

GOD WITH US "EXPECTATION" REVELATION 1:1-8

This Week's Core Competency

Trinity – I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2 Corinthians 13:14 *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

The word Trinity is not found in the Bible, and the doctrine of the Trinity is nowhere fully revealed in either Testament. Nevertheless, the idea that "God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God" (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 226) is progressively revealed in scripture. For example, a plurality in the Godhead of some sort is implicit in words found in the opening chapter of the Old Testament. In Genesis 1:26, God says, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness . . ." While some have explained the plural verb and plural pronoun as "plurals of majesty," and others have suggested that God is speaking to angels, Grudem is right to conclude: "The best explanation is that already in the first chapter of Genesis we have an indication of a plurality of persons in God himself" (227). Jesus himself acknowledged that such a plurality is implicit in certain Old Testament passages when in a debate with the Pharisees he quoted Psalm 110:1, "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I

make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" After pointing out that David, "speaking by the Spirit," calls two separate persons "Lord," 1) "the LORD," i.e., Yahweh, and 2) "my Lord," i.e., the Christ, he popped the question that left his opponents dumbfounded, "If then David calls him [i.e., the Christ] 'Lord' how can he be his son?"

A more complete revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity is found in the New Testament. For example, at the Lord's baptism three members of the Trinity perform three distinct activities: God the Father speaks from heaven; God the Son is baptized and then is spoken to by God the Father; and God the Holy Spirit descends from heaven to rest upon and empower Jesus for his ministry (Mt 3:16-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22). What's more, "when we realize that the New Testament authors generally use the name 'God' (Gk. *theos*) to refer to God the Father and the name 'Lord' (Gk. *kyrios*) to refer to God the Son, it is clear we have a trinitarian expression in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6" (231): "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same *Spirit*. There are different kinds of service, but the same *Lord*. There are different kinds of working, but the same *God* works all of them in all men;" and still another at the end of the book, "May the grace of the *Lord* Jesus Christ, and the love of *God*, and the fellowship of the *Holy Spirit* be with you all" (13:14).

Although some might disagree, the book of Revelation appears to open with a trinitarian greeting: "Grace and peace to you from him *who is, and who was, and who is to come*, and from *the seven spirits* before his throne, and from *Jesus Christ*, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead,

cont. pg. 2

I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One.

– Jesus Christ

and the ruler of the kings of the earth" (1:4-5a). It all depends on the identity of "the seven spirits" in verse 4 (see Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT, 74). If "the seven spirits" is a reference to the Holy Spirit, which seems apropos given that the expression is bracketed by a reference to God, referred to in a way reminiscent of God's declaration to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex 3:14), and to "Jesus Christ," our Savior, then the greeting is clearly trinitarian. The likelihood that "the seven spirits" refers to the Holy Spirit is based in large part on Isaiah 11:2 where the prophet says concerning the Messiah, "The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD." Rather than referring to different spirits, the prophet is referring to one Spirit of the LORD in terms of his different virtues: 1) wisdom, 2) understanding, 3) counsel, 4) power, 5) knowledge, and 6) fear of the LORD. And while only six virtues are mentioned in the Hebrew text translated by our English versions, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, frequently quoted in the book of Revelation (Osborne, 61), adds a seventh, godliness. It reads: "And the Spirit of God shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and *godliness* shall fill him; the spirit of the fear of God." Moreover, the conclusion that "the seven spirits" refers to the Holy Spirit is also implied by Zechariah 4. There "the prophet described a candlestick with seven lamps which are the eyes of the Lord ranging over the whole earth. The meaning of the vision was, 'Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts' (Zech 4:8)" (George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 25).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Revelation 1:1-8

1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who testifies to everything he saw--that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

4 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us

from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. 7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Bracket "of Jesus Christ" in vv. 1, 2.
- * Box "to" (show) indicating *purpose* in v. 1.
- * Underline "soon take place" in v. 1.
- * Draw an arrow from "He" back to "Jesus Christ" in v. 1.
- * Circle "made it known" in v. 1.
- * Circle "blessed" (2x) in v. 3.
- * Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 3.
- * Underline "the time is near" in v. 3.
- * Bracket "the seven churches" in v. 4.
- * Underline "who is, and who was, and who is to come" in v. 4.
- * Circle "the seven spirits" in v. 4.
- * Circle "witness" in v. 5.
- * Bracket "firstborn from the dead" in v. 5.
- * Circle "freed" in v. 5.
- * Circle "kingdom" in v. 6.
- * Bracket "with the clouds" in v. 7.
- * Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 7.
- * Highlight v. 8.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Track the delivery of "the revelation" from its origin to its final destination (vv. 1-2).
2. Describe the *form* of the revelation when received by John (v. 2).
3. What do you infer from verse 3 regarding the practice of the early church?
4. People are fortunate ("blessed") to read, and to hear and obey "this prophecy" (v. 3). How so?
5. Verses 4-5a likely contain an allusion to the Trinity. Explain.
6. Put what "*firstborn* from the dead" means in your own words.
7. To *whom* "be glory and power for ever and ever" and *why* (v. 5b-6)?
8. Believers are "a kingdom" (v. 6). In what sense?
9. When Christ returns people will mourn "because of him." What does that mean?
10. **Discussion:** In my red-letter edition of the *NIV Study Bible*, verse 8 is printed in red. Talk about whether you think it should be or not.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The book of Revelation opens with a brief prologue (1:1-8) containing a foreword (vv. 1-3), a greeting (vv. 4-5a), a doxology (vv. 5b-6), and the theme of the prophecy (vv. 7-8). The foreword tracks "the revelation" from God who gave it, to the churches that received it. According to verses 1-2, the revelation is "from Jesus Christ." God gave it to him for this purpose, that he might "show" the churches "what must soon take place." Jesus in turn "signified" it to John through an angel, who delivered it to the apostle in the form of symbols and visions for him to see. Finally John testified to everything he saw, which was the "word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ," in the words of his prophecy. The chain of divine disclosure runs from God to Jesus to the angel to John to the churches. Verse 3 contains the first of seven beatitudes in Revelation. The reference to "the one who reads" and to "those who hear it" indicates that John intended the book be read aloud in the churches. Seven times in the letters to specific congregations in the next two chapters, we read, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). The beatitude itself indicates that the prophecy was not written merely to address people's curiosity regarding the future: "Blessed are those who . . . *take to heart* what is written in it." In other words, Revelation was written to secure the churches' conformity to the truth of the Lord's return.

A greeting, like the greetings commonly found at the beginning of New Testament letters, follows the foreword. It contains three elements: the sender ("John"), the recipients ("the seven churches in the province of Asia"), and the greeting itself ("grace and peace to you"). "Grace" was the common Greek greeting and "peace" was the common Hebrew greeting. The apostles adapted both for their own use, and in the words of one commentator "'baptized' them with a great deal more significance (Osborne, 60), in that the grace and peace Christians enjoy is only theirs by virtue of their relationship to Christ. The greeting in Revelation is followed by a deeply theological reference to the source of this "grace and peace" similar to that found in 1 Peter 1:2. "Him who is, and who was, and who is to come" refers to God the Father who revealed himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14 as "I AM WHO I AM" "The seven spirits" refers to the Holy Spirit in his

sevenfold fullness (see Isa 11:2). In other places the New Testament speaks of the Holy Spirit in his plurality of functions (cf. Heb 2:4; 1Co 12:11; 14:32; Rev 22:6). "Jesus Christ" is the exemplary witness who testifies to what God the Father has revealed. He is the first one to be resurrected from the dead, and is the ruler over the kings of the earth (cf. Ps 89:27). One day he is coming in the clouds to rule on the earth.

A doxology follows the greeting. Summarizing the basis for giving glory to Christ, one commentator writes, "Three things are ascribed to Him: (1) He loves (present tense) us. (2) He loosed us (some texts read 'washed,' the difference in Greek being one letter) from our sins in His blood. Blood is the evidence of His death, which is the basis for our cleansing. (3) He made us a kingdom (not kings) and priest to God. 'Kingdom' views believers corporately and anticipates our association with Christ in His reign (5:9-10), while 'priests' sees them individually" (Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Revelation*, 15).

Finally, the theme of the prophecy follows the doxology. The revelation is *from* Jesus Christ, but it is also *about* him, more specifically it's about his return to rule. Verse 7 says, "Look, he is coming *with the clouds*," an allusion to the "one like a son of man" who comes with authority given to him by the Ancient of Days to exercise dominion over "all peoples, nations." And according to the prophet Daniel, "men of every language will worship him" (7:13-14). And when he comes, "all peoples of the earth will mourn because of him," an allusion to Zechariah 12:10. They will not mourn *over* him because they crucified him; instead they will mourn *on account of* him because of the terrible judgments he will inflict on them. Jesus uses the same language to describe his return in Matthew 24:30, "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."

And while many understand the speaker in verse 8 to be God (cf., v. 4), the immediate context suggests Jesus Christ is speaking (v. 7). Christ is the one who comes with the clouds; he is the son of man *worshipped* by men of every language. What's more, he says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," and in verse 18 Christ says, "I am the First and the Last."

One commentator sorts things out this way:
"Christ is quoted as declaring himself to be the Alpha and the Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, and 'the beginning and the ending,' that is, the eternal One. The eternity, present power, and future glory of Christ are in view. The description of the Father given in verse 4 is then repeated concluding with the title 'the

Almighty' (Gr., *pantocuator*) a word, which occurs ten times in the New Testament, nine instances being in Revelation. It is probable that verse 8 applies to Christ and the ascription of eternity of verse 4 to the Father. There is no reason, however, why eternity should not be ascribed to Christ as well as to the Father (cf. Rev. 1:10-18; 22:12-13)" (John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 40).

The Message of the Passage

Blessed are those who take to heart the revelation of Jesus Christ made known to John, which shows how Christ the Lord is coming again.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about how God revealed himself to you . . .

–Write about how God wants you to change you . . .

–Write about how God wants to use you to change your world . . .

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 1 **revelation** "In the NT the word group occurs 44 times (verb, 26; noun, 18), nearly always with the basic thrust 'to uncover what has formerly been hidden' and, unlike secular Greek, with a strong religious and eschatological force" (Osborne, 52).
- v. 1 **of Jesus Christ** The phrase clearly describes the "revelation," but does it mean: 1) the revelation *about* Jesus Christ (a Greek construction called an *objective genitive*); 2) 'the revelation *from* Jesus Christ" (a *subjective genitive*); or perhaps 3) both (a *general or plenary genitive*). "In 1:1 and 22:16 it is clear that Jesus has sent his angel to proclaim the message to John; thus the message is from Christ, and this would be a subjective genitive. On a broader scale, though, the revelation is about Christ, so this would be an objective genitive. One important point to note is that the phrase under consideration is best regarded as the title of the book and therefore refers to the whole of the work in all its aspects. This fact favors considering this as a plenary genitive" (the NET Bible **1tn** on Rev 1:1).
- v. 1 **soon take place** Cf., 22:6. According to one view of Revelation (*preterist*), events described in the book did occur "soon," i.e., in the first century (or John mistakenly expected them to). Other interpreters have taken the phrase to mean "they must certainly begin," and still others "they must swiftly take place," i.e., once the events begin, the end will come quickly (see Walvoord, 35). "It is better to see this as apocalyptic language similar to that throughout the NT on the 'soon' return of Christ (cf. Luke 18:8; Rom. 16:20; 1 Pet. 4:7). Such language never means that there are to be no events yet to occur, for both Christ (Matt. 13:24-30; 25:1-13) and the Apocalypse itself (6:11) realize that there will be a period of time before its fulfillment. The language of imminence intends to draw the reader into a sense of expectation and responsibility" (Osborne, 55).
- v. 1 **made . . . known** "This term has a special purpose, for it is the verb cognate of the Johannine term (*semeion*, sign) and yields the idea of 'making known' by means of symbols. This is particularly apropos in light of the predominant symbolism of the book" (55). "If the subject of the verb 'signified' is Christ, then an angel acts as an intermediary between Christ and John" (Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT, 65).
- v. 3 **blessed** Cf., "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy aloud" (NET); the Greek word *makarios* means *blessed, happy, or fortunate*. "Here, a beatitude is pronounced upon those Christian congregations where John's revelation was to be read aloud. That this is the meaning is proved by the words, those who hear. This is not a reference to private reading and study but to public worship" (Ladd, 23).
- v. 4 **John** I.e., John the apostle, the son of Zebedee, who had personally known Jesus in the flesh (cf. John 21:22).
- v. 4 **seven churches** See 2:1-3:22. These cities are "major cities in the province [the Roman province of western Asia Minor—modern western Turkey] that are addressed in the geographical order in which a courier would deliver this letter. Therefore John deliberately chose to address these particular seven churches but intended them to typify all the other churches" (60). "John writes to the most prominent and strategic seven cities in the region, from which word would quickly spread to outlying areas" (Craig S. Keener, *The NIV Application Commentary: Revelation*, 67).
- v. 4 **seven spirits** Cf., Isa 11:2-3, "And the Spirit of God shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and godliness shall fill him; the spirit of the fear of God" (LXX). "From the seven spirits means from the Holy Spirit in his sevenfold fullness (cf. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). Some have seen here a reference to angelic beings; but since the preceding phrase refers to God the Father and the following phrase to God the Son, it is certain that John included a reference to God the Holy Spirit, thus including all persons of the Godhead" (Ladd, 24-25; see Osborne, 74-75).
- v. 5 **firstborn** I.e., the first one to rise from the dead, "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1Co 15:20). Moreover, "By virtue of his resurrection, Jesus has been exalted to the position of firstborn son. This is supported by the phrase that follows: he is also the ruler of kings on earth" (Ladd, 25; see Ps 89:27, "I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth" [ESV]); cf., Col 1:15 where "firstborn over all creation" means "not 'first one born' but the supreme or sovereign Lord over creation" (Osborne, 63).
- v. 5 **freed us** Cf., "washed us" (NKJV). The English translations differ because the NKJV and NIV (and others) are translating different Greek words, *lousanti* "washed" and *lusanti* "loosed" (see Osborne, 75; the NET Bible, 20tc on Rev 1:5). "The Greek idiom in turn reflects a Hebrew idiom, so that we might well translate, 'he has freed us from our sins at the price of his blood'" (Ladd, 27).
- v. 7 **clouds** Verse 7 "reiterates the theme of the book: the second coming of Christ and the events which lead up to and accompany that great consummation. This verse is a conflation of Dan. 7:13 and Zech. 12:10, 12, a combination which also appears in Mat. 24:30" (Ladd, 28).
-

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Note to Parents: For our Christmas series we will be using different texts than the adult scrolls. Each week in our series, The Perfect Gift, we will learn about a gift that was given to us through the Savior. This week we are focusing on the gift of the Promise. Our need for a Savior began in the garden when sin entered the world. From the very beginning God had a rescue plan in place. This plan was the promise of the Messiah, the One who would save us from our sin and reconnect us to him.

I remember one time when I broke a promise to my kids. It had been a particularly busy week and the weather was beautiful. Every day my kids would ask if we could picnic at the park. "Saturday, I promise," I said. All week they reminded me of our Saturday adventure. On that morning we woke up to thunderstorms, not spring showers, but torrents of rain. There would be no picnic that day. I had broken a promise. Even an indoor picnic would not fix this one. According to my kids I had something to do with the front that had blown through the area dropping record amounts of rainfall. I admit it - I will fail. But God will not. He will always keep His promises to us. He's a promise keeper!

What Does The Bible Say

Read: Read Isaiah 9:6-7

1. Who is the child spoken of in verse 6?
2. What is one name He is called?
3. According to verse 7, how long will his reign and peace last?

What Do You Think

Our passage today describes Jesus in four different ways. Which one do you like the best and why?

What R U Going To Do

Commit to making this December The Month of Serving. Make a list of simple ways you can serve your family, neighbors, friends and strangers this month. Put them on your calendar so you will remember to do one each day. Happy Serving!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Humanity - I believe God loves everyone and we all need Jesus as our Savior.

Memory Verse

Isa 9:6 - For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you Belong, Become, and go Beyond as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.