

First Baptist Church of Rochester
May 15, 2022

A TRIAD OF NAMES
Revelation 1:5

In His salutation to the seven churches in Asia, John has a triad of names covering the past, present, and prospective ministry of our Lord.

The Faithful Witness – Past public ministry.

The First Begotten of the Dead – Present, alive forevermore.

The Prince of the Kings of the Earth – Future, millennial reign.

- I. The Faithful Witness – Past Public Ministry
 - A. Faithful – πιστος faithful, trustworthy, reliable, believing – Used 67 times in NT.
 - B. The word witness μαρτυς is the same as martyr. It has the idea of “to witness until death.” The apostle John uses witness, μαρτυς, in its noun or verb form 72 times in his writings. It is his characteristic word.
 - C. Similar Titles
 1. The Faithful and True – Revelation 19:11
“Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse. Its rider is called Faithful and True, and he judges and makes war with justice.”
 2. The Faithful and True Witness – Revelation 3:14
“Write to the angel of the church in Laodicea: Thus says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the originator of God’s creation...”
 - D. Extolling His trustworthiness and reliability. Christ was not only faithful to the truth always and faithful in its application, whether in promises of blessing or cursing, He was the personification of truth.
 1. “I am the truth” – John 14:6
 2. Pilate asked, “What is truth?” How blind he was to the fact that truth stood before him, who was ever faithful and true.
 3. In His person and ways, Christ was the perfect embodiment of these attributes. Christ is faithful in the performance of every promise and every threat, while every word and act bears the stamp of absolute truth.
 - E. First of all, let us try to understand what a faithful witness is. The Bible has much to say about false witnesses, those who are not truthful. They lie in the evidence they give. But a faithful witness is one who furnishes evidence or proof from having known or actually seen something.
 - F. This title, the faithful witness, the one who is trustworthy, reliable up to and including causing his death, is embracing the whole of our Lord’s life from the cradle to the cross. He alone passed through earth in His solitary and rugged path of unswerving devotedness to God, without break or flaw in all His holy separateness to God.
 1. In declaring His credentials, He could say, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness (μαρτυρεω) unto the truth” (John 18:37).
 2. In every way He related truth to every phase of life. In every way, Jesus was the fulfiller of the truth of God. Truth permeated His daily life (Matthew 4:4; 22:39).
 3. He obeyed every aspect of truth implicitly (Matthew 26:54; John 19:28,36).
 4. In Him there was perfect agreement between the written and Incarnate Word (John 5:39).
 5. Thus, as we can see, He is The Truth, on whom we can depend (John 6:68).

- G. Christ alone is the perfect faithful and true Witness (John 15:27; Revelation 1:5; 3:14). Jesus bore witness, even unto death for God, to His law, claims, and plan of redeeming love and grace.
 - 1. Revelation is a testimony because it is propounded to be received on the authority of the Giver, and not merely because it can be proved by arguments.
- H. As for ourselves, our obligation is clear:
 - 1. We must simply take Him at His word (Mark 9:7).
 - 2. We must continue in Him who is truth (John 8:31), and thereby experience the blessing of the truth (John 8:32).
- I. There are at least three things which go into the making of a faithful witness, and such are evident in the life and ministry of our Lord.
 - 1. Experience
 - a. An effective witness is one who has a personal realization of the truth he seeks to testify to. Christ is the only One who has seen and known God, and with such a qualification He must be listened to as He speaks about His Father (Luke 10:22; John 1:18).
 - b. Like Him, we are only true witnesses as we speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4:19-20).
 “Peter and John answered them, “Whether it’s right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide, for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”
 - 2. Certainty
 - a. If there is anything of a doubtful character about a witness, the people will not pay much heed to his testimony. Life and lips must ring true. Christ always declared the truth with authority and certainty because He was the truth. Behind the witness of His lips was the faithfulness of life (John 8:40-46; 1 Corinthians 14:7-9).
 - b. In Acts 1:8 He said of His own, “You will receive power when the Holy spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
 - c. Like Him we should be able to proclaim the truth with assurance and confidence because of obedience to the truth (Ephesians 1:13; 2 Timothy 1:12).
 - 1. Ephesians 1:13 – In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and when you believed.”
 - 2. 2 Timothy 1:11-12 – “For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle and teacher, and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day.”
 - 3. Boldness
 - a. A testimony has greater effectiveness when it is proclaimed with courage. Light must not be hid under a bushel. The people marveled at the boldness of Peter and John as they witnessed to the reality of Christ’s resurrection (Acts 4:13). The Master never shrank from telling the truth He had come from heaven to announce. Even in the face of the greatest danger and opposition, He never failed to declare the whole counsel of God (John 6:66; 8:59).
 - b. May ours be the spirit, not of fear, but of power to present the testimony of the Lord (2 Timothy 1:7,8)!

“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but one of power, love, and sound judgment. So don’t be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Instead share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.”

- c. May we never fail to declare by word and deed the truth received from God!
- d. Think of the reward of being acknowledged before the Father in heaven if we emulate the example of Him who is “The Faithful Witness” (Matthew 10:32).

- II. The firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:18). Present ministry -Alive forevermore.
 - A. In Biblical culture, the firstborn had higher status and received a greater share of the inheritance. Jesus Christ, as the firstborn of God, is of supreme status and inherits all things.
 - B. Of all who have been or will be raised from the dead, He is the preeminent one, the only one who is the rightful heir (3:14; Ps 89:27; Col 1:15).
“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (Col 1:15).
 - C. The Firstborn from the Dead looks back to His resurrection, the guarantee of the future resurrection of all believers and unbelievers (Rev 20:4-5; 1 Cor 15:20,23).
 - D. “Firstborn” is the title signifying that He is first in rank of all the saints who will rise from the dead, for this title suggests supremacy, preeminent dignity and not one of time or of chronological sequence. He became the Prince of Life.
 - E. As the Federal Head of a new race, namely, the redeemed of all ages known as His Body, His Church, who are to be raised from the dead and caught up to meet Him at His return, it was essential for Him to rise again and ascend on high as the Captain or Leader of their salvation. He is the Firstborn out from the dead, who died in Him (Colossians 1:18). Thus, Paul outlines the order of the resurrection of the Head and the Body.
“Every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; Afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Corinthians 15:23).
- III. The ruler over the kings of the earth: Future Ministry – Millennial Reign
 - A. Prince ἀρχων (ruler, prince, chief) is same word used in Ephesians 2:2 for Satan as the prince of the power of the air.
 - B. Though Christ has all the authority to be universal ruler now (Matt 28:18), he will not fully exert it until his second coming (Rev 19:11-21).
 - C. Lord of Lords and King of Kings in Revelation 17:14
“These will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them because he is Lord of lords and King of Kings. Those with him are called, chosen and faithful.”
 - D. Lord of all – Romans 10:1-13
“For Scripture says, Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame since there is no distinction between Jew and Greek because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”
 - E. Lord! The Faithful and the True,
Thou wilt yet come again;
In judgment wilt make all things new
And take thy right and reign.

This morning the triad of names in Revelation 1:5 covered the past, present, and prospective ministry of our Lord. Jesus Christ was the faithful witness during his past public ministry. Jesus Christ as the first begotten of the dead is present, alive forevermore. The future ministry as the prince of the kings of the earth will be fulfilled in the millennial reign. May this picture, understanding, of Christ enable each of us to live a stronger, victorious Christian life.