it will happen at the right time; it will happen at the time determined by the Father, and that is so important.

The hope of the second coming of the Lord is vital for our Christian life. That is one reason, as we explained last week, that this book promises a blessing at the beginning, at the end. It promises that we who read it and understand it and embrace it will be blessed, in part because it gives us hope for the future. It is, as I say, the second coming is vital for the Christian life, regardless of the circumstances in which we live.

Regardless of the circumstances in which we find this world, regardless of the tyrants of this age – and there will be many more – we Christians are more than conquerors. And John emphasizes the importance of the Lord’s return, and the certainty of it, by saying, “So it is to be. Amen.” Count on it. Christ is coming again, and he will rule the earth.

Finally, in verse 8, John gives the authentication of this. It’s not in his words; it is God’s words. “‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’” Well, this again is the Father speaking, and giving his endorsement to all that is contained in this great prophecy. And it’s authenticated by the Alpha and the Omega.

In our manner of speaking, that’s like saying, “I am the A to Z; the first and the last; the beginning and the end.” From the beginning of history to the end and everything in between, he is Lord. He is sovereign over all times and all ages. It is the unfolding – history is the unfolding of his eternal plan. So regardless of the times in which we live, the title encourages us to trust in the Lord even when bad men rule.

Even when tyrants come into positions of power, even when Antichrist arises; and the saints of that day are to be encouraged by the words of this book. All of it is part of God’s plan. Nothing occurs outside of God’s eternal plan. Now, that doesn’t make life easy, I don’t think. Pain is what it is, hardship is what it is. Life’s still difficult. But it does give us hope in the midst of trials, whatever they may be.

Because all of this is moving toward the victory, and the glorious kingdom to come; to emphasize this, John gives the full Old Testament name of God, the one he gave in verse 4. “The one who authenticates this message is the Lord God who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” The Almighty, *pantokratōr*, that’s the Greek word, which means something like “the one who holds everything in his hand.”

Or “the one who has his hand on everything.” All things are under his control. Later, at the end of the book, in 22:13, Christ speaks, and he uses this same title. Now, this

is the Father speaking here, but later on, Christ says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” He has the same name, the same title, as the Father, because he is equal with the Father.

He is God the Son, very God of very God, and he too is the Almighty. He is the ruler of the kings, and he is coming. That’s the message of the book. And for the world, that is terrifying news. In him, all men will someday face their God and their judge, and as Paul tells us in Philippians 2, every knee will bow to him. But for the believer in Jesus Christ, what an encouragement all of this is to us. What a greeting.

The triune God is for us, giving us grace and peace at every moment, and we have that encouragement from each member of the Godhead. God the Father is sovereign; he is forever the same. He doesn’t change. He has a purpose for the ages. He is working it out in history, and he guarantees that it will occur as he has planned and be successful. What a comfort to know that the Holy Spirit, who gives grace and peace, is working for us and in us now, at this moment.

What a comfort in times of testing to know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the ruler of the kings, loves us, presently and always, and that he has made us to be a kingdom, and that he is coming back, and we will someday enter that kingdom, all because he died for us. He’s really the focus here. What began as a greeting from the trinity quickly becomes a doxology of praise to Christ.

John begins with God the Father, but almost immediately shifts his emphasis to the work of God the Son. He purchased our freedom from slavery to sin and death, and he will bring history to its triumphant conclusion when he comes again to rule upon the earth. Now, that is great news for the church, regardless of the difficulties of the present, regardless of who sits on the thrones of this world, all things are working in our favor and for our good.

And as a result of that, we don’t need to be anxious about anything. But for those who are in unbelief, it is reason for fear. It’s reason to tremble. There is a way of escape, and that is through Christ, and the way is simple. It’s by simply believing in him, trusting in him as God’s Son and our Savior. He died for sinners, so that all who believe in him will be saved, and so believe in him. If you’ve not trusted in Christ, do so. Give yourself to him.

And you who are believers, give yourself to him fully, the one who loves us. May God help us all to do that. Well, so much of this greeting is about Christ’s sacrifice for us

and what he has done for us. He released us from our sins by his blood, so why don’t we end by standing and singing William Cooper’s great hymn, “There is a Fountain,” hymn number 192 in the red book, and then remain standing for the benediction – hymn 192.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for that fountain. We thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming into this world and dying for us, and all that you’ve accomplished through that death. You’ve cleansed us of our sins, you’ve clothed us in your righteousness, you’ve made us children, sons of God, heirs of an inheritance that cannot perish, and made us priests and kings.

Thank you for that. We look forward to your coming. We pray these things in Christ’s name. Amen.