

February 20, 2022

Sunnyside Community Church

Pastor Guy Shields

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Seven Realities” — Revelation 1:1-8

Introduction:

→ We are in—

—Revelation 1:4-5a—

—and—

—we are considering—

—the 4th Reality—

—of the Revelation—

—presented—

—in this opening section—

—of John’s Apocalypse—

—the Reality—

—that the Revelation is—

—an instrument—

—of grace and peace—

—from the Triune God—

—As John transitions—

—from—

—the prologue—

—in vv.1-3—

—to—

—the Epistolary Greeting—

—of the Letter—

—He writes—

—Revelation 1:4-5a—*"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."*

—With these words—

—John expresses—His desire—

—that the seven churches of Asia—

—blessed—

—with grace—and—peace—

—that they be—enriched—

—with anything—

—and—everything—

—necessary—

—to equip them—

—to answer the call—

—that rests upon them—

—anything—

—and—everything—

—essential—to perseverance—

—in faithful witness—

—in the face—

—of the world's opposition—

—John prays—

—for this—

—and—

—then—

—he proceeds—

—to pursue—

—the answer—

—to his prayer—

—*Really*—

—to—*be*—

—the answer—

—to his desire—

—for them—

—(at least in part)—

—And—he does this—

—by proceeding—to write—

—his Epistle—

—In one respect—

—The Revelation—is—

—the answer—

—to John's prayer—

—And—

—this is—because—

—the Revelation—

—is—an instrument—

—by which—

—the grace—and—peace—

—for which he prays—

—is—imparted—

—to them—

—Through the Revelation—

—the grace—and—peace—

—John desires/ prays—

—for his readers—

—is—provided—to them—

—And—

—from this prayer wish—

—we can identify—two ways/reasons—

—in which/why the Revelation—

—is an instrument—

—of grace—and—peace—

—from the Triune God—

—First of all—

—as we saw—

—last time—

The Revelation is an instrument of grace and peace from the Triune God because it provides the substance of that grace and peace—the instruction, understanding, encouragement and confidence God’s people require for perseverance in faithful witness in the face of the world’s opposition.

—But—secondly—

—we see—from this prayer wish—

—that—

II. The Revelation is an instrument of grace and peace from the Triune God because it presents the source of that grace and peace—the triune God in His working of His eschatological purposes.

—John says—

—Revelation 1:4—***“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.”***

—Having expressed—his wish—

—for grace—and—peace—

—John proceeds—

—to identify—

—the source—

—of that grace—

—and—peace—

—And—

—*what is that source?*

—the source—is—

—the triune God—

—John identifies—

—all three members—

—of the Godhead—

—in this statement—

—He attributes—

—the source—

—of grace—and—peace—

—to all three persons—

—of the triune Godhead—

—He begins—

—with the Father—

A. The Source of Grace and Peace is the working of God the Father—the Author and Initiator of God’s End Time Purposes.

—John says—

—Revelation 1:4—“*Grace and peace to you from Him who is and who was and who is to come.*”

—Five times—

—in the Revelation—

—the Father—is—referred to—

—in this way—

—here—

—in Revelation 1:4—

—But also—

—in Revelation 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5—

—In three—

—of the five—

—John includes—

—the full—

—3-part—designation—

—here—

—in 1:4—

—and—

—in 1:8—

—and—

—4:8—

—But—

—in the other two references—

—John includes—

—only—two—

—of the three—elements—

—in 11:17—

—and—

—16:5—

—Here—

—in 1:4—

—and—

—again—

—in 1:8—

—we read—

—Revelation 1:4, 8—*“Him (the Lord God) who is and who was and who is to come.”*

—In 4:8—

—we read—

—Revelation 4:8—*“And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.’”*

—But—

—in 11:17—

—we read—

—Revelation 1:16-17—*“And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, ‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was . . .’”*

—And—

—similarly—

—in 16:5—

—we read—

—Revelation 16:5—*“And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, ‘Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was . . .’”*

—So—

—3 times—

—the 3-part designation—

—and—

—2 times—

—the 2-part designation—

—And—

—the question is—

—*Why?*

—Well—

—we are going to hold that question—

—for a moment—

—We'll come back to it—

→ Now—

—immediately—

—we recognize—

—that this designation—

—of the Father—

—has its origin—

—in God's identification—

—of himself—

—to Moses—

—in Exodus 3—

—You'll remember—

—that—in Exodus 3—

—God appears—to Moses—

—on the Mountain—
—in the burning bush—
—In this appearance—
—God—directs Moses—
—to return—to Egypt—
—in order to lead His people—
—out bondage—
—into the Land of Promise—
—You remember—
—that Moses objects—
—to the Lord’s instruction—
—and—
—he asks—
—in Exodus 3:13—

—Exodus 3:13—*"If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"*

—To this question—
—the Lord God responds—

—Exodus 3:14—*"God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

—The Lord—
—identifies—himself—
—as—
—the *"I AM"*—

—as—

—the One—

—“Who is”—

—the—

—“I Am who I am”—

—It is this—designation/ name—

—that John adopts—

—as he identifies—the source—

—of grace—

—and—peace—

—In fact—

—in part—

—this explains—John’s order—

—in this series—

—of designations—

—You notice—

—that—here—

—in Rev.1:4—

—as well as—

—in Rev. 1:8; 11:17 and 16:5—

—John doesn’t say—

—“The One who—**was**—and—who is . . .”

—Rather—

—he says—

—“The One who—*is*—and—who was”—

—He places—the present tense—

—before—

—the past tense—

—One reason he does this—

—is because—

—“He who—*is*”—

—is how—the LXX—

—(the Greek translation—of the OT)—

—renders—

—the Hebrew—

—“I Am Who I am”—

—John’s purpose—

—is—to demonstrate—

—that—

—the source—

—of grace—and—peace—

—is—

—the “I AM”—

—of Exodus 3:14—

—to demonstrate—

—that—grace—and—peace—

—have their source—

—in the God—

—of Exodus 3—

—the I AM—

—who delivers—

—His people—

—the I AM—

—who saves—his people—

—through judgment—

—through the judgment—

—brought upon Pharoah—

—and—the Egyptians—

—John’s purpose—

—is—to demonstrate—

—that the source—of grace—and—peace—

—is—the One—

—Who—is—

—of Exodus 3—

→ But—

—this is only—part—

—of John’s reasoning—

—John is not only—wanting—

—to identify—

—this source—

—of grace—and—peace—

—with the “I AM”—

—of Exodus 3—

—He is also—wanting—

—to emphasize—

—the working—

—of this God—

—and—not merely—

—the fact—of his existence—

—as the source—

—of that grace—and—peace—

—Although—

—certainly—

—God’s—existence—

—is—essential—

—to his being—

—the source—

—of grace—and—peace—

—more—

—specifically—

—it is through his working—

—that grace—and—peace—are—supplied—

—When the focus—

—is—

—on God’s existence—

—(as in Revelation 4:8)—

—then God identified—

—as—

—“the Lord God Almighty—

—*who was*—

—*and is*—

—*and—is to come*—

—the elements—

—that designate him—

—are—set—

—in temporal order—

—past→present→future—

—together—

—indicating—

—his—

—eternality—

—his—

—eternal—

—being—

—disrupting—

—the temporal order—

—by—placing—the present—

—ahead—of the past—

—indicates—

—that—something else—

—is—being indicated—

—and—

—that—something else—

—is—

—His activity/ working—

—This fact—

—is—reinforced—

—by another feature—

—of this designation—

—Notice—

—that—

—rather than using—

—the future tense—

—of the verb—

—*to be*—

—John substitutes—

—the verb—

—*“coming”*—

—rather than saying—

—*“Him who is and who was and who is to be”*—

—John says—

—*“Him who is and who was and who is to come.”*—

—Again—

—he does this—

—because—

—the emphasis/point—

—is—not—merely—

—on God’s—

—being—

—but—

—on God’s—

—doing—

—specifically—

—on God’s—

—judgment—

—on God’s—

—coming—

—to judge—

—The backdrop—

—for John’s designation—

—of the Father—

—is—

—not only—

—Exodus 3—

—but also—

—OT statements—

—such as—

—Psalm 96:11-13—

—or—

—Psalm 98:8-9—

—or even—

—Isaiah 40:10—

***Psalm 96:11-13—“Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.*”**

Psalm 98:8-9—“Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity.”

Isaiah 40:10—“Behold the Lord God comes with might and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms’ he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with you.”

—The source—

—of grace—and—peace—

—is—the God—

—who—comes—

—The God—

—who comes—

—to save—his own—

—the God—

—who comes—to judge—

—all—who oppose Him--

—the God—

—who comes—to judge—

—in righteousness—

—the God—

—who comes—

—to save—

—through—judgment—

—By identifying—

—the source—of grace—and—peace—

—as—the One who is—

—and—who was—

—and—who is to come—

—John—identifies—Him—

—as the Gentle shepherd—

—of Isaiah 40—

—as the Righteous Judge—

—of Psalm 96—

—and—98-

—That this is so—

—is—again—

—reinforced—

—by Rev.11:17—

—and—16:5—

—where we find—

—not—

—the 3-part—

—designation—

—but—

—only—the 2—

—Remember—

—Revelation 1:16-17—*“And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, ‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was . . .’”*

—and—

—again—

—Revelation 16:5—*“And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, ‘Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was . . .’”*

—And—

—our question was—

—*Why?*

—*Why only the 2 elements—*

—*and—not all three—*

—It is—because—

—in each of these references—

—the *“coming”*

—that we would expect—to follow—

—is—being fulfilled—

—in the divine judgement—

—that is described—

—in the context—

—In Revelation 11:17-18—

—explaining—

—what has just been described—

—in preceding section—

—we read—**Revelation 11:17-18—**

—*"saying,*

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,

who is and who was,

for you have taken your great power

and begun to reign.

The nations raged,

but your wrath came,

and the time for the dead to be judged,

and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,

and those who fear your name,

both small and great,

and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."

—The explanation—

—speaks—

—of wrath—

—and—judgment—

—this is God's—coming—

—to judge—

—and—to save—

—God’s coming—

—is—already—

—occurring—

—thus—

—He is—no longer—described—

—as—the One—who—*is*—

—to come—

—Similarly—

—in Revelation 16:5—

—where we read—

—Revelation 16:5-6—“And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!”

—What is described—

—in the context—is—

—God’s—coming—

—in judgment—

—Thus—

—in commenting—

—on this judgement—

—He is no longer described—

—as—the One who—*is*—to come—

—All of this points—

—to the reality—

—that—the emphasis/focus—

—in this designation of God--

—is—the working—

—of God--

—specifically—

—the working of the Father—

—in salvation—

—and—judgment—

—It is—this—saving—judging God—

—who is the source—

—of grace—and—peace—

—and—

—the Revelation—

—is—an instrument—

—of grace—and—peace—

—because—it shows us—

—this God--

—it shows us—

—the workings—

—of this God--

—It shows us—

—this God—working—
 —salvation—
 —through judgment—
 —As a result of this—
 —we can pursue—
 —the grace—and—peace—
 —for which John prays—
 —by attending—
 —to the Revelation—
 —that sets forth—
 —this working of God--

Trans—
 —but—
 —the source—of grace—and—peace—
 —is—not only—
 —the One who is—
 —and—who was—
 —and—who is to come—
 —not only—
 —the working—of the Father—
 —but also—

B. The Source of Grace and Peace is the working of the Spirit—the Empowering Agent for God’s End Time Purposes.

—John says—

—Revelation 1:4—*“Grace and peace to you from him who is and who was and who is to come—and from the seven spirits of God—*

—The seven Spirits—

—of God—

—has in view—

—the seven-fold—Spirit—

—of God—

—Seven—

—(as we know)—

—is the number—

—of fullness/ completeness—

—The seven Spirits of God—

—is—

—the Spirit of God—

—in his completeness/ fullness—

—In the fullness—

—of his power—

—and—

—effective working—

—Four times—

—in the Revelation—

—John makes reference—

—to this seven-fold Spirit—

—Here—

—in 1:4—

—Then—

—again—

—in—

—Revelation 3:1—

—where he is described—

—as belonging to—

—the Risen Christ—

—who speaks—

—to the church—

—Revelation 3:1—*"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.'*"

—then—

—again—

—Revelation 4:5—

—where he is described—

—as—seven torches—

—of fire—

—burning—

—before the throne—

—in heaven—

—Revelation 4:5—*"From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God."*

—And—

—finally—

—Revelation 5:6—

—where he is—described—

—as a feature—

—of the Lamb—

—that John sees—

—Revelation 5:6—*"And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth."*

—Again—

—this understanding—

—of the Spirit—

—has its origin—

—in the OT—

—specifically—

—in the Prophecy—

—of Zechariah—

—In Zechariah 4—

—the prophet is given a vision—

—Zechariah 4:1-3—*"And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left."*

—As John understood—this vision—

—he could not—escape—
 —understanding—
 —the Lampstand—
 —as the seven-branched—lampstand—
 —that stood—
 —before the Lord—
 —in the holy place—

—As the Prophet continues—
 —he asks—
 —about the meaning—
 —of what he sees—
 —his interest—is—
 —first of all—
 —with the meaning—
 —the lampstand—
 —with its seven lamps—

—Zechariah 4:4—*"And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?"*

—The angel—
 —does not—answer—him—
 —directly—
 —but—responds—
 —with an oracle—

Zechariah 4:5—*Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." Then he said to me,*

“This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.

—The angel—follows this—

—with a further explanation—

—Zechariah 4:7-10a—“Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’ ” Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.

—The vision—

—has to do—

—with the restoration—

—of the Temple/ the house—of the Lord--

—And—

—the point—of the vision—

—is—

—that this restoration—

—will be accomplished—

—in the power—

—of the Spirit—

—The angel—

—finally—explains—

—the identity—

—of the seven lamps—

—Zechariah 4:10b— *“These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth.”*

—The angel—explains—

—that—the seven lamps—

—are—the seven eyes—

—of the Lord—

—the image—

—of the eyes—

—speaks—

—not just—

—of God’s knowledge—

—but—also—

—of his power—

—John—

—pulls—all of this—

—together—

—to understand—

—that—

—what is in view—

—in Zechariah’s vision—

—is—the Spirit of God—

—working—with power—

—to effect—

—God’s
purposes—

—purposes—encompassing—

—the whole earth—

—purposes—involving—

—the restoration—

—of his House—

—Here—

—in our text—

—John’s description—

—of the Spirit—

—as—the seven Spirits—

—that are before the Lord/ before his throne—

—identifies—the Spirit—

—as empowering agent—

—by which—

—God’s eschatological
purposes—

—are

accomplished—

—the Spirit—is—the empowering—dynamic—

—by which—

—the people of God—

—persevere—

—in faithful witness—

—This reality—

—is—clearly—depicted—

—in Revelation 11—
 —in the vision—
 —of the two witnesses—
 —the two witnesses—
 —are—
 —the two olive trees—
 —and—
 —two lampstands—
 —that stand—before the Lord—
 —of all the earth—
 —(another allusion—to Zechariah’s prophecy)—
 —From Zechariah’s prophecy—
 —we understand—
 —that—that lamps—that burn—on these
 lampstands/the dynamic—that empowers—their
 witness—
 —is—
 —the Spirit—of God—
 —The Spirit of God—is—the empowering agent—
 —by which the church—
 —fulfills—her calling—
 —the source of grace—and—peace—
 —is—the working—
 —of the Spirit—
 —The Revelation—is—

—an instrument—

—of grace—and—peace—

—because—

—in the Revelation—

—we see—

—the effective working—

—of the Spirit—

—Here is—impetus—

—for us—to attend—carefully—

—to the Revelation—

—in order—

—to see—

—this effective—working—

—of the Spirit—

—and—

—to be—encouraged—

—by that—

—and—

—to seek—

—enabling—

—from the Spirit—

—as we—endeavor—

—to be—faithful—

—in our witness/ to our calling—

—The Revelation—

—is an instrument—

—of grace—and—peace—

—because—it shows us—

—the Spirit—

—it shows us—

—the working of God—

—by this Spirit—

—But—

—thirdly—

C. The Source of Grace and Peace is the working of the Son—The Effecting Agent for God’s End Time Purposes.

—Again—John says—

—Revelation 1:4-5a—*"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."*

—Here—

—John presents—

—the third member—

—of the Godhead/ triune God—

—the Apostle—

—identifies—

—Jesus Christ—as—

—the faithful witness—
 —the firstborn from the dead—
 —and—
 —the ruler of the kings of the earth—
 —this—
 —three-fold—identification—
 —identifies—Jesus—
 —in terms—of His role—
 —in God’s end time—
 —purposes—
 —it identifies—Jesus—
 —as—the means—
 —by which—God—effects—
 —His eschatological—purposes—
 —The Son—
 —fulfills in these purposes—
 —(first of all)—
 —as—

1. The faithful witness

—This has in view—
 —the death—
 —of Christ—
 —It frames—that death—

—in terms—of witness—
 —Jesus Christ—
 —bore—faithful witness—
 —to the word of the Father—
 —even to the point of death—
 —He is—*the* Faithful witness—
 —because—he bore— testimony—
 —to the truth of God/ Kingdom of God—
 —even unto death—
 —By this witness—
 —he conquered—
 —so that—
 —he was raised to life—
 —and thus—
 —he is—
 —not only—
 —the Faithful witness—
 —He is—
 —also—

2. The Firstborn from the dead

—Jesus Christ—
 —is—the Firstborn—
 —from the dead—
 —He is—

—the firstfruits—

—of the resurrection—

—by his resurrection—

—he inaugurated—

—the age to come/ resurrection age—

—by his resurrection—

—he set in motion—

—the events of the end—

—Having conquered—

—by His faithful witness—

—his is given—

—all—authority—

—He is seated—

—with the Father—

—on his throne—

—so that—

—he is not only—

—the Faithful witness—

—Not only—

—the Firstborn—

—from the dead—

—But—

—He is—also—

3. The Ruler of the Kings of the Earth

—All authority—

—in heaven—and—on earth—

—has been—given—

—unto Him—

—He has authority—

—to judge—

—and—

—to save—

—to save—

—through judgement—

—As such a one—

—(as the Faithful witness—

—as the Firstborn from the dead—

—as the Ruler of the Kings of the earth)—

—he is the agent—

—through whom—

—God is effecting—

—his eschatological purposes—

—The Revelation—

—is an instrument—

—of grace and peace—

—from the Triune God—

—because—it shows us—

—this one—

—It shows him—

—in his triumph—

—as the Lamb—

—who was slain—

—who has redeemed—

—a people—

—for God—

—from every tribe—

—and tongue—

—and nation—

—and people—

—It shows us—

—the One—who is worthy—

—of—power—

—and—wealth—

—and—wisdom—

—and—might—

—and—honor—

—and—glory—

—It shows us—

—the One—who—is—worthy—

—to take—the scroll—

—and—to open—

—the seals—

—worthy—

—to effect—

—God's end time—purposes—

—It shows us—

—the working—

—of the Son of God—

—the source—

—of grace—and—peace—

—The Revelation—

—is an instrument—

—of grace and peace—

—because it shows us—

—the triune God—

—Father—

—Spirit—

—Son—

—working—

—his eschatological purposes—

—The Revelation—

—is a window—

—out through which—

—we can see—

—the transhistorical workings—

—of the eternal God—
—the workings—of God—
—that transcend—
—time—and—space—
—the workings of God—
—in the heavenly realm—
—bringing—to effect—
—His purposes—
—for His creation—
—his end-time purposes—purposes—
—of salvation—
—and judgment—

→ This is why—

—the Revelation is a blessing—
—to all—
—who carefully attend to it—
—Yes—
—it is enigmatic—
—Yes—
—there is much—
—in the Revelation—
—that is hard—to understand—
—But—
—we are encouraged—

—to persevere—

—in seeking—

—understanding—

—to attend—

—carefully—

—to it—

—to read it—

—to study it—

—diligently—

—because—

—in it—

—God's shows us—

—his working—

—and thus—

—by it—He imparts—

—grace—and—peace—

—to us—

—understanding—

—encouragement—

—and—equipping—

—for perseverance—

—in faithful witness—

—in the face—

—of opposition—

Conclusion

- ➔ Our call—is to faithful witness
- ➔ The burden of Revelation—
 - to instruct—encourage—give confidence—
- ➔ In so doing—
 - Revelation serves as an instrument—
 - of grace and peace—
 - from the triune God—
- ➔ Let us attend—
 - carefully—
 - to it—

Benediction~ Revelation 1:4-5a—May the grace and peace that comes from the triune God, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, from the seven Spirits before His throne and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth be with you all—Amen!