

The Letter to the Seven Churches of Asia

- I. Introduction:
 - a. The Study of the Book of Revelation
 - i. This book brings fascination to the student – Strange sayings and images – But puts fear in the heart of the teacher – Strange sayings and images!
 - ii. Must not be reluctant to study this book – Can get much out of this book if we study it – help us to be great Christians
 - iii. **(Rev 1:3)** “Blessed is he that **readeth**, and they that **hear** the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”
 - b. This is sermon will serve as the introduction of our new series of sermons.
 - i. In this series of sermons we will be looking at these letters written to the churches of Asia and then looking at our own selves to and ponder on the question of what would Jesus write to us at this location today?
- II. Why read and study this letter to these churches?
 - a. Because the content is from the mouth of Christ
 - i. **(Rev 1:1)** “The Revelation of **Jesus Christ**, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.”
 - 1. “of Jesus Christ” – It both spoken and shown by Jesus and focuses around Jesus – These words are the words of Christ to us to help us know and understand the plan of God
 - ii. **(Rev 1:16)** “And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.”
 - iii. The two-edge sword has power and can make us better Christians
 - 1. **(Heb 4:12)** “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
 - 2. Quick – living – can make us a live
 - a. **(Ps 119:130)** “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”
 - b. **(Ps 119:50)** “This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.”
 - 3. Powerful
 - a. **(Isa 55:11)** “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall **not** return unto me **void**, but it shall **accomplish** that which I please, and it shall **prosper** in the thing whereto I sent it.”

4. Sharper than any two-edged sword – Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart
 - a. The word of God can deter bad thoughts and actions – need to let the word of Christ dwell in us
 - b. **(Col 3:16)** “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.”
 - i. Difference in memorizing and knowing the word of God and letting the word of God dwell in you. – Let it direct your path
 - ii. **(Ps 119:105)** “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”
 - b. Because the content describes all problems that can plague a congregation
 - i. There is not one problem that the church will encounter that’s root doesn’t stem from one of these problems
 1. Lost of first love
 2. Holding and following of false doctrine
 3. Tolerating false teachers
 4. Popularity to mankind but dead to Christ
 5. Lukewarm Attitudes (Spoiled)
 - ii. These examples and advices are timeless and for everyone
 - c. Because rewards will come to those that hear
 - i. **(Rev 2:7)** “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”
 - ii. **(Rev 2:11)** “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”
 - iii. **(Rev 2:17)** “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”
 - d. Because disinheritance will come to those that will not hear
 - i. **(Rev 2:5)** “I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”
 - ii. **(Rev 2:16)** “Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”
- III. The Book of Revelation’s Introduction
- a. **(Rev 1:1)** “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.”
 - i. “Revelation” – “**αποκαλυψις**” – “an uncovering”
 1. Makes otherwise hidden truth known
 2. This very word indicates that the book of Revelation is something that can be understood! – If not it wouldn’t be

an unveiling at all! – Same sense of the word is used in the Paul's letters

- a. **(Rom 16:25-26)** “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the **revelation of the mystery**, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”
 - i. “Revelation of the Mystery” = “Unveiling of the war like strategic plan of God”
 - ii. At one time these plans, like a military plan, was kept secret but now they are made known! – mystery does not mean something that can't be understood, but something that is hidden from view.
 - b. **(Eph 3:3-4)** “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)”
 - i. By “αποκαλυψις” Jesus made known to Paul the strategic plan of God
 - ii. When we read, we also can understand God's strategic plan concerning Christ
3. We should conclude that we CAN understand the lessons from the Book of Revelation.
- ii. “of Jesus Christ” – It both spoken and shown by Jesus and focuses around Jesus – These words are the words of Christ to us to help us know and understand the plan of God
 - iii. “which God gave unto him”
 1. The origin of all truth is from the Father – The Son of God is God's spokes person
 - a. **(Heb 1:1-2)** “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.”
 - b. **(John 7:16)** “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.”
 - c. **(John 12:49)** “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.”
 - iv. “unto his servants” – The things revealed are for the whole church

1. This revelation is just as useful to us today as it were for His servants 2000 years ago!
 - v. “He sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John”
 1. “Signified” – means signs – the things that are revealed are in the form of signs and symbols and was given to John in the form of a vision – that is the messenger spoken of here
- IV. What churches was this letter written to?
- a. **(Rev 1:9-11)** “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.”
 - b. Why Seven?
 - i. **SEVEN** - A sacred number to the ancient Hebrew people. The word is used often in the Bible to symbolize perfection, fullness, abundance, rest, and completion. (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)
 - ii. The Seven represents the whole of the church – These seven congregations were sufficient to give a complete picture of all churches of Christ everywhere for all time.
 - c. The Congregations:
 - i. Ephesus
 - ii. Smyrna
 - iii. Pergamos
 - iv. Thyatira
 - v. Sardis
 - vi. Philadelphia
 - vii. Laodicea
- V. Jesus symbolic introduction to these churches
- a. **(Rev 1:12, 17-20)** “And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks... ..And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. **The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks.** The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”
 - i. “Stars” – “Angels” = Messengers
 1. Symbolic Messenger – the overall spirit of the church
 2. **(Rev 1:16)** “And he had in his right hand seven stars.”

- a. In the right hand of Jesus – position of protection, security, and Jesus’ control of the destiny of the churches
 - b. **(Eph 1:22-23)** “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
 - ii. “Candlesticks” – “Churches”
 - 1. We are the light of the world
 - a. **(Matt 5:16)** “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”
 - b. **(Phil 2:15)** “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”
 - c. **(Eph 5:8)** “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.”
 - 2. Congregations are the candlestick in which this light radiates
- VI. Jesus also shows us in the introduction of the Book of Revelation that the church is important – in the midst of the candlesticks
- a. **(Rev 1:13)** “And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.”
 - b. Some say preach Christ and leave the church out of it
 - i. Impossible – Can’t preach one without the other!
 - c. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, His body
 - i. **(Eph 5:23)** “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church...”
 - ii. **(Col 1:18)** “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”
 - 1. A Head without a Body is Mutilation - Jesus is the Head of the Body – Is your body important to your head? – So is the body of Christ important to the head which is Christ.
 - d. Jesus Christ purchased the church with His own blood
 - i. **(Acts 20:28)** “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
 - 1. The thing that is bought is worth the price paid
 - 2. If the church is not important, then neither is the blood of Christ
 - e. In purchasing the church, Savior of the church.

- i. (Eph 5:23) "...and he is the savior of the body."
 - f. When one obeys the gospel of Christ, he is added to this body by God
 - i. (Acts 2:47) "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."
 - ii. How were they saved?
 - 1. (Acts 2:40-41) "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."
 - 2. They received the word – Gospel – of Jesus Christ
 - a. Faith
 - b. Repentance
 - c. Confession
 - d. Baptism
 - 3. Then they are added to the church of Christ – Church belonging to Jesus Christ – not a denomination but His church
 - g. His church is important – He has fellowship with his church – He walks in the midst of His church

VII. Conclusion

- a. We can learn greatly from what Jesus teaches these seven congregations
- b. Can we say that our congregation is a candlestick?
- c. If you are not a child of God – urge you to become one today