

8-20-2016, COTR Texarkana

Title: The 7 Churches of Revelation, pt.-2

Purpose: Proclaim the words of Jesus to the Churches of Revelation and provoke people to imitate their virtues and repent of their mistakes.

Spiritual Truth: Jesus wants us to follow him in a hostile, godless world.

Text: Revelation chapter 2 & 3

Topic: Revelation, Last Days, Persecution, Suffering, Love, Endurance

Series: The Final Chapter

Series Purpose: Teach people about the last days and show them how to live accordingly.

The 7 Churches of Revelation, pt.-2

I. Introduction

A. Review series: "The Final Chapter" ...living in the last days

1. Listen to live stream @ChurchOnTheRock.org or the COTR iPhone/ Android app

B. Last week we looked at the Book of Revelation to see what Jesus said the 7 churches.

Picture: Map. The general format of His messages to each church was a picture of Jesus, commendation, rebuke and a promise. My purpose is simple: imitate their virtues and learn from their mistakes so we can be a conqueror and inherit the promises Christ gave.

C. Today we'll look at what Jesus had to say regarding commendation, rebuke and promise to the churches at Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

1. Next week we'll finish the series and talk about Eternity.

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E. Purpose: Proclaim the words of Jesus to the Churches of Revelation and provoke people to imitate their virtues and repent of their mistakes.

F. Spiritual Truth: Jesus wants us to follow him in a hostile, godless world.

II. The Commendation (Virtues and practices we can imitate)

A. Loyalty to Christ in Pergamum, Revelation 2:13 (ESV) I know where you dwell, where **Satan's throne** is. Yet **you hold fast my name**, and **you did not deny my faith** even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

1. Pergamum was a wealthy, wicked city filled with pagan cults. It was not easy to be a Christian because of the social, religious and political climate. They lived where Satan has his throne, i.e. where Satan is the supreme ruler. This may refer to the temple of Asclepius, a pagan god of healing represented in the form of a serpent or emperor worship; three Roman emperors had temples dedicated to them. (Is Jesus Lord or Caesar?)

2. In Philadelphia Christ referred to their enemies as the **synagogue of Satan**. They were unbelieving Jews who opposed the believers' Christian testimony. False religion has always persecuted true Christians. e.g. ISIS and Islamic jihad.

3. Satan was using a pagan culture to make it hard to be a Christian. Hold fast my name means to be faithful and loyal to Jesus even when Christians were martyred.

4. Lesson: it's not easy living in a non-Christian culture, // today. Jesus is proud of us when we keep on believing and following Him especially when it's hard.

- B. Serving the Lord in Thyatira, Revelation 2:19 (ESV) **I know your works**, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that **your latter works exceed the first**.
1. Jesus said I am proud of you because, “you are now doing more than you did when you first believed in me.”
 2. Lesson: Jesus expects us to grow spiritually/ mature and become fruitful as believers. John 15:8 (NLT) When you **produce much fruit**, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father. He expects our service to Him to grow and our influence increase, i.e. As I become a mature Christian, my FB posts start pointing people to Jesus, I give more, I find my passion and serve the Lord, etc.
- C. Living a pure life in Sardis, Revelation 3:4 (ESV) Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, **people who have not soiled their garments**, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.
1. Who have not soiled their garments/ T- “who have lived pure lives as Christians.” to keep one’s clothes clean is a metaphor for pure, Christ-like behavior.
 2. Lesson: It matters how I live; Jesus applauds us when we dress modestly when others dress seductively (e.g. Olympics), when we drink a coke while others are getting drunk, when we fast forward the sex scenes in movies and stop laughing at the vulgar jokes, etc. 1 Peter 1:15 (NIV) But just as he who called you is holy, so **be holy in all you do**.

III. The Rebuke (We want to learn from their mistakes)

- A. False teaching and sexual immorality in Thyatira, Revelation 2:20–22 (ESV) But I have this against you, that **you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols**. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. 22 Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works...
1. A woman named, symbolically, Jezebel was a woman leader trying to replace the true worship of God by pagan rites and beliefs. She claimed to be a prophetess (she claimed that her teaching was an authentic message from God but it wasn’t). She was causing Christians to be sexually immoral and practice idolatry like Ahab’s wife Jezebel corrupted Israel 1 Kings 16:31–33 (NIV)...he (*King Ahab*) married Jezebel...and **began to serve Baal and worship him**. 32 He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria.
 2. In their culture, pagans practiced temple prostitution and worshipped idols. Jezebel influenced Christians to do the same and the leaders didn’t stop her. She deceived and lead Christians astray and was tolerated by members and leaders.
 3. Lesson: Church leadership must protect the sheep from error and immorality. We live in an immoral day where a Biblical view of sex in marriage has been replaced by anything goes with anyone anywhere (except sex with minors).
 4. Lesson: Who is influencing me? Do I follow the example of God fearing, holy, humble people committed to live by the Word of God or do I follow people who say what I want to hear? 2 Timothy 4:3 (NLT) For a time is coming when people will no

longer listen to sound...teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for **teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear.**

5. Lesson: Am I living a sexually pure life or am I immoral like the world?
- B. Backslidden in Sardis, Revelation 3:1–3 (ESV)...I know your works. **You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die,** for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, then, what you received and heard...repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.
 1. T- “I know that you seem to be spiritually alive, but are really dead....you seem to be faithful believers in me, but in reality you do not follow me anymore.”
 2. They were like the Pharisees, outwardly religious but inwardly far from God. Matthew 23:27–28 (NLT) ...Pharisees. Hypocrites...28 **Outwardly** you look like righteous people, but **inwardly** your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness
 3. Jesus told them to Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, i.e. “Start living as Christians/ followers of me again.” Restore your relationship with Me/ start doing what I called you to do before it’s too late.
 4. We don’t know why they were spiritually dead. Maybe a sinful culture seduced them or maybe a hostile culture intimidated them and made it difficult to be a Chr.
- C. An ineffective witness for Christ in Laodicea, Revelation 3:15–19 (ESV) I know your works: **you are neither cold nor hot.** Would that you were either cold or hot! 16 So, because **you are lukewarm**, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. 17 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked...19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.
 1. Laodicea was a wealthy city. So much so that when an earthquake destroyed it, they refused Rome’s help to rebuild it. The Christians were also wealthy and were content with material wealth believing their possessions to be a sign of God’s approval. you say ‘I am rich and have become wealthy but they were unaware of their spiritual poverty. Jesus said they were wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. They thought they were they were right with God but weren’t.
 - a James 4:4 (NCV) So, you are not loyal to God! You should know that **loving the world is the same as hating God.** Anyone who wants to be a friend of the world becomes God’s enemy.
 2. The hot waters of Hierapolis had a medicinal effect and the cold waters of Colossae were pure, drinkable, and had a life-giving effect. However, Laodicea had access only to warm water, which was not life giving and caused nausea.
 3. Def. lukewarm: they were indifferent, ineffective and impotent as a Christian witness. They had lost their voice in culture. They went along with the sinful city instead of being a light in darkness. Their religion was respectable, sentimental and skin-deep. They accepted sin instead of confronting it. They hid inside the church walls. This made Jesus sick.

4. Lukewarm means their witness for Christ was useless. They were having no effect on the people in their city. Jesus was the faithful and true witness, they were not. They never offended anyone or aroused strong feelings or hostility because of their Christian stand and Jesus said I will spew/ vomit you out of my mouth.
5. Lesson: Don't conform to a godless culture and don't be intimidated by their threats; don't go along to get along. Be a Christian witness. Speak the truth in love, e.g. movie, God's Not Dead-2" Context: history teacher asked a question about Jesus... https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_VEhNWXWDo

IV. Conclusion: The Promise to those who conquer/ overcome

A. The church in Sardis, Revelation 3:5 (ESV) The one who **conquers** will be **clothed...in white garments**, and **I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father** and before his angels.

1. I want to learn from these churches. I want to imitate what they were applauded for: (1) loyalty to Christ, (2) serving the Lord and (3) living a pure life they. I want to avoid what they were rebuked for: (1) tolerating false teaching and sexual immorality, (2) a backslidden heart and (3) a lukewarm, ineffective witness to a world in trouble.

V. Response

A. Prayer/ Souls

B. *** *Logos Bible Software and library, ESV Study Bible, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, A Handbook on the Revelation to John, The New Intl. Greek Testament Commentary and Word Studies in the NT and Webster's 1828 Dictionary were used to prepare this message.*