

No coach ever had a lot of success telling their team to go out and lose. Imagine little league coaches telling their kids to just play bad. Or a high school cross country coach telling their runners to give it somewhat less than all they've got. Or a professional basketball coach telling his team to play poorly. Coaches like that don't last long. Preparation, encouragement, and a winning attitude are the coach's job. No matter how many mistakes, strikeouts, or fumbles the coach must remain positive and keep the team focused on the big picture.

It's no game, but Christian living still seems like a losing effort sometimes. And we don't have a coach telling us things will get better if we just keep focused. The challenges of life weigh us down. Family tension reaches new heights when children don't baptize the grandchildren. Friendships are strained when you learn that a close friend struggles with lustful thoughts. Church relations are on the brink because of gossip and idle talk. Our focus is off the mark. We're missing any big picture. If we go far enough we might lose sight of Christ. That makes blaming him for our problems easier and concentrating on our daily defeats just a part of life.

Some of you may not have known that there are two symbols in the tile work of this altar, one on the left and right. On the far left is a symbol that looks a lot like a horseshoe in the shape of the letter A. On the right is another symbol looking totally like a horseshoe. I encourage you to come up after church and take a look. For those familiar with Greek these symbols are the letters alpha and omega, the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet. It also happens to be the imagery from this first chapter of the book of Revelation that takes us back to the big picture for our life...

It's all about Christ the King
A message to celebrate
A message to communicate

The apostle John starts Revelation with a greeting to seven real churches experiencing tough times. Their Christianity was under attack, their faith was weakening, and it didn't look good. But John starts with encouragement and a hymn of praise. **"Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits,...and from Jesus Christ."** What's the important message? It's all about Jesus. He's with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The three-in-one God knew every attack their faith faced. Knew things didn't look good. Knew what to do.

Picture your hero. Is it a politician or a movie star, sports personality or business guru, or a famous author or a rock star? Whoever it is, imagine that person walking down the aisle of church. Heads turn because everyone knows your hero. The person walks right up here on the altar, stands here and announces they're taking you to lunch. Not only that but you can expect special treatment. They'll use their power and influence for you. They'll use their resources to get things done for you. You'd probably be speechless.

The same Jesus who revealed himself in such glorious words from the apostle John went bigger and more awesome. John later received a vision from the Lord Jesus. John saw **"someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest."** How many people do you know that dress like that? None probably. But in John's day one did, the king. Jesus revealed himself to be the king at John's side, Christ the King. This would be your hero taking you to lunch in a limo, while giving you their credit cards to use, while setting you up for meetings with even more powerful people. Jesus would use his power, resources, and influence to get things done for John.

But King Jesus had power and authority to go further than John's physical needs. Jesus is holy and can see everything, even into human hearts. He's got powerful words. His face shines like the sun. The message? It's all about Christ the King. And this wasn't just for John. He recorded it for the times when we're down and looking for something to pick us up. John wrote it so we know who to look to: our true king, our glorious God, our only Savior.

We could stop with it's all about Christ the King. That tells people Jesus has power. It even shares a little of what he did. But Jesus shared more for John to share with us, **"Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth."** Witnesses tell only the truth of what they saw. Jesus testifies, speaks, and proclaims the whole truth of how we're saved. Jesus is also the firstborn from the dead. This doesn't mean he was the first to rise from the dead, but he was the first to rise and never experience death again. He was the first and only one ever to sacrifice himself so we might live with God for eternity. He alone died in the place of sinners as the substitute, the perfect substitute who walked out of his tomb alive.

And Jesus is the ruler above every single king. You might picture a king wearing royal robes, carrying a scepter, and sitting on a throne. Most kings don't that today. But they also don't do what kings used to. Kings led, they ruled, and they fought battles often from the front lines. As our king Christ fought the ultimate battle with Satan, and Christ the King won. **"To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood...to him be glory and power forever and ever."** Jesus' victory over sin and Satan gives him the right to rule in our hearts and get the glory. His victory assures us what the message really is. It's all about Christ the King.

The rescue mission is a fact good for all time. The rescue has direct bearing on our future. Remember, we're going to see Jesus again. Everyone will see him when he comes in the clouds. **"Every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be."** It's all about Christ the King. Those who rejected this Messiah will mourn while we rejoice. Jesus is no mummy. He's not some dead body still in Jerusalem. We celebrate the message of a living Savior.

People get all confused about the book of Revelation. “It’s too confusing” they say. “Too many numbers that I don’t understand.” “Probably so many hidden codes we’ll never know what it truly says.” But remember the intended recipients. These were Christians getting hit in the mouth with bad news. Their heads were down, their hearts were low. Hope seemed lost. It doesn’t sound all that different from us. Some days seem to have no hope or comfort. Eternal life seems like a dream. Then we pick up the book of Revelation and its message of celebration. Jesus won, the victory is complete. When we look pitiful and weak Revelation reminds us it’s all about Christ the King giving us strength and courage for life.

A message like that turns your whole life around. Suddenly courage from Jesus allows us to say no to invitations to get drunk. It allows us the ability to say no to sex before marriage. It empowers us to give up creature comforts in order to contribute more offerings to ministry. Jesus’ victory is a powerful message that can’t be kept secret. It’s a mighty message we’ve been entrusted with, the mighty message of Jesus in the Word. A mighty word that penetrates deep, zaps out sin, and fills us with the power of Christ our king himself. We’ve been made by Jesus **“to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father.”** Part of serving God means pushing Satan aside and forgiving. It means communicating the loving message of Jesus. It means knowing the truths and telling people it’s all about Christ the King.

Revelation is all about triumph; Jesus’ triumph over sin, and our triumph through him. It’s really all about Christ the King. He says this for himself when he signs his name to this powerful book. Look for it there just like it’s on our altar. **“I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”** Christ is King from beginning to end. He’s got us covered from first to last. He’s got our eyes on the big picture with a message of power and pardon, of assurance and comfort. We celebrate it and we communicate it. It’s all about Christ the King.