

# REVELATION 1:5

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Revelation 1:5 continues the greeting and blessing that introduces the book: “*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.*” In this one verse, we find a wonderful description of Jesus Christ the Lord. In each of these terms used to describe Christ in this verse, Christians can gain strength and encouragement which is needful in times of persecution such as was being endured by the Christians to whom Revelation was originally written and must be endured by us too (2 Tim 3:12).

## **The faithful witness**

The first description of Christ in Revelation 1:5 is “the faithful witness.” Revelation 3:14 also calls Jesus Christ “the faithful and true witness.” Revelation 19:11 pictures Christ sitting upon a white horse, and refers to him as the one who is “called Faithful and True.” Jesus was faithful to God in all that he did in his life on this earth. He came not to do his own will, but only the Father’s will (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). Jesus did nothing of himself, but always what pleased the Father (John 8:28-29). He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross (Php 2:5-8). Jesus remained faithful to God in spite of all the afflictions that he suffered and we must have the same mind in us. Hebrews 2:17-18 says he is “*a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.*” In every way, Christ was “faithful to him that appointed him” as High Priest (Heb 3:2).

## **First born from the dead**

Jesus is next described as the “*first begotten of the dead.*” He was the first one to partake of the resurrection that we long for (Acts 26:23; 1 Cor 15:20,23; Col 1:18). This is why his resurrection is the basis of our hope for eternal salvation in heaven (1 Pet 1:3-5). Yes, Jesus suffered for righteousness’ sake to the point of dying on the cross. But that was not the end of the matter. On the third day, Jesus was raised from the dead! This is the same point that is made to the church at Smyrna in Revelation 2:8-11. Some of them were in prison facing death for their faith in Christ. To them, Jesus introduced himself as he “which was

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(continued)

dead, and is alive,” and then urged them to be faithful *unto* death (meaning to the point of dying) so that they would receive the reward of the crown of life and not be hurt of the *second* death. This should offer great encouragement to any suffering Christian. We may die physically for the faith as Jesus did (the first death), but if we are faithful like Christ, we will be raised from the dead and have eternal life instead of eternal damnation (the second death).

## **The prince of the kings of the earth**

Jesus is then called the “prince of the kings of the earth.” Much of the severe persecution facing the Lord’s church at the end of the First Century was instigated by the Roman government itself. Tens of thousands of Christians died during this time because they refused to deny Christ and bow down and worship the image of the Roman Emperor. Some Christians were tempted to think that their government was beyond God’s control. But we are reminded that Jesus is the prince of the kings of the earth and that he has dominion (Rev 1:5; see also Rom 13:1-7; Dan 4). Jesus has all authority in heaven and in earth (Matt 28:18). He is working everything after the counsel of his own will (Eph 1:11). All Christians can take courage that the Lord is in control, even if persecution comes from a powerful government. Glory and dominion will be his forever and ever (Rev 1:6).

## **The Savior of those who follow him**

Finally, we are reminded that Jesus loved us and washed our sins in his own blood (Rev 1:5). If we keep his commandments, he is our helper and will never leave us nor forsake us, and we need not fear anything that man may do unto us (Matt 10:28; Heb 13:5-6). His love for us is too great and the price he paid for us too high for him to forsake the faithful. This too should comfort us in all our afflictions. Furthermore, we are told that Christ has made us kings and priests unto God (Rev 1:6). Jesus is the King of kings (Rev 17:14; 19:16) and the High Priest (Heb 3:1) and we are kings and priests to God under Christ. No matter how much we are hated, reviled and persecuted by men, to God we are a holy and royal priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices to Him (1 Pet 2:5,9) and if we remain faithful to God, we will reign as kings with Christ throughout eternity (Rev 21:3-5).