

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Reflections on The Seven Churches

Revelation 2 - 3

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SermonAudio Blurb: In this final sermon on the seven churches of Revelation, we pull out key lessons we learn about our Lord and how He works within the Church. We see what He values and what He desires to see much of within His Bride.

I. Introduction.

- A. A simple sermon that will cover a lot of bible passages.
- B. We are preparing to enter into a hard portion of Revelation where for 15 chapters you will watch unfold before you what God means when He speaks of judging those who rebel against Him.
- C. Two concerns on my mind in light of what is to come.
 - 1. First, we will become haughty and look at those who are not Christians in an inappropriate sense of pride or self-congratulations.
 - 2. Second, we will become afraid and lose heart.
- D. It is my opinion that one of the reasons these letters to the seven churches are immediately followed by the unfolding of God's future judgement is to promote a heart of repentance and faithfulness.
- E. So today I want us to see six things about Jesus and His relationship with His Church.

II. Six Reflections on The Seven Churches.

- A. Jesus cares for the spiritual health of His Church.
 - 1. He shows this through warnings and corrections.
 - 2. We saw this with the Ephesian church lost their first love.
 - 3. With Smyrna and Pergamum to stand firm in the midst of persecution.
 - 4. We saw with Thyatira the praise for their growth in the doing of good and godly works.

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5. Sardis was more dead than alive and instead of turning away from them Jesus exhorts them to rise up and repent all the while praising the few who were staying faithful.
 6. With Philadelphia it is praise and blessing because they are faithful to His name.
 7. And even in the horrid situation of Laodecia we saw grace and kindness in His call to repent or die. He points to them the way of life and warns them of the choice to reject His words.
 8. John 17:17.
 - a. So many things He could pray for the disciples as He looks to the Cross.
 - b. But He shows His sincere concern that the Church be holy and a proper reflection of their Lord and Savior.
 9. Some sample prayers of Paul:
 - a. Philippians 1:9ff.
 - b. Ephesians 1:15-21.
 - c. Colossians 1:9-12.
- B. Jesus knows our situation.
1. In every letter Jesus makes it clear that He knows their situation.
 2. This is either good or bad but it must be understood to be a reality that I will speak to at the end of this message.
 3. Jeremiah 23:23-24.
 4. Psalm 139.
 - a. In our waking and sleeping our Lord is near and He is infinitely interested in you.
 - b. Do not hear or receive the lie that He cares not or sees not. For it is your sins and your shame He bore on the Cross that you might be made in conformity of Him.
 5. Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD, And whose deeds are done in a dark place, And they say, "Who sees us?" or "Who knows us? You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, That what is made should say to its maker, "He did not make

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me"; Or what is formed say to him who formed it, "He has no understanding "? (Isaiah 29:15-16)

C. Jesus honors faithfulness to His name.

1. We already heard it but it bears mentioning again, Revelation 3:7-8.
2. With every rebuke given and correction stated the purpose behind it is that they live and reflect the true character of God. He wasn't telling them these various things just to make them happy.
3. The end/goal/purpose of all things is ultimately the glory of God.
4. As Psalm 19 said, "the heavens declare the glory of the Lord." Day and night it cries out that God is glorious.
5. Consider the Lord's Prayer.
 - a. The very first thing our Lord calls us to do is declare that His name is hallowed—holy.
 - b. "holy" is not a word of purity, it is a word of separation and uniqueness.
 - (1) To be a holy vessel meant that it was separated from common use and used only for the Lord.
 - (2) To be a holy people is to be a people who are separated for God and His work.
 - (3) God's name is holy, it is unique. There is nothing to compare it to and it is to be constantly on our minds that the God we worship and approach in prayer is holy.
 - c. Jesus calls us to be a people who reflect correctly His character and His reputation.
 - (1) Why? Because He is a perfect reflection and revelation of His Father.
 - (2) And we are to reflect that to a watching world.
 - (3) Matthew 5:5-16 with 11:29.
 - (4) Ephesians 5:17-20.

D. Jesus exalts love as the supreme act of Christian obedience.

1. As already stated this is the preeminent command for the Church and it cannot be emphasized enough. The New Testament is replete with

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commands that either overtly remind us of this or strongly imply it in the context of the other commands.

a. The Ephesian church was doing so much right and yet because they forgot the supreme command to love God and one another they were at risk as a church.

b. With the church of Thyatira the praise was that their love was not static, but growing.

2. John 13:34.

3. Romans 12:9-10.

4. 1 Timothy 1:5.

5. 2 Peter 1:4-11.

a. Such a key passage for every Christian to spend time and meditate upon.

b. It shows the intricate connectedness of various aspects of the Christian life. But it also points us to the goal, a life of true, biblical love.

E. Jesus hates false teaching and expects us too as well.

1. Just listen to the warnings against false teachings again:

a. Revelation 2:2, 6.

b. Revelation 2:14-16.

c. Revelation 2:20-24.

2. We live in a time where a twisted form of tolerance exists. We must be people who love truth and be a truthful people.

a. This is not to be taken as an excuse to be uncaring or mean-spirited.

b. But it is also not to be taken as afraid and vague.

c. We need to know true and sound doctrine.

d. We need to reject and not tolerate bad and false teaching in the church.

F. Jesus calls us to persevere in faith.

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1. James 1:19, demons know there is no other way.
 - a. Without Jesus Christ we are infinitely unsafe.
 - b. With Jesus Christ we are infinitely safe.
2. The repeated idea of “overcome” in Revelation.
 - a. In every situation Jesus uses this in these letters it is linked to promises related to the final salvation.
 - b. We are never to be so caught up in the day to day that we lose sight of what is coming. The grand promises of future salvation is what we are to grab hold of to aid us in persevering in spite of what we might see right now.
 - c. John 16:33 — we overcome because Christ has already overcome (with 1 John 4:4).
 - d. 1 John 2:13-14 — we overcome through being strong in the Word of God.
 - e. 1 John 5:4-5 — overcoming is a mark of true faith.
 - (1) There is a word play in the Greek here. Twice he uses the verb *nikaoo* and once the noun *nike*. Here is how the NET translation handles it, “because everyone who has been fathered by God conquers the world. This is the conquering power that has conquered the world: our faith.”
 - (2) What is meant by “our faith” and the final “conquered/victory”?
 - (a) First, this is the only time John uses this specific Greek construction *he pistis* (the faith). All other times he uses a different way, using the verb *pisteuo* which means to believe.
 - (b) Second, this is pointing us to the body of doctrine that is believed rather than the act of us believing. We hold the true faith (which is grounded in the Person of God and His Gospel).

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- (c) Third, because we possess the body of truth within us it becomes the means for the power of God to overcome/conquer the power of this age.
 - (d) Fourth, all of this is built upon the victory that Jesus gained through His death and resurrection. The fact we believe that becomes the basis for our day to day victories.
 - (e) “We are saved because we have a faith in **THE** faith” (Rick Cate, March 21, 2017)
- G. How this impacts Missio.
- 1. We need to remember these truths and we need to consistently remind one another of them.
 - 2. Some inter-related thoughts in no particular order.
 - a. Not allow comfort and tradition to dull our senses as we gather together in both corporate and more relaxed gatherings. Intentionality.
 - b. We are to be always ready to repent both individually and corporately.
 - c. We must be about disciple-making. (Something I may expand on next week before we go into the rest of Revelation)
 - d. We need to reform our individual and home cultures to promote godliness. In other words, we need to make sure our lives and homes truly reflect biblical/Christ faithfulness and love.
 - e. Finally we need to sharpen our convictions regarding what we believe and reject.

III. Conclusion.

- A. We are finish with two of the three sections of this important book. “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things” (Revelation 1:19).
- B. From here we are moving into what is too come.
 - 1. It will challenge some of you in how you view God and how He interacts with people.

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2. It is a hard message but it is also a true one.
- C. But there is a consistent theme that showed itself repeatedly in these letters to the churches. The certainty of a coming judgment by God.
1. Repeatedly Jesus has said, "I know your deeds." And that was both good and bad for the hearer.
 2. Repeatedly Jesus has said in one way or another that He is true, faithful and righteous.
 3. And repeatedly Jesus has said that He shall mete out either reward or punishment.
- D. There is a purpose behind this all and it is simply to learn to live under the gaze of our Lord.
1. The scourge of habit and routine help to make us dull to the reality that all things are hurtling toward God's ordained end.
 2. Train your mind to know that He sees you. He knows your every thought and act.
 3. But also train your mind to hold fast to the reality that the Father loves you more than your mortal mind can comprehend.
 4. Close your eyes and let these words from God Himself speak to you:
 - a. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believe on Him shall not perish but have eternal life.
 - b. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
 - c. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we

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overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

IV. Benediction/Doxology.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Small Group Questions

- **Summer Break**