

Revelation 1:4b-8

“We want a king to rule us and fight our battles, just like all the other nations around us!” That’s what the people of Israel said when they gathered before Samuel, God’s prophet. Basically the Israelites had had enough. For three hundred years God had provided them with judges to rule the land. But everyone did as he saw fit. The people weren’t listening to God and they certainly weren’t trusting his leadership. They rejected the Lord as their King and wanted an earthly king. So, Samuel informed them of the dire consequences of their actions. The king would seize the best land, he would take their daughters and put them to work, and their sons would fill the ranks of the army—life in Israel would be far from picture perfect. Tyranny and oppression would come from a king who rules from his palace, disconnected from God’s people and disgusted by their lowliness. That’s exactly what King Saul did. That’s the way worldly kings operate. They have the absolute power and they use it absolutely how they want. That’s one reason you don’t see many kings ruling today. But then there’s King Jesus. He’s the King we cry out to, he’s the King we can say with confidence, “We want him to fight our battles and rule over us!” We can say this without hesitation because, **Jesus is a King who’s all about Freedom! 1. He sets us free from sin, 2. He sets us free to serve.**

1. He sets us free from sin

Jesus gave the apostle John the commission to write Revelation at a time when the people of God needed the deep comfort of God’s love. They needed comfort because they were enduring the cross of suffering. John himself had been exiled to the island of Patmos, Christians were being put to death by the Roman emperor, and believers everywhere were unsure how “all things could be theirs” (1 Cor 3:21) as suffering lurked around every street corner. Once again Jesus vividly portrayed the message of his Kingship. Revelation reminds us that grace and peace belong to us from our Triune God. The visions in Revelation portray our powerful King winning the Final Victory over all our enemies.

But how did we come to have this King Jesus? I don’t recall a coronation ceremony anywhere in the Bible, do you? If we base our standards on the pomp and pageantry of the world, we won’t find it. But Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world, so his coronation won’t be either. The ceremony started on the night he was betrayed. As his close friend brought soldiers and betrayal, Christ watched and prayed. When the betrayer arrived in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus’ disciples all scattered. No one was left to accompany the Son of Man to his coronation as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Sure, other rulers became involved: men like Caiaphas the high priest, Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, and Herod the ruler of Galilee. But these rulers did not see Jesus as King—they only mocked and questioned him, treating him like a side-show.

Things only became worse for the Lord Jesus. He was whipped and beaten. The soldiers honored him with an elegant purple robe, but only to mock and cause him more pain. His coronation didn’t involve a crown of gold and jewels, but a crown of thorns pressed into his sweaty brow. They gave him not a scepter of power, but a cross of weakness and he carried it willingly. This is his coronation ceremony. And the coronation oil? What was that? Was it expensive olive oil or perfume? No, it was the holy precious blood pouring from his head and feet, his hands and side. In weakness and suffering our King Jesus is crowned.

Why was this the path God laid out for Jesus? Why all the suffering and death? Why all the blood? For 1,500 years God’s people had seen bloodshed in the tabernacle and temple. Day after day God’s people brought animal sacrifices before God. They learned over and over and over that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. The blood of King Jesus has brought us forgiveness. In a coronation of weakness, our King earned us freedom and

forgiveness. **He's a King who's all about Freedom, and he sets us free from sin by his blood!**

Freedom is something we value pretty highly as Americans, don't we? We thank God for the freedom of religion. We can gather together and hear his Word without the fear that someone is going to come and haul us off to jail. We thank God for the freedom of the press. We have the ability to communicate ideas, and we don't suffer from the blindness of other people around the world who live under state controlled clouds. But what does it mean that we are free from our sins? What do you see when you look at your own life? Do you see a person who is free from sin? Do you see your life completely devoid of any hardship or failure? We might ask, "Where's the freedom God?"

In fact, the more we study God's law, the more we see how we have sinned in life. God says, "Do not commit adultery" and we think, "Good thing I've never had sex outside of marriage." But then Jesus says, "Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully commits adultery with her in his heart." Suddenly the illusion of freedom disappears. We see our lives are still filled with sin. God says, "Worship me only!" and we say to ourselves, "Good thing I went to church this week. I'm okay with the Big Guy upstairs!" But then Jesus says, "Love the Lord with all your heart and every fiber of your being at every moment." Suddenly the illusion of freedom disappears. Woe to me if I don't see the sin that stares me in the face!

But there's another message God shares with us. We hear the good news of our King "who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood" (Rev 1:5). Despite the sins we see and failures we fall into, the reality is we have **a King who's all about freedom**. Jesus sets us free from the guilt and condemnation our sins rightly deserve. He's the Faithful Witness who said, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!" (John 8:33) His Word isn't empty promise; it's pure gospel, pure good news. He's the Firstborn from the dead. He rose just as he said he would. Just because his blood was shed, doesn't mean he stayed dead. He broke death's chains and his new life guarantees our freedom. The power of sin in your life has been broken. Because our King paid the price for all sins of all people of all time, sin doesn't control us. Even though we battle against sin, we are free from its power and control. That's the peace we have from him who is and who was and who is to come.

2. He sets us free to serve.

John gives us this prophecy, "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" (Rev 1:7). This is the first prophecy of the book of Revelation and it takes us back to Jesus' Ascension. The angels promised us that Jesus would come back in the same way he left. But do you remember why Jesus ascended into heaven? Why would Jesus leave us visibly when he knew how much our world needs him, even today? He ascended to fill all things and rule all things. He's the King of kings and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. Even when it seems like crackpot leaders and diabolic dictators are calling the shots, Jesus is in control. He fully assumed the Kingship he earned with his blood.

This prophecy from John also points us forward to his coming on the Last Day. People will mourn because of him. Broad is the road that leads to destruction and many want to travel down that path. They say they're doing their own thing, but they are travelling the path to hell. Until that Day comes and even after it occurs, you and I will continue to enjoy freedom in Christ. But it's not the freedom to do whatever I want. It's the freedom to follow what Christ wants. **He sets us free to serve.**

Jesus' Kingship is one of a kind in the history of the world. No dictator or king has ever come close to the rule of our King, Christ. He may not have received his crown as we would picture an earthly king, but he does have one thing in common with earthly kings—he has subjects. You and I are the subjects of King Jesus, because **he sets us free to serve**. Jesus' blood was the oil that anointed us as royal priests. In the Old Testament you couldn't be a king or a priest without being anointed by God. Jesus "has made us a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father" (Rev 1:6) by his own blood. Service is not an option when you're a royal priest. It's who you are. It's what you do.

Do you see yourself as a royal priest? Do you see the service God has placed before you? Maybe you need to look in areas you've never considered very important. Faithfully showing up for work, day in and day out—there's a service you offer, not only to your employer but to God the Father. Helping someone clean up after a big dinner—there's a service you offer, not only to your neighbor but to God himself. God has placed you where you are in life and he gives you reason and ability, and he says, "Serve me! Whatever you do, serve me!"

Your service might also lie in places you have yet to discover. Maybe you have a hobby or a talent and in the coming weeks God is going to use that talent to make a Christmas gift for someone. Maybe there will be someone with a flat tire on the side of the road as you drive home today. God can use your flat tire experiences to help that person. This is the freedom to serve God. Use what he has given you and give glory to him. How beautiful is the freedom to serve!

So, go in peace royal priests. You have a King who's all about freedom. He freed us from our sins by his own blood. In weakness and suffering he made it clear—he is the Lord of lords and King of kings. He also made us free to serve him in power. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of our lives. In him we live and move and have our being. AMEN.