

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter

April 24, 2022

Revelation 1:4-8:

## **“It Ain’t Over Till It’s Over”**

I. It Isn’t.

II. “The Tribes of the Earth.”

III. *“It ain’t”*

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Revelation 1:4-8

Dear Friends in Christ,

For much of the church in America, Easter is a major turning point. It's the end of the journey through Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany and then through the seriousness of Lent and Holy Week, and then Easter. The Tomb is opened, and for many, that's the gateway to newness of life. Spring!! Well, I think that's the way a lot of people see it.

I don't know who originally said the following, but it will be familiar to some of us: "...you can't argue with American Baseball legend Yogi Berra (who) first uttered the phrase about baseball's 1973 National pennant race. His team was a long way behind when he said it and they did eventually win the division title." Yogi Berra's famous phrase was, 'It ain't over till it's over.'"

As far as our Easter celebration from a week ago is concerned, and all it means, Yogi Berra's phrase is correct . . .

### **"IT AIN'T OVER TILL IT'S OVER"**

#### I. It Isn't.

Here are verses 4 and 8 of our text:

"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....

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

We heard the words of the eighth verse on Palm Sunday: *who is and who was and who is to come*. They're important. It would be impossible to miss it. This "grace and peace" are from the Lord God who is "the Alpha and the Omega," the beginning and the end of all things here.

The "who is," is the Lord Himself who is. He is now! He is present in all human events. He is especially active in the lives of His people. As Jesus promised, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Mt. 28:20) The end of this world.

The "who was" takes us back to Exodus and the question Moses asked God: "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? 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.'" (Ex. 3:13,14) This takes us to these words of Jesus: "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." (Jn. 8:58) Abraham was centuries before Moses. Jesus is God "who was" - the one who spoke to Moses!

Jesus is also *The Angel of the Lord*, first mentioned in Genesis 16:7, "The angel of the Lord found (Hagar) by the spring of water...". And listen to what happened after *The Angel of the Lord* appeared to Samson's parents some 800 years later: "The angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the Lord. And Manoah said to his wife, 'We shall surely die, for we have seen God.'" (Judges 13:22) The one "who was" has always been, even before the creation of the world, and He is ever present now. And finally this . . .

"...and who is to come" which of course, takes us to the very end of this world. He is the One who directs all human history, in spite of what humans think. He is Jesus, the resurrected Christ who will return.

Some might say, "Well, Easter is over..." But it isn't. It never is. It never will be. The opening words of our text which we have just considered point us to these words from the twenty-second chapter of Revelation: "The throne of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads....And they will reign forever and ever." (Rev. 22:3-5)

## II. "The Tribes Of The Earth."

And listen to this: Everything Christ "who is and who was and who is to come" will be witnessed by "all tribes of the earth." Verse 7 of our text: "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 wail on account of him." In comparison with this Jesus said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days... Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Mt. 24:29,30)

As I reflect over these years, I cannot help but recall the professors, the books and articles, the Hollywood and television presentations that have worked so hard to degrade Scripture and Christ in every conceivable way. Everything from Bertrand Russell's, *Why I am not a Christian* to the 1970's *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and the willingness of many who claimed to be Christian yet tried to defend it; the fiction of *The Di Vinci Code*, the absurdity of *The Gospel of Judas*, the multitude of people who laugh at Scripture and, yet, have never read or studied it - as is the case for the many who sit in churches.

And why all this uproar from "the tribes of the earth?" It isn't because the rejection is backed by certain proof. It's because the world can't tolerate the truth: Sin. You know the words of Jesus: "The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil." (Jn. 7:7) It cannot deal with the words the Lord gave to Peter: "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

By nature, humans want freedom from all restrictions and prefer that somebody takes care of them and makes life comfortable and easy. And look where this has brought us! It's the same "pandemic" that has always been part of the world. And there are no masks, vaccines or distancing that have ever worked. It is, from the beginning to the present and to the end, the unending violence and corruption of the human race! It's this world's "*what was, what is, and what's to come!*" It's sin! It's lawlessness! It's death!

As the twenty-four elders declare in the Book of Revelation: "The nations raged, but your wrath came..." (Rev. 11:18a) And every conceivable effort to degrade Christ and His people will continue to that very moment when, as Paul writes, "While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' (we're all thinking the same way) then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape." (I Thess, 5:3)

Listen: Now that Easter is over there is time, but just so much time. But for His people Jesus said, "Now when these things begin to take place (and we are beyond the beginning), straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Lk. 21:28)

## III. "It ain't"

Finally, for God's people are these words of our text: "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." (vss.5b,6) It's simply the truth: "To him who loves us." Those are five words that take us through the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus for our eternal salvation. And then, "freed us from our sins by his blood." In Christ, God has taken away all - every! - sin. Forgiven. We are forgiven forever!

We live with the living, Real Presence of the resurrected. He knows us, claims us as His own, and speaks to and assures us through Word and Sacrament. As Paul writes, "But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows who are his,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.'" (2 Tim. 2:19)

A fellow by the name of Andrew Wyermann wrote:

"I remember the witness of Bishop Lajos Ordass of the Lutheran Church in Hungary to a small group gathered at the Lutheran World Federation assembly in Minneapolis in 1957. As bishop, he protested the Communist regime's confiscation of church schools and was imprisoned for twenty months (because that's what Communists do). Later he was under arrest for six years (because that's what Communists do). He was a tall stately man, and I can still see his ashen face as he quietly told his story.

"They placed me in solitary confinement. It was a tiny cell, perhaps six feet by eight feet, with no windows, and soundproof. They hoped to break down my resistance by isolating me from all sensory perceptions. They thought I was alone. They were wrong. The risen Christ was present in that room, and in communion with him, I was able to prevail." (James S. Hewett, "Illustrated Unlimited," (p. 165)

You see? Easter celebration "ain't over till it's over." And it will never be. We look forward to that moment when "...the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God." God help us to prevail! (1 Thess. 4:16) We plead with the words of John: "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20)

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott