

# Revelation 1.4–8

---

## *Jesus Christ*

Amington (Online)

Sunday 5 July 2020

Revelation: Names of Jesus [9]

### **Focus**

I love taking photos – I have literally thousands of them now – so I’m often the designated photographer on holidays or at family parties or when we visit somewhere. My favourite photos are the ones that aren’t posed, that capture a particular moment: not least because I have a terrible memory!

But have you ever taken a photo like that, only to get home, print or load the photos onto your computer... and realise that perfect photo is totally out of focus?! That instead of focusing on the moment you wanted to capture, the camera decided to focus on something over there... and the moment is all blurry?

In the early days of recording these services I had to record a whole service all over again, because the camera was focusing on the picture beside me...

John has no such problem at the start of the book of Revelation. Or rather, the *letter* – for this isn't really a book, it's a letter (4). John knows exactly where the focus of his letter – and where the focus of the churches should be.

John begins with one of the Bible's clearest statements of God as Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

Grace and peace to you from the one who is, and who was, and who is to come... *and* from the seven spirits (or 'sevenfold Spirit') before his throne... *and* from Jesus Christ.

*Revelation 1.4-5 (NIV)*

Our focus is not down here, or even in here – our focus should be away from ourselves, and on God. And in particular, our focus should be on Jesus, because he is how we know God. We might think of Jesus as a bridge, bringing us and the Father together – and we might think of the Holy Spirit as the one who enables us to cross that bridge through faith.

# Jesus Christ

If Jesus is our focus, who is he? Let's look at verse 5:

1. He is the **faithful witness** – we can trust what he says; what he tells us and shows us about the Father is *true* and *reliable*
2. He is the **firstborn from the dead** – death no longer has any power over him *and* he is the first – which implies more...
3. He is the **ruler of the kings of the earth** – whether good or bad, earthly rulers will have to answer to Jesus...

You may recognise those titles if you've been following our series over the past few weeks looking at Jesus' names and titles in the book of Revelation.

And, John gives each of those titles an action as well: we can see who Jesus is, by what he does.

He is the **faithful witness**, who **loves us**; Jesus shows us what the Father's love for us truly is. Isn't that interesting? Jesus is not self-seeking, but opens the way, directs us, brings us, home to our loving heavenly Father. The point of a bridge is not simply to exist, but to carry us safely across to the other side.

Second, Jesus is the **firstborn from the dead**, who **has freed us from our sins by his blood**. This is what love *looks* like. Think about that for a moment. Love is *not* saying ‘who you are is ok’... love is saying ‘who are you is *not* ok... you are broken and damaged by sin... so much you don’t even realise! But this is what I’m going to do about it: I will send my Son to set you free from the penalty, the power, and ultimately the presence of sin.’ *That* is love.

Freedom from sin comes only through death – so we have a choice. We can either die ourselves, in our own sin, or we can let Jesus set us free from, and let *him* die in *our* place. And if we do that we join Jesus’ family: he is the first of many.

Third, he is the **ruler of the kings of the earth**, who **has made us to be a kingdom and priests**. When we become a Christian, it’s like being given a new citizenship, a new passport, a new identity. Instead of belonging to the world, we belong to Jesus and *his* rule. We have the responsibility to live as citizens of his kingdom – and we have rights as well.

Did you spot there that John says Jesus makes us **priests**? But hang on, don’t you need one of *these touch dog collar* to be a priest? Well sort of, but not really. The New Testament says several times: we are *all* priests.

In the Old Testament, and in Jesus' day, priests guarded access to God. If you wanted to pray, you had to use their words. If you wanted to make a sacrifice to God, you needed their help. If you wanted God's blessing, you needed them to say it. In a sense they enabled people to access God – but in another they got in the way.

Now, through Jesus, we are *all* priests, we *all* have access to God *directly*, like a child has access to her father. We can *all* pray, using the words and groans that come from deep within us. We can *all* bless and pray for one another and our communities.

This is who Jesus is, and this is what Jesus does... why would we want to focus on anyone or anything else? And yet, that's exactly what we all do. Can you honestly say that your main focus is always on Jesus? If we're honest, a lot of the time Jesus is at best out of focus – at worst, not even in the picture.

You see, ultimately sin is less about what we do or don't do – and much more about where we focus. If our focus is on things other than God – whether they are good or bad – that is 'sin', because God alone deserves our focus, he alone deserves **glory and power** (6). So saying, 'I'm a good person,' is irrelevant. Compared to some, I'm sure you are. The question is really: if your life were a camera, what are you focusing on? Is it Jesus?

# Look!

If you ever want to mess with a crowd of people, just stand stock still and stare into the middle distance with an amazed expression on your face... you'll find people start looking, trying to see what it is you're looking at...!

John does that here (7): **'Look!'** he says, **'He is coming!'**

Where are you looking?

Our church motto is this: following Jesus together. Jesus needs to and must be our focus – so let us look, let us fix our eyes on him, and on him alone.