

Text: Rev. 1:4-5a

Title: "The Triune God of the Revelation"

Time: 1/22/2017 am

Place: NBBC

Intro - Our God is a Trinity, and so right off the bat we are confronted with the fact that we are dealing with Someone we cannot fully comprehend. Analogies fail us as we try to contemplate the sense in which our God is both one and three. In one sense, the word *Trinity* seems to put the nature of God far beyond the reach of our understanding.

But in another sense, God's triune nature is an important key to our ability to know Him intimately. We might say that a Trinitarian is a monotheist who knows the one God personally as three persons. It is good to know God. We all need to know God. But as we get to know God, we come to know Him as the Father of the Son and our Father too; we come to know Him as the Son of the Father, and so our Elder Brother and Savior; and we come to know Him as Spirit of the Father and the Son, and so that indwelling person who is our constant companion, whom we would not grieve.

We prayed for our dear sister, Anna Henderson, this week. As Trinitarians we prayed not only to the God of heaven who controls all things, but also to the perfect Father who warmly cares for His creatures, to the perfect Son who knows what it means to severely suffer and who has committed Himself to be our sister's faithful High Priest, and to the perfect Spirit who would never leave or forsake Anna and whose work of illumination can bring the truth of God and its encouragement to her heart and mind as she goes through this trial.

And so the God of the New Testament revelation especially, who is the same God of the Old Testament revelation as we saw in some detail in Sunday School, is the Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And the people of God, especially in New Testament times are Trinitarians, who have the joy of knowing God personally revealed fully as three persons in a way few Old Testament believers could appreciate so fully. Our message this morning is titled, "The Triune God of Revelation," and I want us to learn together this morning 5 things about Him from the passage.

I. The Triune God is the God of local churches (1:4a).

Ill: It is hard to read your Bible without getting the general impression that its Author has a preference for some reason for the number seven. He made the world in six days and rested on the seventh day, so with day number 8 the count began at 1 again. We have seven days in our week.

Sylvain Marechal was a prominent atheistic French philosopher who lived during the French Revolution. In 1788, just prior to the Revolution, he published what he called an *Almanac of Honest People*, and in that work he had created a calendar based on the number 10 rather than on 7 as part of an effort to expunge any remnants of the Bible's truth from French society. The French government actually implemented that system from 1793 to 1805. That Revolution, we know, led to the Reign of Terror and eventually to Napoleon's tyranny. Today, of course, France is back on the 7-day-week calendar.

Appl: I refer to that because it is an illustration from history of how wrong things can go when man decides that God's plan is no good and his own plan is something better. And just like we cannot read our New Testaments without see-

ing that God is a Trinity, we also cannot read our New Testaments without seeing that this Triune God has a keen interest in the work of local churches in this day and age. It is what He has arranged for believers today, and trying to live our lives without a local church is a little like French revolutionaries trying to live their lives without a 7-day work week. The Triune God is the God of local churches. There is no other thing on earth that God is more interested in today than what you and I are called to be a part of this morning. Do you and I share this interest of our Lord?

II. The Triune God is the God of grace and peace (1:4b, *grace and peace to you*).

III: As we read the letters to the churches in Asia in chapters 2 and 3 in the days ahead, we will see among them a great need for grace and peace from the Triune God. The book of Revelation, we shall see, was written by John while he was suffering in exile. It is a book that was written during the days of the Emperor Domitian, who was the first Roman Emperor to really take seriously the idea that he was a god. Cruel persecution of the church resulted. We see in the letters that some of the problems that Paul dealt with in seed form a generation earlier had become full-blown toxins in the church, like the problem of meat sacrificed to idols and the policy of the Nicolaitanes. Satan is mentioned 5 times by name in the seven letters.

Appl: So local churches need grace and peace from the Triune God to deal with the realities of an enemy that wants to destroy them. Grace is God's willingness to freely give us what we need and what we do not deserve if only we will receive it by faith. Peace is that power that keeps or guards our hearts and minds. Both are associated in the life of the church with her prayers. This verse is really a prayer.

We cannot pray too much as a church family. The day we have prayed too much as a church together will be the day we have had too much grace and too much peace. I hope you pray for grace and peace both with and for your local church here.

III. The Triune God is God, the sovereign Father (1:4c, *His throne – is, was, is coming*).

Ill: We witnessed another transition of power this past week with the inauguration of President Trump. Eight years ago, it was President Obama who basked in the glory of the inauguration and in the anticipation of obtaining the power of this office. Now he has that glory and that power no more.

Appl: Our verse tells us that God the Father is on the throne of absolute power, and it tells us that He is, that He was, and that He is to come that same Father God in that same powerful position. His reign does not expire after four or eight years. There is no term limit for Him. No rebellion or hostile coup can disrupt His sovereign reign. No passage of time or oncoming change can change this – God is still on His throne.

We have a hymn in our hymnal, which I have never sung, that celebrates this wonderful truth and what it means to our lives that our Father God is unchangeably and eternally on His throne (Hymn #790). What is causing us to forget that God is still on the throne this morning? Whatever it is, it is lying to us. The Triune God is God, the sovereign Father, and He is still on the throne.

IV. The Triune God is God, the omniscient Spirit (1:4c, *seven Spirits*).

Appl: All Bible students have struggled to understand why we read of seven Spirits in this verse rather than the one person, the Holy Spirit. It is clear from this Trinitarian context that the seven spirits refer to the Holy Spirit, but why seven? What we do know about the answer to that question comes from the other places we see the seven spirits in Revelation and from the Zechariah passage we read this morning together (Rev. 3:1, 4:5, 5:6; Zech. 4). Note some details about “the seven spirits” label for the Holy Spirit from these passages:

1. They are associated with the seven stars, which are the angels or messengers of the seven churches (3:1, 1:20).
2. They burn as lamps before God’s throne (4:5).
3. They are the eyes of the Lamb that are sent out into all the world (5:6).

Ill: It is this last passage that connects to Zech. 3:9 and 4:10. The Zechariah passage is all about the way in which God was going to use Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple in preparation for the coming of the Branch of the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah (Zech. 3:8). The seven eyes of God are involved in this construction work. It is a work that must not be despised as the day of small things (4:10), and it is a work that could only be done by the power of God’s Spirit (4:6).

So what this seven-fold symbol of the Holy Spirit teaches us is that He is the one who does a work of God among men in preparation for the coming of the Son. He did so with post-exilic Israel for the Son’s first coming, and He is doing so with local churches for the Son’s second coming. It is an omniscient work, and it is a work that reaches to the ends of the world. It is a work that is despised by the world, but it is a work filled with messages to local churches.

So we have seven stars, seven lampstands, seven angels, seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, and seven spirits, because seven is the number that indicates the means of the sovereign work of God among men on the earth. The Holy Spirit is the seven spirits today, because He is that person of the Trinity whereby God is especially at work among men, just as He was in the days of Zerubbabel. Our work is not by might, nor by power, but by God's Spirit. We must not grieve Him. We must not quench Him. He must do the miracles our work and our lives need. The triune God is God, the omniscient Spirit, and we must walk in the Spirit in our work for the Lord.

V. The Triune God is God, Christ Jesus (1:5a, Christ = prophet, priest, king).

Appl: *Christ* means *Anointed One*, and Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit to be our prophet, priest, and king. As our prophet, He is the Faithful Witness. What He promises can be trusted. He keeps His word to us. He promised, "I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." He promised, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish." He promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my help; I shall not fear what man shall do to me.'" Each of those promises comes from the Faithful Witness, and we can trust Him with everything.

As our priest, Jesus Christ is the Firstborn of the Dead. Our Priest first had to die to be that. He died in our place for our sins a cruel death that involved the unimaginable suffering that propitiated God's wrath on our sins. But dead He did not stay. He conquered death. He is the firstborn of the dead, ready to receive for His people the inheritance of life

everlasting. We can be saved from our sins and possess eternal life in Him.

And as our king, Jesus Christ is the king of all kings. You did not see Him in Washington, D.C. last Friday, but all that happened there reports to Him. He holds them all accountable. And as the king of all kings, He loves His church and gave Himself for her, so when those kings persecute His church, they shall not go unpunished. He will protect us. He will keep us.

Conclusion: Are you part of a local church that has grace and peace from the Triune God this morning? Do you know your God as Father, unchangeable on His throne? Do you know Him as Spirit, omnisciently powerful to do the work He has called us to do here on earth? Do you know Him as Jesus Christ, the faithful witness prophet to whom you listen regularly, the firstborn of the dead priest whose death and resurrection you are trusting for your own salvation, and your king of kings, to whose reign you gladly bend the knee with ready obedience?

If so, John's prayer for grace and peace belongs to you and your local church, and it shall have its answer from the Triune God speedily and without fail.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*