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## Revelation 1:1-8 - Three persons - Daniel 7:13-14

Last week we began our series on Revelation as we read chapter 5. We saw that the message of the book is: Jesus is in control of history. To us the book of history is a closed secret, but he is able and worthy to control history. This means that Revelation is largely a clear book with a positive message.

This week we first look at the form of Revelation. In verse 3 John calls the book a prophecy. In the Bible prophecy is not about looking in a glass ball and trying to discern the distant future. Biblical prophets point the people of their own time to the will of God: they say what things God likes and which he dislikes. The audience is clear what the prophet means. So in Revelation expect things which the seven churches can understand.

In verses 4-8 we see that Revelation is also a letter. It begins in a way similar to the other letters in the Bible and to secular letters of the time. John is addressing seven churches which will be mentioned in verse 11. Seven is the number of completeness and together these churches represent the worldwide church.

The letter begins with a blessing: 'Grace and peace to you'. The grace and the peace come from three persons: God, the Spirit and Jesus.

1. In verses 4 and 8 God is referred to as the one 'who is, and who was, and who is to come'. We recognise these words from our sermons on Exodus, because they are based on Exodus 3:14 and 6:2-6. Revelation extends this to the future: God is also the one who will come, namely to make all things new.  
In addition, in verse 8 he is also called Alpha and Omega, the first and the last letter of the Greek alphabet: God embraces all creation.
2. In verse 4b John mentions 'the seven spirits'. This is a reference to the sevenfold activity of the Holy Spirit in all the world. The Spirit of God is present in each of the seven congregations in Asia, and in the worldwide church, and also in Knaphill!
3. The blessing also comes from Jesus Christ (verse 5), who is called 'the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth'. In verse 7 Jesus is praised in a way which reminds us of Daniel 7:13.

So we see that John mentions three divine persons, in other words, the Trinity! John does not present us with a creed, a fixed formula, but with lived reality. God is experienced as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For many of us this is still puzzling and I don't think I fully understand the Trinity.

Analogies like 'water' (which can occur in three forms: as ice, as liquid and as vapour) are unhelpful, because these three forms do not occur at the same time. The three divine persons always exist together. Yet there is one God; Muslims are wrong when they say that we worship three gods. (Or do we...?)

Because the Trinity is difficult to understand, the church will not throw you out if you don't get it completely. There is no exam! Together we try to fathom what it means.

One thing we understand is that God has a companionship, fellowship, in himself. As humans are made in God's image, this tells us that humans were made for companionship.

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