

Revelation 2

Intro

Chapter 1 introduces:

- The Title

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ...”

It is both from Him and about Him

- The Purpose of the book

Reveals - “Things which must shortly take place”

This book is prophetic in nature

This book unveils events in the future that lead toward the return and reign of Christ

- The **key for unlocking meaning** from this mysterious book

This key is in the form of **an outline**

The outline provides insight into the timing for many of the events described within the text

Revelation 1:19

Write the things which you **have seen**, and the things **which** are, and the things which will take place **after this**.

Things which you have seen - Chapter 1 (The Vision of Jesus)

Things which are - Chapter 2 (The Church Age)

Things which will take place after this - Chapter 4-22 (The future)

Chapter 2 - 3 introduces the churches to whom the book was first addressed

- These were actual churches from first century Asia Minor who were facing real life challenges that threaten the effectiveness of the church.

- The problems they faced are common to the church down through the ages and are common place within the church today.
- These letters follow a simple pattern;
 - Jesus introduces Himself
 - Jesus exposes the issues the church is facing
 - Jesus provides solution
 - Jesus gives promises specific to each church

Ephesus

Often referred to as the “Loveless Church

This is somewhat misleading but expresses the basic problem within the Church in Ephesus

Introduction

Revelation 2:1

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

Holds the 7 stars - Stars likely refer to the leadership of the local church. They are held in the hand of Jesus

Walking in the midst of the Lampstands - Lampstands refer to the churches. Jesus is in the midst of the Church.

There is great comfort in knowing that Jesus walks within His Church

We should expect to meet Him there

Commendation

Revelation 2:2-3

“**I know your works**, your labor, your patience, and that **you cannot** bear those who are evil. And **you have** tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

Revelation 2:6

But this you have, that **you hate** the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Jesus commends the church for their works. He Highlights 3 specific areas

You cannot bear those who are evil

The church bears a responsibility to address sin within its midst

Vivid illustrations of this are given in Acts 5 and 1 Corinthians 5

Sin is dealt with quite harshly by the Lord

It is important to make a distinction between examples of church discipline and instruction regarding church discipline. Since "Giving him over to Satan" is not defined church leadership should instead look for proper ways to implement the clear instruction given regarding a sinning or struggling believer

Clear instruction for this is given in

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

1 Thessalonians 5:14

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

Titus 3:10-11

Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

The Church in Ephesus was doing this well

You have tested those who say they are apostles and are not

The church must test what is being espoused against the clear teaching of the Word of God

This would include Biblical doctrine as well as cultural mores

Often groups of people use similar vocabulary with differing dictionaries

This is wide spread today where Biblical terminology has been high jacked and redefined and now believers are being accused of not showing love, kindness, tolerance, acceptance...

We must learn to define what we are hearing and compare that with what the Word of God is actually teaching

You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans

We cannot be certain as to the identity of the Nicolaitans. Some indication may be found in the meaning of their name

Nike - Victory

Laos - People

Some see this as a reference to the germ of a hierarchy being developed in the church

A hierarchy that creates a separation between the people and the leaders

This is something detestable to Jesus and should be detestable to His church and especially its leadership

There is always a temptation among the people to exalt their leaders. Leaders in turn must learn to resist this with equal force.

Solution

This might call this the Big-Ticket Item

If this issue is not addressed none of the rest of it matters much.

Revelation 2:4-5

Nevertheless, **I have this against you**, that you have **left your first love**. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.

Although the Church was filled with valiant works, they had drifted from the Love relationship they had been saved to

Jesus provides them with a **3 - step remedy** to solve their problem

First - Remember from where you were fallen

This would likely include remembering what it is that caused the fall

Similarly, Paul asked the Galatians:

Galatians 5:7

You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

If we can discover what leads to our fall we can likely make the necessary changes

Second - Repent

Repent means to turn or change

Going one direction, turn and go the other

Doing one thing, stop and do another

It speaks not only of turning from **something** but turning to **someone**

When we turn toward God, we also turn toward the one who is able to provide us what we need

Repentance is Cathartic

2 Corinthians 7:10-11

For godly sorrow produces **repentance** leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What **diligence** it produced in you, what **clearing** of yourselves, what **indignation**, what **fear**, what vehement **desire**, what **zeal**, what **vindication**! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

Third - Return or Redo your first works

First works are the things that brought about initial growth in the life of the believer.

A person may outgrow pull ups, baby food and a bassinet BUT they will never outgrow sleep, food or pants.

The moment we begin to neglect the things that are designed to bring about our spiritual growth is the moment our first love will begin to falter.

The appropriate question to ask would be:

Am I neglecting any of the things that were designed to bring about my Spiritual growth and development?

Smyrna

Often referred to as the Persecuted Church

Introduction

Revelation 2:8

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,

‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

Each introduction reveals something about Jesus previously seen in chapter 1

He is the First and Last

This is a reference to the eternal nature of Christ

He was dead and came to life

This speaks of the great power of Christ to give life

Romans 8:11

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

And eternal life

John 11:25

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

Commendation

Revelation 2:9

“I know your works, **tribulation**, and **poverty** (but you are rich); and I know the **blasphemy** of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

The Church in Smyrna was undergoing swelling persecution

Ironically this persecution was stemming from a culture that considered themselves to be Tolerant and Enlightened.

The city was littered with Temples to various Roman deities

Apollo

Aphrodite

Zeus

First ever Temple built to Caesar

Tolerance of a wide array of religious views was widespread in Smyrna **but** they had little or no tolerance for Christ, the Christian or the Christian message

Believers in Smyrna were being persecuted for their unwillingness to confirm to the mores of the culture

We read of:

Tribulation

Suffering

Imprisonment

Death

We are seeing history repeat itself today.

We live in a culture that is **preoccupied** with both **tolerance** and **intolerance** **simultaneously**.

Tolerance -

Sympathy for beliefs or practices that differ or conflict with your own

Tolerance requires difference

If we do not disagree, we cannot be tolerant

Tolerance is the freedom to express different thoughts and ideas without fear of reprisal

LET'S BE CLEAR: Tolerance should be expressed

Tolerance Toward People - regardless of a person's views they should be treated with value and civility

Although we should rigorously oppose their opinion

Tolerance Toward Behavior

Man is free to believe whatever he wants, but we are not free to behave however we want

There are behaviors that are wrong

And there are behaviors that are harmful to others and to the common good

Abraham Lincoln is credited with saying:

"There is no right to do what is wrong"

Tolerance Toward Ideas

Not all ideas are created equal

Some views are absurd and should be disregarded as such

Being Tolerant of folly is not true tolerance

(Emperor's New Clothes)

Hans Christian Anderson tells the tale of 2 swindlers who fool an Emperor into thinking they are making him a suit from fabric which only the simple or uneducated cannot see.

When they show him and others the fabric, they pretend to be impressed not wanting to seem foolish

When the fake garment is completed, they pretend to put it on the king who proceeds to walk through the city naked. The townspeople pretend to be impressed with the beauty of the outfit until a child yells out "He is naked".

This story caught on and spread so quickly because it addresses something that is true about human nature. Human beings are easily swayed by popular opinion over truth, reality and even common sense.

Psychologists refer to "Mob Mentality" where the views, values and mores of an individual get swallowed up in the mind of the mob. In the

present culture where social media connects people everywhere “Mob Mentality” is a constant pressure

It is time to stand up in our culture and let people know the emperor is naked

Jesus observed the Church in Smyrna undergoing rising levels of persecution.

Solution

Revelation 2:10

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. **Be faithful** until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Jesus will provide solution for the challenges they are facing

It is likely not the solution they were looking for or that which we want to hear

Do Not Fear

It has been my experience when someone tells my not to be afraid that there actually is grave reasons for being afraid

Don't panic but there is a tarantula on your neck, a shark in the water, a snake right next to you or the ice is cracking

The believers in Smyrna and the believers today have ample reason for fear, BUT Jesus exhorts us not to fear but to look to the future instead, and adds...

Be Faithful

There are very few obstacles the Church cannot overcome if we will combat them with confidence in the Lord and commitment to the call.

Heroes do not rise during times of rest and ease.

Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David and Daniel all had difficult backstories that led to their heroic exploits.

These are the times to rise up and faithfully follow and serve the Lord.

Pergamons

Often referred to as the “Compromising Church”

Compromise is when to give something of value away in hope of getting something of greater value.

When it comes to our walk with the Lord compromise usually just mean we have given something valuable away.

Introduction

Revelation 2:12

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write,

‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:’

Jesus describes Himself as the one who has the “Two - edged sword”

The cure for what is ailing this church will come from the Word itself

Commendation

Revelation 2:13

“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

You have not denied the faith even under the threat of martyrdom

He further refers to the death of a man named Antipas

Antipas is only mentioned here

Name means - “Against All”

Apt name for a man who refused to deny Christ no matter what pressures were placed upon him.

Seems no matter how high the heat of persecution was turned up against the church people like Antipas stood strong and the gospel flourished.

As a result, the enemy chooses a different approach

Revelation 2:14-15

But I **have a few things against you**, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus, you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

I have a few things against you:

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans

Same issue faced by the church in Ephesus

The doctrine Balaam

Balaam was an Old Testament prophet who instructed the King of Moab on how to defeat Israel. Since his forces were no match for Israel, who was strengthened by God, Balaam suggested that his best defense would be to use the Moabite women to allure Israel's men into sexual compromise. This compromise led to the fall of many in Israel.

This is the same tactic we see in the book of Acts

The church could not be stopped from external persecution. As a result, the devil seems to have directed his energies trying to produce compromise within.

Greed and self-promotion took care of Ananias and Saphirra while jealousy and factions threatened even further divisions

This pattern is developed throughout the Scriptures:

The giant could not defeat David but an improper glance led to his decline

Same was true for Gideon, Samson, Noah and others

Solution

Revelation 2:16-17

Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”

Jesus uses vivid terminology to speak of His Word

“Fight with the Sword in my mouth”

This speaks to the great power and ability of the Word of God

If you are compromising, the key is to let God fight against you with the Sword of His mouth

Thyatira

Often referred to as the Corrupt Church

Corruption is different than compromise.

Corruption breaks down the material weakening it.

The church in Thyatira was being weakened from within.

Introduction

Revelation 2:18

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write,

‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

Jesus refers to Himself as the one with eyes like flames of fire

Jesus is the man with the x-ray eyes.

He sees it all

Commendation

Revelation 2:19

“I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

Jesus speaks very generally of the works being accomplished by this church

The works, no matter how great were being overshadowed by the corruption within

Solution

Revelation 2:20-22

Nevertheless, I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

Jezebel was an ancient queen of Israel who along with her husband Ahab drew Israel further and further away from God, His word and His ways. This was accomplished by introducing more and more idolatrous practices in Israel

As time went on the practices once considered forbidden had become commonplace and she was able to use her resources to launch a full-scale attack against those who were dedicated to serving the Lord

The reference to Jezebel is a way of speaking against allowing ungodly and worldly practices to make their way into the church

The Solution

Revelation 2:25

But hold fast what you have till I come.

The church has a responsibility to hold on to the timeless and unchanging doctrines of the Word of God.

Culture is in a constant state of flux. Things considered right to one generation are considered wrong to another and every generation thinks they are absolutely justified in the positions they hold.

It is the Word of God that remains unchanging. Many of the actions of past generation that are considered wrong by our present generation have always been a violation of the teaching of the Bible.

Revelation 3

Intro

Chapter 1 introduces:

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It is both from Him and about Him

- The Purpose of the book

Reveals - “Things which must shortly take place”

This book is prophetic in nature

This book unveils events in the future that lead toward the return and reign of Christ

- The **key for unlocking meaning** from this mysterious book

This key is in the form of **an outline**

The outline provides insight into the timing for many of the events described within the text

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Chapter 2 - 3 introduces the churches to whom the book was first addressed

- These were actual churches from first century Asia Minor who were facing real life challenges that threaten the effectiveness of the church

- The problems they faced are common to the church down through the ages and are common place within the church today
- These letters follow a simple pattern;
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Sardis

Often referred to as the Dead Church

Introduction

Revelation 3:1

“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, “These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: ‘I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, **but you are dead.**”

Dead a harsh diagnosis

Right away it becomes clear that this is something that cannot be self-remedied

There is no mention of interaction between the city of Sardis and the Church

No Synagogue of Satan

No persecution or imprisonments

This may be because a dead church has little impact upon a living city

What kills the church?

Biblically - legalism kills the church

This is part of the storyline of the book of Acts. The church in Jerusalem became increasingly less effective as they became increasingly more legalistic.

Historically- Liberalism kills the church

Modern church historians have noted an interesting phenomenon; when the church abandons Biblical truth in an attempt to be more relevant and impactful in the culture the church ultimately becomes less impactful. Empty church buildings scattered across the landscape of Europe testify to the deadly impact liberalism will have upon the local church.

Research done among churches throughout Canada found that the churches that were growing were the ones that maintained strong Biblical doctrine while those that were all but dead had embraced modern liberal theologies

Solution

Revelation 3:2

Be **watchful**, and **strengthen** the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.

Revelation 3:3-4

Remember therefore how you have **received** and heard; **hold fast** and **repent**. Therefore, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

Strengthen the things that are ready to die

Seems they are mostly dead

Remember, hold fast and repent

Turn back to the truths that make the church the church.

We can never abandon the message Jesus has entrusted us with.

The more the culture resists it the more important the message becomes

Jesus alludes to His sudden and unexpected return that has caught them unaware

Philadelphia

Often referred to as the Faithful Church

Introduction

Revelation 3:7

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,

“These things says He who is holy, He who is true, ‘He who has **the key** of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”:

The Key of David is a messianic term and has something to do with salvation

Jesus reveals Himself as the one who can open and closes doors that no one else can

Revelation 1:18

I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen.
And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

When we think of Jesus having the keys to hades perhaps it would not be best to think of Him looking to lock people away as much as to think of Him as setting people free

The purpose of Jesus coming was to set the captives free

Commendation

Revelation 3:8-9

“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

They have an open door

This is true of the church in every age and in every community.

It is important for the church to look for the open door

Paul developed a custom for proclaiming the Gospel based upon the open doors that were afforded to him as a Rabbi

Acts 17:2

Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures

When there seems to be no open doors it is important for the church to seek the Lord for His way in to a closed community or people group

Joshua 6:1-2

Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in. And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor.

Jericho is the story of God opening what seems to be a closed door.

Joshua saw the city securely shut and God saw the way in

God sees the way to bring the Gospel where it seems impossible

They have a little strength

The church and its mission always seems to face opposition greater than its abilities or natural resources.

The leaders are limited and the people are few.

It is crucial to remember where our true strength lies.

Caleb is a picture of where the believer's true strength is found.

Joshua 14:11

As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in.

The only way our strength is the same at 80 as it was at 40 is if our strength was never found in ourselves.

True strength for the believer is found in leaning upon the promises of God and trusting in the supply of the Spirit of God

Those of the Synagogue of Satan will worship before your feet.

This must be a reference to the impact they will have in the community as nowhere in scripture do we find unbelievers worshipping believers.

Solution

They are given a great promise

Revelation 3:10

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

This is an allusion to the Great Tribulation that will be described in chapters 6-19

Laodicea

Often referred to as the Lukewarm Church

Introduction

Revelation 3:14

“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

Amen, Faithful and True all refer to the nature of both God and His promises.

Scripture affirms that God cannot lie and that His promises cannot be broken.

Jesus implied that there is a greater likelihood of earth passing away than one of His promises failing

Commendation

Revelation 3:15-17

“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

Their self-diagnosis and the diagnosis Jesus provide are strikingly different.

They thought of themselves as needing nothing.

Jesus saw them as desperately in need.

Jesus refers to them as Lukewarm and explains that to be a flavor He disdains.

Lukewarm is a condition caused by taking on the temperature of our surroundings.

Since water boils at 212* Hot can be measured.

Since water freezes at 32* Cold can be measured.

But Lukewarm changes when the outside temperature changes.

Lukewarm is determined by the temperature of the surroundings.

A lukewarm Christian is one that is hot about what the world is hot about and cool with what the world is cool with.

This seems to be a tremendous issue in the church today.

With the advent of social media, we are constantly bombarded with issues (Social, political, environmental) while these issues might be the marching orders of the unbelieving world the marching orders of the church remain the same.

Solution

Revelation 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Although the taste of Lukewarm is vile to Jesus, the Lukewarm believer is still desirable to Him

He desires to come in and meet with us

Spending time with Jesus will ignite our hearts to love the things that He loves and hate the things that He hates

Conclusion

This brings us to the end of the messages to the churches, the end of the church age and the end of the second section of the book.

Beginning with chapter 4 we will enter into "The things that take place after this" or the futuristic aspect of the book