

# You've Got Mail

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. The book of Revelation, chapter 1.

Revelation, chapter 1. And if we read again at verse 4. Revelation 1 and 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 kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.

And made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

[ 1 : 05 ] I'm sure that you would agree that it's always nice when you come home and you see that the postman has been.

And you've got mail. You've got mail at the door. Of course, it's not nice when the mail consists of junk or lots and lots of bills. But you do enjoy receiving a handwritten letter or a handwritten card sent by someone.

Because in such a technology driven world today, we don't really send or receive many postcards or Christmas cards like we used to. Because it's cheaper, as you know, to send a text or to write an email than to pay for a stamp.

It's easier to wish a group chat, Merry Christmas, on WhatsApp rather than just write individual cards. And I don't know, maybe it's just my generation.

It's quicker to share our holiday with everyone on social media than send a postcard. But when you've got mail, when you receive something in the mail, you're touched that someone would take the time to personally put pen to paper and write to you.

[ 2 : 19 ] And you know, that's what we see in these verses in the book of Revelation. Because when the apostle John got mail while in isolation on the Greek island of Patmos, he didn't receive a letter from his family back home in Galilee.

He received a letter from the throne of heaven. He received a letter, as we're told there in these verses. A letter from God, his heavenly Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ, and also the Holy Spirit. It was a letter addressed to the apostle John. And it was a letter that was to be passed on and shared with the church of Jesus Christ. And so this evening, I just want us to think about this introduction.

The introduction to Revelation. We looked at the prologue last week, but we're looking at the introduction here this evening. And verses 4 to 8, they give to us, these verses are introducing the writer and then informing the reader.

They are introducing the writer and informing the reader. So first of all, we see that these verses, they are introducing the writer. They're introducing the writer.

[ 3 : 33 ] We see there in verse 4, it says, It says, Amen.

And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of kings on earth, to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom priest to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

If you were with us last week, you'll know that we were considering the opening three verses to the book of Revelation. I'm sorry the recording didn't work last week. My technological skills are awful. But last week we noted that the book of Revelation is not the book of Revelations, plural, but it's one long revelation. And it's not the revelation of John the Apostle. It's the revelation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And as a revelation, its purpose is not to conceal, but, as it says, to reveal. Because it's a revelation from Jesus Christ, about Jesus Christ, to and for the church of Jesus Christ.

[ 4 : 57 ] But as we touched on last Wednesday evening, we said that unlike the general revelation of God's creation and the special revelation of God's word, this revelation, the book of Revelation, is a specific revelation.

It's a final revelation. It's the final revelation of Jesus Christ. That's how this letter begins in verse 1. It says the revelation of Jesus Christ.

It is the apocalypse, the apocalypse of Jesus Christ. Which, as we said, that word, apocalypse, it gives to us the image and the illustration of God lifting the lid.

He is pulling back the curtain. He is lifting the veil in order to reveal something glorious to the church of Jesus Christ. And what God wants to reveal to the church is something that will encourage them and exhort them and enable the church to remain focused and remain faithful, even in the midst of all the obstacles and opposition around them.

Because what's been revealed here in this final revelation, in this apocalypse, what's been revealed is not only the climax and the culmination and also the conclusion of this world's history, but also the fact that, as we said last week, Jesus Christ, he is the risen, ruling, and reigning king who is going to return.

[ 6 : 27 ] Jesus Christ is the risen, ruling, and reigning king who is going to return. And we'll see that theme all the way through this final book of Revelation. But as we were considering last week, this revelation, this revelation, the revelation of the risen, ruling, and reigning king, Jesus Christ, who is going to return, it has followed this chain, a chain of revelation.

We saw that, you see that even in verse 1. It says, The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him, that is Jesus, to show his servants, that is John, the things that must soon take place.

He made it known by sending his angel, his spirit, to his servant John. So it has been handed down, this revelation has been handed down from God the Father, to God the Son, to God the Holy Spirit, and now to God's servant John, who wrote down all these things that he saw, and he's now handed it down to the church.

And the church has handed it down as well. Handed it down throughout the centuries, from the first century when John wrote this in AD 95, down to present day 21st century, where it has now been handed down to you and to me.

Which means that just like those, as Angus mentioned in his prayer, our forefathers, those who came before us, they passed down this message. They had that role and responsibility to hand down this revelation to the next generation.

[ 8 : 00 ] We have that same role and that same responsibility to hand this revelation down to the next generation. Because this revelation, it comes to us with a personal promise.

A personal promise that we need to remember. Verse 3. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy. And blessed are those who hear, and those who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

And so as we're introduced to this letter from heaven, we're introduced to, first of all, the recipient and then the writer. The recipient is, of course, the Apostle John.

The Apostle John, we see there in verse 4, and the seven churches that are in Asia. And God willing, we'll consider these seven churches in Asia in the coming weeks.

But, you know, I want to say at this point that the reason this letter from heaven was addressed to the seven churches in Asia, it wasn't because there were only seven churches in Asia at the time.

[ 9 : 08 ] There were many churches in Asia. There were actually presbyteries throughout the region of Asia. It said that there was a presbytery in Galatia alone.

But the reason wasn't because there were just seven churches. The number seven is the number of perfection. It's the number of completion. So the number seven is the number of perfection and completion.

Because, as you know, there are seven days in the week. And there are seven days in the week because by the word of his power, God created the world out of nothing in the space of six days and all very good.

But on the seventh day, God rested because he saw that his work was perfect. He saw that it was all complete. It was all very good. And so the seven churches in Asia, they signify and symbolize to us the whole church, the complete church, the entire church of Jesus Christ.

More than that, we're told that there were seven churches in Asia, not Israel, but Asia, Gentile territory. Asia was outside the country, outside the covenant people of Israel, which emphasizes and should explain to us that the church of Jesus Christ, it was not confined to a particular place or a particular people.

[10:32] Rather, the church of Jesus Christ is to be a universal church. It's a worldwide church, a church that is spreading to the uttermost parts of the earth.

And so the reason this letter from heaven is addressed to the seven churches in Asia was in order to signify and symbolize the whole church, the complete church, the universal church that Jesus Christ loved and gave himself for.

But as we said, when we're introduced to the recipient, that is John and the seven churches, we're also introduced to the writer, the writer of this letter.

And, you know, it's fascinating the way that this letter from heaven begins, because it actually begins exactly the same way that many of Paul's New Testament letters begin.

As you know, there are 27 books in the New Testament. At least 13 of them are ascribed and attributed to the Apostle Paul. And Paul begins each letter, as you know, in a similar way.

[11:41] He writes, he states the writer, then the recipient, and then there's this familiar greeting. And the familiar greeting, it often comes with the form of words, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you see that in many of his letters. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a meeting of grace. It's a greeting of grace and a greeting of peace.

Because the church of Jesus Christ, it consists of both Greeks and Jews, or Gentiles and Jews. Grace, the word grace or charis, was often a Gentile greeting.

Grace to you. Whereas peace or shalom was a Jewish greeting. Hence the famous and familiar greeting, grace to you and peace. Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. But when the writer of this heavenly letter introduces himself, he doesn't use Paul's famous and familiar greeting. In fact, he doesn't even say that it's from God the Father, although it is from God the Father.

[12:52] Instead, he says, as you read there in verse 4, grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come.

This letter is from him who is and who was and who is to come. And you know, it's amazing. This heavenly letter was written by one who has always been.

He has existed before time itself. He has no beginning. He has no end. He is the past, the present, and the future. He is infinite, immeasurable, and incomprehensible.

He's from everlasting to everlasting. You cannot contain him. He's from eternity to eternity. He is, as he described to Moses in the burning bush, he is the great I am.

He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. In his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come.

[13:59] And you know, what a greeting. What better greeting could you get? Imagine you got that letter through your door. 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 again, there's the number seven. Seven is mentioned, but this time it's not the seven churches, but the seven spirits.

And undoubtedly, the seven churches and the seven spirits, we'll see that later on in the chapter, they're both related. The seven churches and the seven spirits are related because the seven spirits, they, of course, refer to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in and among the seven churches in Asia.

It's a picture of the Holy Spirit being present in the whole church, the universal church, the worldwide church. The Spirit is present amongst the church of Jesus Christ, which should always be a comfort and a confirmation to us as a church.

That, you know, we might think we always live in a day of small things. And yet, despite our flaws and our failings and our faithlessness, the promise of God's word is that the Holy Spirit is still with us and still working in us.

[15:26] That's the Lord's promise. I will never leave you and I will never forsake you. But, you know, what I think is wonderful is that as we're introduced to the writer of this letter from the throne of heaven, we discover that this letter, this revelation, this apocalypse, it isn't the work of one, but the work of three.

It's a Trinitarian letter from heaven that comes with this Trinitarian greeting. We mentioned last week that this revelation is a Trinitarian revelation.

God's general revelation is a Trinitarian revelation. God's special revelation is a Trinitarian revelation. And God's specific revelation here in the book of Revelation, it's also a Trinitarian revelation.

It's made up of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It has been passed down from one to the other. But we read there that it's from him who is and who was and who is to come, which is God the Father.

It's from the seven spirits in the seven churches who are before his throne, which is God the Holy Spirit. And it's also, we're told, verse 5, from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

[16:50] And it's interesting there that the Son of God is mentioned, Jesus is mentioned last in the list of writers. And he's mentioned last because he's the focus.

He's the focus. He's the focus because the Father sent the Son. And the Spirit reveals the Son. That's the work of the Holy Spirit to make the Son known, to highlight the Son to us.

Therefore, the focus is on the Son. And the Son is revealed to us, we're told there in verse 5, as the faithful witness. He's the faithful witness. He's the faithful witness who testifies to the truth of God's character.

He testifies to the truth of God's Word. He witnesses to the surety and the steadfastness of God. More than that, he affirms the promise of salvation.

Because he is, as we read there in verse 5, he is the firstborn of the dead. Following his humiliation on the cross at Calvary, he has been highly exalted.

[17:53] He's been given a name that is above all names. He's the firstborn of the dead. He's defeated death. He's conquered the grave. He's brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

He's the firstborn of the dead. More than that, he is the ruler of the kings on earth. Through his resurrection, he has put all his enemies under his feet.

He is the king of kings and the lord of lords. He is, as we see throughout this letter, Jesus Christ is the risen, ruling, and reigning king who is going to return.

And you know, what an introduction. What a revelation. What a greeting. A greeting from the throne of heaven. It's a Trinitarian letter from the throne of heaven.

But there's more. Because we read in the second half of verse 5 and also verse 6, we read that there are others who are being described. Yes, there's God the Father.

[19:01] There's God the Son. There's God the Holy Spirit. The Trinity are present around the throne of heaven. But we're also told that there are others around the throne of heaven too. And there they are giving glory to God.

They're declaring their doxology. It's the second half of verse 5. Their doxology. This words that give glory to God. That's what the word doxology means. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priest to his God and Father.

To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. There's God the Father. There's God the Son. There's God the Holy Spirit.

And then there's the saints in glory who are included in this introduction. The saints who are in glory are included in this introduction.

What an introduction. What a greeting. And you know, it should be an encouragement to us here on earth to read about those in heaven. To read about the saints in glory.

[20:07] I don't think we think about them enough. It should be an encouragement to what we often describe as the church militant. Reading about or reading the doxology of the church triumphant.

Those in glory. It should be an encouragement to us because it ought to remind us. This doxology ought to remind us and reassure us of Jesus' promise to his church.

His promise in John 14. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there you may be also.

And you know, I say that the saints in glory are included in this Trinitarian introduction. Because this doxology, verse 5 and 6, this doxology, it's actually echoed throughout parts of the book of Revelation.

Because when John is given that revelation of the throne room of heaven in chapters 4 and 5 and 6 and 7, he sees the saints in glory.

[ 21 : 13 ] He's given, the veil is opened for him, the curtain is pulled back. He sees the saints in glory and he sees them singing. He sees them singing that new song to the Lord.

In chapter 5, they're singing, Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals. For you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people. For God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

And you have made them a kingdom and priest to our God. And they shall reign on the earth. And even when one of the 24 elders questions in chapter 7, he questions, he says, Who are these saints in glory?

Who are these and where have they come from? And John knows who they are. John knows where they've come from. And he says, These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation.

They've washed their robes and they've made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, says John, they're before the throne of God. They serve him day and night in his temple. And he who sits on his throne will shelter them with his presence.

[ 22 : 21 ] And they shall neither hunger no more, neither thirst any more. The sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd. And he will guide them to springs of living water.

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And you look at it and you think, well, what an introduction. What a letter to get from the throne of heaven.

Now, time is going. As you can see, there's so much. There's so much in these introductory words from this revelation, this letter from heaven.

As we said, these verses are introducing the writer. Then they're secondly informing the reader. Introducing the writer and informing the reader. That's what we see secondly and lastly and briefly. So informing the reader. Look at verse 7. It says, Behold, he is coming with the clouds. And every eye will see him.

[ 23 : 23 ] Even those who pierced him. And all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God.

Who is and who was and who is to come. The Almighty. Now, verse 7, it begins with a word that's worth taking note of.

Behold. It's a word we're familiar with. But it's an imperative of instruction. It's an indicator of information. Because what's coming next is important.

So it says, Behold. Behold. In other words, stop and sit up. Look and listen. Don't skip over.

Don't swerve past this. Because this is important. He says, Behold. He is coming. He is coming with the clouds.

[ 24 : 21 ] And every eye will see him. Even those who pierced him. And all tribes of the earth. Will wail on account of him. Even so.

Amen. And you know, Jesus touched on this in his last sermon. His final sermon. He said in Matthew chapter 25.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory. And all the holy angels with him. He will sit on his throne in glory. And he says, All the nations will be gathered before him.

He will separate them one from the other. As a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. And he will set the sheep on his right hand. But the goats on his left hand.

And the king will say to those in his right. Come, you blessed of my father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you. From before the foundation of the world. And the king will say to those on his left hand.

[ 25 : 21 ] Depart from me, you cursed. Into the everlasting fire. Prepared for the devil. And his angels. And you know, even in this introduction.

We're being told to sit up. And take note. To listen. Because Jesus Christ is the risen, ruling and reigning king.

Who is going to return. That's what he says. Behold. This is a message from heaven. From Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And the saints in glory. Behold, he is coming. With the clouds. And every eye will see him. Even those who pierced him.

Now that's a statement. Even those who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth. Will wail on account of him. They will call for the rocks.

[ 26 : 18 ] To follow them. Even so, he says. Amen. But of course, there will be many who question. Such a statement like that.

That Jesus is the ruling, reigning and returning king. And they'll say, well, it's been 2,000 years. Where is he? Where is the promise of his coming? Where is he?

And you know, they asked the same question in Peter's day too. And Peter said. Do you remember what Peter said to them? The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise.

Or he is not slack to fulfill his promise. But he is patient towards you. Why? He is not willing that any should perish.

But that all should come to repentance. What a great text. The Lord is not slack to fulfill his promise. But is patient towards you.

[ 27 : 16 ] He's not willing that any should perish. But that all should come to repentance. Do you know, my friend, as God lifts the lid in this book.

As he removes the veil and pulls back the curtain. He reveals his apocalypses. His apocalypse. His revelation. His final revelation of his son, Jesus Christ.

And you know, having been introduced to this Trinitarian writer. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And the saints in glory. He informs the reader. He tells us who are reading this book.

First of all, he's told us that we're blessed even reading it. We're blessed hearing it. But we're being informed that this Jesus. He is risen. He's ruling. He's reigning.

He's a king. And he's going to return. He's going to return. Behold, he is coming with the clouds. And every eye will see him. Even those who pierced him.

[ 28 : 15 ] And all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. And then to crown it all. And to make it all official. To give his seal of approval.

To put a stamp on it. He signs his name to it. I am the Alpha and the Omega. Says the Lord God. Who is and who was. And who is to come. The Almighty. He puts his sign and seal on this introduction.

This is a message from heaven. So take note. You know, what an introduction. Where the Lord is speaking to us. And reminding us.

I am the Alpha and the Omega. Says the Lord God. Who is and who was. And who is to come. The Almighty. Well, may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us.

[ 29 : 15 ] Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God. We give thanks to thee for this revelation. We thank thee, Lord, for the general revelation of creation.

The special revelation of thy word. But also this final revelation. That closes the canon of scripture. And yet a revelation that reveals to us. Our risen, ruling and reigning king.

Who is going to return. And Lord, that we would all be ready for that great and glorious day. And that we would encourage and exhort others to be ready. That they would be ready like those who were ready to have with oil in their lamps.

Waiting for the bridegroom to come. And Lord, we plead that we would have an urgency. That we would see that Jesus is coming. But he is also one who desires all people everywhere to repent. He is not willing that any should perish. But that all would come to repentance. Help us then, we pray, to encourage our fellow man and woman around us.

[ 30 : 23 ] Those in our workplaces. Those in our homes. To seek the Lord while he is to be found. And to call upon him while he is near. Bless, Lord, thy truth to us.

Bless our study as we study thy word together. That Father, Son, and Holy Spirit would teach us and guide us and lead us. That thou wouldest have all the glory.

And that we as thy people, that we would know blessing. Hear us then, we pray. Go before us. Take away our iniquity. Receive us graciously. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

We're going to bring our time to a conclusion this evening. We're going to sing again in Psalm 107. Psalm 107. Again in the Scottish Psalter, page 384. Psalm 107.

[ 31 : 20 ] We're singing from verse 27 down to verse Mark 31. As I mentioned, Psalm 107 is a psalm full of testimonies.

Testimonies where the Lord's redeemed are being exhorted and encouraged to praise God for he is good. They've been encouraged to tell their testimony. And at the end of each testimony, there is that confession or that exhortation that others would tell their testimony about the Lord's goodness.

But these verses that we're singing are a familiar testimony. It's the sailor's section where it speaks about this sailor who's reeling and staggering like one drunk in a storm.

And yet he cries to the Lord and the storm is changed into a calm. And at the end of it all, his confession is, Oh, that men to the Lord would give. Praise for his goodness then, and for his works of wonder done unto the sons of men.

So Psalm 107 from verse 27 down to the verse Mark 31. We'll stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise. Let's sing, if you're able, to God's praise.

[ 33 : 00 ] Let's sing, if you're able, to God's praise.

Let's sing, if you're able, to God's praise.

So to the heaven he left praise, which they desired to see.

Oh, that men to the Lord would give. Praise for his goodness then, and for his works of wonder done.

Amen. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.