

Rev 1:1-8
“The God Who Is and Who Was and Who Is to Come”
Part 2 “The God Who Is”

Joy is a peculiar thing. Biblically, I am sure it is very different from happiness, though the English language often intertwines to the two. Happiness can be attained. It is the result of what’s happening in one’s life at any given moment. Happiness is conditioned upon our circumstances. Joy on the other hand is not the result of what we may be experiencing in the moment. It cannot be gained or deterred by life circumstances. If it could, then James would be wrong in his instruction to us in **James 1:2-3**, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.” I haven’t found a person yet who is happy when he or she is going through. But I have found persons who have joy in the face of great suffering. Why? Because joy is that which we receive from God. Joy is a state of being brought on by one’s complete confidence in the promises of God assured to all who trust in His Son, Jesus the Christ. The God Who Is, the ever-present God, God with us, is doing and has done great things for us. Things that are our cause for joy, or should be our cause for joy, despite our individual life circumstances. This morning, drawing from the text, I want to share three wonderful things that the God Who Is is doing or has done for all who put their hope in His Son, Jesus the Christ.

First thing, the God Who Is loves us. Notice this love is present tense. It’s not ‘has loved’ us or ‘will love us’. No, it reads, **V5** “to him who loves us”. God’s love is a very unfamiliar love to us because too often love as we know it and experience it is conditional. Not so with God. This love is a right now, right here love. This isn’t a love that is waiting on you to receive it or acknowledge it. It is not a love we receive when

we are finally at a place of lovability. This love loves us when we are at our best and our worst. It is preemptive, transcendent, and transforming. It does not need or wait for our acknowledgement, it is unmatched to any love you could ever experience, and it will not leave you as it found you. What joy it brings to know that the God Who Is, loves us right here and right now! Church, the God Who is loves us.

Romans 5:7-8 “⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person— though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

John 15:12-14 “¹²This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you.”

John 3:16-17 “¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Second, the God Who Is has freed us from the bondage of sin. V5 “and has freed us from our sins by his blood”. All of us were in sin’s chains. I know we use language like, I been a Christian all my life. Not true for anyone. Every human being is born in sin and as a result is in need of release from the bondage of it. And this release we cannot purchase for ourselves. No effort of ours could ever make us right with God. We can’t give enough, serve enough, pray enough, preach enough, teach enough, fast enough, sing enough, etc. to wipe our slate clean. Only the blood of Jesus can set one free. And why blood, because God has deemed it so. And what joy we have, or should have, knowing that because of the love of Jesus that led him to the cross we

have eternal life. For this purpose Jesus came into the world to set the captive free by the shedding of his blood. The song writer got it right when he penned, "I know it was the blood for me. One day when I was lost, he died upon the cross and I know it was the blood for me!" The God Who Is has freed us from our sins by his blood!

Matt 1:19-21 "19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

John 8:34-36 "34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

Romans 3:21-25a "21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."

Finally, the God Who Is has made us over. V6 "and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." I think most of us are familiar with the term make over. When we humans receive a physical make over, we alter our appearance by changing our hair, applying make-up, maybe a new

wardrobe or even plastic surgery. When our homes receive a makeover, we call it a remodel and the remodel normally changes the entire appearance and functionality of one or more areas of our home. When we come to faith in Jesus the Christ, we receive a spiritual make over that changes everything about us. It changes where we reside and who we serve. No longer are we members of the synagogue of Satan, serving and fulfilling our own selfish desires. Through faith in Jesus the Christ we become citizens of his kingdom, and priest to God. That means, we devote ourselves to serving Christ and God by the power of the Holy Spirit. Church, we are a royal priesthood. What joy to know we are citizens of and priests in God's/Christ's kingdom right now. No one who comes to faith in Jesus the Christ remains the same. The God Who Is has made us over.

2 Cor 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

Romans 6:4 "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

1 Peter 2:9-10 ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." Church, the God Who Is loves us, has set us free from the bondage of sin, and has made us over. All these things are certainly a cause for joy this Advent season despite what we have or may be going through. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.