The seven churches

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[0:00] Now let us turn with the Lord's help to consider words which we shall find in the portion of scripture read. Revelation chapter 1.

We may again read from verse 4. Revelation chapter 1 and reading at verse 4. John to the seven churches which are in Asia.
Grace be unto you and peace from him which is and which was and which is to come. And from the seven spirits which are before his throne.
And from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness. And the first begotten of the dead. And the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us.
And washed us from our sins in his own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his father. To him be glory and dominion.
[1:09] Forever and ever. Amen. Particularly the words we find from the middle of verse 5. Unto him that loved us.

And washed us from our sins. In his own blood. And so on. Now we read at the beginning of verse 4 here that John is writing to the seven churches which are in Asia.
And the time of writing was a time of particular trial and difficulty and persecution for the church. John himself had been banished to the isle of Patmos. By the enemies of the church. In the hope that he would not be able to influence for good the progression of the gospel.
In the hope that he would not be a leader and a guide to those who wanted to propagate the good news of Jesus Christ.
[2:29] But of course although John himself was confined to the isle of Patmos. The Lord is not confined. Although John may have been bound.

Maybe not literally. He was bound nevertheless. In being isolated from the church. Nevertheless the word of God is not bound.
And John receives a revelation from Christ. That was to be a source of encouragement. To the church.
In days of trial and persecution. Generally speaking. This is one very important strand of the book of Revelation.
It is a book full of encouragement. To the church of Christ. And do we not ourselves in our day. Need encouragement.
[3:30] Does the church in our day not need. To take note of the encouragement. That God gives his people. In his word. Because the encouragement given to the church.

In the first century AD. Is relevant. To the church. In the 20th. And going into the 21st century AD. Because God's word. Is always a source of life. And encouragement. To God's people. And we see before we subdivide our text.
That the Lord. At the very beginning. Here. Sends grace. And peace. Unto the church. In verse 4. The seven churches which are in Asia. Grace be unto you. And peace. From him which is. And which was. And which is to come.
[4:28] Isn't that a wonderful word. Of encouragement to the church. In the midst of its trials. Feeling downcast. Feeling possibly.

That the enemy is closing in. And seeking to extinguish the light of the church. The Lord says. Grace. And peace. Be unto you.
And also. From the seven spirits. Which are before his throne. The seven spirits before the throne. Indicating to us. The manifold. Operations. And workings. Of the spirit of God. In the church of God. He who is. The spirit of God. Is in the heart of God's people. And he sends them. A blessing as well.

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[5:27] He sends strength. He sends encouragement. And. In the way that he himself sees it. He will. Give them.

All that they need. To meet up with all the circumstances. That this wilderness journey. Presents to them. Isn't that a great comfort.
To yourself today. And also. From Jesus Christ. Who is the faithful witness. The first begotten of the dead.
And the prince of the kings of the earth. I won't say anything about the two. Previous points. The first begotten. The faithful witness. And the first begotten of the dead.
But focus for a moment. On the third thing that he says. The prince. Of the kings of the earth. In another place. The scripture says.
[6:23] Of our Lord. That he is king of kings. And lord of lords. And however much. The kings of the earth. May rise up against the church.

However much. Satan with all his wiles. Will try. And undo the work of the church. As it is. Carried through.
In the strength of the Lord. And according to God's word. We must always remember. That Jesus Christ. As king mediator. Reigns.
In the interest of his church. And he will reign. Until all his enemies. Are placed. Under his feet. And that is a great.
Encouragement to the Lord's people. In every age. And then coming to the particular. Point. That he.
[7:18] Mentions from the middle of verse 5. Unto him that loved us. And washed us from our sails. In his own blood.

This is a doxology. This is a song of praise. This is a song of thanksgiving. To Christ. The savior. And there are three things I'd like to mention. First of all. The fact that he loved. His church. Actually. The tense.
Says that he continues to love. Not only did he. Love. At one time. But. He loved and continues to love.
That's the first thing. And secondly. He washed. The church. In his own blood. And thirdly.
[8:18] What he made them. He made us. He made us kings and priests. To God. And his father. The church is not an insignificant. Club of people.

The church. Is the most significant. Community. Constituency. In this whole world. Because. They are a force to be reckoned with.
Because they are kings and priests. Made so. Made so by God himself. Maybe they don't feel. Like kings.
Maybe they feel more. Like the worm. Jacob. Because of the difficulties and trials. And the oppression suffered at the hands of the enemy.
But. From God's point of view. They are kings. And priests. These are words of encouragement.
[9:18] Firstly then. The point he makes here. He loved. Us. Unto him that loved us. What kind of love.

Was this. Is this. Well surely. It is a love. To his own. Elect people.
There is a sense. In which. God is. Kind. To all his creatures. There is a sense.
In which. Some may. Say. That God loves. All men. But the love. We have mentioned here. Is a love.
To his own. Elect. A love. That focuses. Upon them. Because. He has. A particular. Purpose.
[10:19] In mind. And the purpose. That he has. For his own. People. Is to redeem them. To save them.

To make them. Like unto. The image. Of Christ. The son. Of God. God loves.
With an everlasting. Love. This love. Has no beginning. This love. Has no ending. This love.
Is so deep. And so high. And so wide. And so broad. That we cannot. Even measure it. Because it is the love. Of the infinite.
God. For his people. Also. It is an unchanging. And unchangeable. Love. It is a love.
[11:13] That delights. To bless. These people. A love. Love. That focuses upon them. To do them good. And the greatest good.

Positive. Unto him. That loved us. Love. This love.

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Is a love. For individuals. It is. A love. For. Individuals. To the extent.
That God. Says. Of his people. That he. Is their husband. I have betrothed thee.
Unto me. I have betrothed thee. Unto me. Forever. And you cannot say. Generally speaking.
[12:12] That one. Betroths. One's health. To a mass. Of people. As such. This betrothal. Must be. Between individuals.

And that is. What we have. In the love of God. To his people. So that the apostle. Paul. Can say for himself. He. Loved me. And gave himself.
For me. The Lord's love. For you. As a believer. Is a particular. Individual. Personal. Love. He loved. Us. And. To what extent. Did he love us? Well there are many answers. To that question.
But I'm going along. This particular line. He loved us. Not only. To unite us. To himself. In that bond. Of betrothal.
[13:12] And marriage. But he loved us. To the extent. That he is willing. To undertake. Our cause.

I mean. That he is willing. To address. The deepest. Problem. That we have. And the deepest. And most significant. Problem. That we have. Is that we are sinners. We are divorced. From God. By the fall. We lost. Our communion. With God. We are under his wrath. And curse. Liable to all. The sin.
And misery. Of his life. To death. Itself. And to the pains. Of hell. Forever. We are tottering. As it were. On the brink. Of eternal destruction.
[14:09] And that is our case. That is our danger. That he loved. And he betrothed. And he came.

To undertake. That cause. He came. To assume. Our nature. He took. Human nature. To himself. Uniting.
That human nature. To his eternal. Passion. So that when. Mary brought forth. Her first born. Child. He was none other. Than the eternal. Son of God. In human. Nature. Unto us.
A child is born. Unto us. A son. Is given. Who. The eternal. Son of God. Of course.
[15:05] The second person. Of the Trinity. He was given. Unto us. To take. Our nature. But he came. To be under.

The law. That he might. Redeem. Them. Who were under. The curse. Of the law. He came. To address. Our problem.
He came. To give himself. A sacrifice. To make atonement. For our sins. To us. Oh.
What love. Is this. Unto him. That loved us. No wonder. John here. Lodged. This wonderful. Savior. And rises. In this. Hymn. And song. Of praise. Unto him. That loved us. However many. Gather together.
[16:01] And show hatred. To us. However many. May be spiteful. Towards us. However many. Difficulties. They may manufacture.

And present. For our undoing. He. Loved us. Love. And what is more. As I mentioned. He continues.
To love. It is not. A love. That was. A fleeting thing. It was a love. That continues.
Having loved. His own people. Who were in the world. John says. In the gospel. He loved them. Unto the end.
That may mean. Particularly. In connection. With the Lord's. Life in this world. That he. Continued.
[16:57] To love them. Right. Through. To the point. At which. He. Declared. From the cross. It is finished. It is finished.

He loved them. To that end. That he gave himself. Utterly. And completely. And exclusively. For them.
And was it not. A marvel. Despite. The way. The enemies. Came. To try. And prevent him. From fulfilling. His mission.
The devil. Tried. This way. And that way. Nevertheless. The Lord. Fulfilled. His mission. He. Went over all.
The obstacles. He wasn't. Turned. This way. Or that way. He wasn't. Pressurized. To stop. Three quarters. Of the way. No.
[17:53] He loved them. To the end. He loved them. He loved them. He loved them. He loved them. He loved them. He loved them. And he continues to love. And to cherish. He embraces his people.

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Embraces their cause. Encourages them to go on. Fear not. For I. Am with thee. And as we mentioned already.
He said to the disciples. I am with you always. Even unto the end of the world. As the one who loves them. As the one who is married to them.
In the highest possible. Meaning of that word. Marriages in this world are for time. This union. Between Christ and his people.
Is a spiritual and eternal one. And we see. The church of Christ in the revelation. As. The bride.
[18:53] Adorned for her husband. In the revelation. That shows us. A glimpse. Of the eternity into which.

The church is going. The glorious eternity. Which the church will spend. She will spend it. As. As. The wife. The wife.
Of the lamb. He loves her. Eternally. In heaven.
They will hunger no more. Neither will they thirst anymore. Neither will the sun light on them. Nor any heat. Of persecution or tribe.
But the lamb that is in the midst of the throne. Shall feed them. And lead them. And lead them to living fountains of water. And God. Shall wipe away. All tears.
[19:50] From their eyes. Unto him. That loved us. Secondly. He washed us from our sins. In his own blood.

Though that brings. Something new. Into our consideration. Of this love. Because. By virtue of the way we have.
These words brought before us. We realize. That he loved the church. That was. In the words. That may be appropriate to this verse.
He loved her. In her unwashed. Condition. He loved her. In her unattractive condition.
He loved her. In her contaminated condition. He loved her. While she were. Was yet his enemy. He loved her.
[20:51] While she was still. Full of enmity. Unclean. Impure. God does things differently.

To men. When a young woman. Wants to endear herself. To a young man. She will try. And.
Make herself. As attractive. As possible. You see that. In the book of Esther. Esther. When. Esther. Went into. King Ahasuerus. Along with. The others. Whom Ahasuerus. Desired. To see. And from which company.
He wanted to choose. A wife. Because Vashti. His wife. Had refused. To comply. With his command. To come. And show herself. Off. To the nobles.
[21:47] Of the land. And you see. That it is there. Written. That. Esther. Went through. A particular. Process. Of preparation.

And beautifying. Before she went. Into the presence. Of the king. But the church. Of Christ. Is different. It is not. For anything. That Christ.
Saw in her. That he loved her. It is not. For any beauty. That she might. Innately. Have possessed. That he loved her. It was not.
For any. Particular. Achievements. That she may have had. That he loved her. She had no achievement. She had no innate beauty.
She had no attractiveness. Because she was dead. In trespasses. And sin. She was far. From him. Rebellious.
[22:41] In every fiber. Of her being. Against him. And these. These sentiments. Are expressed. By others. Who said of Christ. We shall not have this man.

Reign over us. Unto him. That loved us. And washed us.
While we were yet enemies. We were reconciled to God. By the death of his son. He washed. He washed. Those who were putrefied.
With sin. He beautified. Those who were scarred. With sin. He gave them. All that they needed. So that they would be beautified.
And make like. Unto himself. He washed us. From our sin. In his own blood. What does this mean?
[23:50] Well surely. The blood of Christ. Means. Something. Particular. I cannot wash. Anyone.

In my blood. Neither can you. People. But Christ's blood. Is significant. Because it is. Sacrificial blood.
He gave himself. A sacrifice. To satisfy. Divine justice. And reconcile. His people.
To God. You see. Sin. As it were. Bound. Bound. These people up.

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Another translation. For the word. Washed. Here. Can be. Loosed. He. Loosed. Us. From our sins. [24:49] In his own blood. And sin. Attaches. And the guilt. Of sin. Attaches. To individual. People. Because.

The law. Binds. Sin. Upon them. The demands. Of the law. Unfulfilled. And unanswered. They automatically.
Bind. People. In sin. And how then. Were these people. To be loosed. From this bondage. Loosed. From this guilt. Washed.
From this. Impurity. Of sin. Well. There was only one way. And that way. Is highlighted here. That. He washed them. Or loosed them. From their sins. In his own blood. How can that be? Well the words.
[25:45] I believe. Are speaking. Of his work. Of atonement. The words. Are speaking. Of. Of. The sacrifice.

That he gave. For them. So that. On the basis. Of Christ. Magnifying the law.
Making the law. Honorable. Giving the law. Every requirement. That it asked. For. On behalf of these people. He satisfied.
The demands. Of the law. And it's as if. The bonds. Or bands. Of the law. Must yield. Regarding these people. Because Christ.
Answered. All these requirements. On their behalf. The other way. Of looking at it. Is this.
[26:40] That Christ. Gave. His blood. God. That they might. Be. Made.

Clean. The fountain. Opened. To the house. Of David. And the inhabitants. Of Jerusalem. For sin. And uncleanness.
That fountain. Is available. That fountain. Is opened. In the death. Of Christ. And the words. We have here. Are speaking.
Particularly. I believe. Of. The cleansing. Or washing. Of justification. Rather than.
The cleansing. Or washing. Of sanctification. That Christ. Opened the fountain. And those who come.
[27:35] To avail themselves. By faith. Of. This. Shed blood. Will know. That they are justified.

On the basis. Of what Christ. Has done. There is a fountain. The hymn writer said. Filled with blood. Drawn from Emmanuel's veins.
And sinners. Plunged. Beneath. That flood. Lose all. Their guilty stains. He washed us.
From our sins. In his own. Blood. Have we come. To that blood yet. Have we come.
To avail ourselves. Of. The power. And efficacy. Of the blood of Christ. Of his finished work. That is basically.
[28:32] What the blood of Christ means. His sufferings. And to death. For his people. We mustn't be too.

Literal about his blood. Although his blood was a. Literal reality. And his pouring of his blood. Was a literal. And historical occurrence.
In the world. We must remember. That when the scripture. Speaks to us. Here and elsewhere. Of the blood of Christ. It is speaking. Particularly. Of his sufferings.
And to death. As the sacrifice. Of his people. The finished work. That he came. To perform. On their behalf. And now.
He washed. His people. From their sins. In his own blood. When does this become. Effectual in your own life.
[29:28] Well it comes. Becomes effectual in your life. When you. Trust him. And believe in him. As. Your only savior.

You. The merit. The efficacy. The power. To cleanse. Your sin. Becomes. Personal. To you. And to me.
When we come. To our faith. Knowledge. Of him. We spoke. Yesterday morning. Of the woman. Who had the issue. Of blood. And we suggested. That that resembled.
Her state. In sin. And corruption. But once. She judged. Christ. The power. Of all. That he was. As savior. As it were. Channeled through to her.
Dealing with her problem. And cleansing. Our sin. And so. We see here. He loved us. And washed us. In his own blood.
[30:26] Thirdly. What he made us. What he made his people. He made us. Kings. And priests.

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And to God. And to God. And his father. Mentioned already. How significant. These words may be. To a church.
Downcast. To a church. Suffering. Persecution. In the days of John. He says. You are kings.
And you are priests. Kings. In what sense. Are the people of God. Kings. Well the people of God. Are kings. Because they have been given.
A kingdom. They have received. A kingdom. Of grace. Which cannot. Be taken away.
[31:25] From them. Is not a marvelous thought. Whatever else. You might lose. In this world. You may lose. All your money. All your property. You may lose.

Your health. Your strength. Whatever else. You will never lose. What the Lord. By grace. Has given you. By way of. An eternal inheritance. Fear not.
Little flock. It is your father's. Good pleasure. To give you. The kingdom. You may not feel like a king.
Or a queen. But actually. This is what the Lord. Makes his people. They are significant people. They are. People.
Who have great possessions. And as they exercise. Their kingship. In what areas. Do they do so. Well.
[32:22] They have power over sin. Or you say. That's not right. I feel sin beats me. On every turn. Well. Let's put it this way.

That you have. Power over sin. That you did not have. In your unconverted days. By grace. By the spirit of God.
You are able to mortify. The deeds of the body. That you might live. And sin. Does not have. Real dominion. Over you. The reason for that is.
That you are. United to Christ. And that his grace. Operates in your life. And heart. To this extent. You are. I know. I know.
That you. You. Sometimes. Feel. That sin. Weakens you. To the point. Where you give in.
[33:21] That may be so. That if any man. That if any man sin. We have an advocate. With the father. Jesus Christ. The righteous. And he is the propitiation.

For our sin. You come. And look at him. In view. Of your sinning. Against God. And you know. That you have. A friend. Who is a priest.
Who is a great high priest. And who himself. Is the propitiation. Or the sacrifice. That atoned. For your sin. And then you can look.
With confidence. At sin. And say. My sin is forgiven. And really. There is ultimately. A complete assurance. Given to me. That sin.
Will be. Under my feet. I will not be under it. Under it. Ultimately. One more thing.
[34:21] He also made his people. Priests. As priests. They offer up. Spiritual sacrifices. Of prayer.

And praise. They don't. Offer up. Sacrifices. To atone. They don't. Offer up. Sacrifices. To make. Reconciliation. They don't. Perpetuate.
The sacrifice. Of Christ. Like the. Roman Catholic. Church. Perform. In the mass. The people of God.
Have no part. In that. Because Christ himself. Has finished it all. And he. With one sacrifice. Has forever. Made perfect. Them.
That are sanctified. Once. And for all. He made atonement. But the way. The people of God. Are priests. As I mentioned. Is. Through their sacrifices.
[35:16] Of prayer. And praise. Here he says. Even their bodies. Are given. As living sacrifices. To God. Day by day.

Another way. Of looking at this. Kings. And priests. May. Be translated. A kingdom. Of priests. In other words.
All of God's people. Are a people. Who pray. And all of God's people. Are a people. Who have a reason. To praise. And we see John here.
Giving us. An indication. Of the way. He saw things. And the reasons. He saw. To praise. And magnify. The Lord.
For all. He is. And all he has done. For his people. Unto him. That loved us. And washed us. From our sins. In his own blood.
[36:14] Unto him. Who has made us. Kings and priests. Unto God. And his father. To him. Be glory. And dominion. Forever. Forever.

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And ever. Amen. And may we all be able. To enter into that. Doxology. Even this morning. Let us pray. Thank thee.
O Lord. For thy kindness. To us. And pray that thou wouldst. Help. And strengthen us. In all that we. Need to do. In thy name. Continue with us.
We pray thee. Continue to enlighten. Our minds. Upon thy word. And give us. To know thy strength. And enabling. Forgive our sin.
For Jesus sake. Amen. Amen.

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