

The Book of Revelation
Christ Amid the Seven Churches
Lesson IV
Revelation 2, 3

Subject : CHRIST AMID THE SEVEN CHURCHES

INTRODUCTION

1. Revelation 1 Presents the Glorified Christ.

Rev. 1:13-15 Presented as “The Son of Man.”

a. Here the symbolic description is picturing Jesus as the Judge.

Rev. 1:18 HE holds the keys. HE is the One who has the right to judge.

HE is the One who has the responsibility to judge.

cf John 5: 22, 25-27, 2 Timothy 4:1, Acts 17: 30,31

11. IN REVELATION 2 AND 3 CHRIST IS SEEN AMID THE CHURCHES AS THEIR JUDGE

A word about the location of these churches.

Fly by jet to Istanbul Turkey. Then by a smaller plane to present day Izmir ,which is the site of Smyrna. From there take a bus to the site of the ruins of Ephesus. Ephesus is located on an inlet from the Aegean sea. In the time of John and Paul, it was one of the Roman worlds’ greatest cities. At the height of its population it may have reached 500,000,as low as 200,000. Mark Antony so taxed the city that he ruined the financial prosperity of Ephesus The inlet was kept open by constant dredging. When this effort was slackened, the inlet silted up completely. In A.D. 70, a great earthquake caused great destruction in the city By the tenth century, the city was deserted. It had been the center for the worship of Dianna, “The many breasted” goddess of prosperity. (does the modern prosperity doctrine have its roots in this idolatry?) The Temple site of the Temple of great Goddess is a few miles from the ruins of Ephesus. The temple platform was 418 feet long and 239 feet wide. Ten steps led up to this base. The Temple proper was 377 feet long and 180 feet wide. The roof was supported by 177 columns, 60 feet high and 6 feet in diameter. Some of these supporting columns can be seen in the Blue Mosque that now stands in Istanbul. It was decorated in white blue ,red , yellow and gold. The theater (Acts 19:29) would seat 25,000 persons. There in 1970, with a tour group, we sang “How Great Thou Art”, not how great is Diana! The road to the harbour, 36 feet wide was paved with marble. We saw a stone on which was inscribed, “Caesar Augustus”, (see Luke 2:2).

Smyrna on the Aegean sea. There stood a Temple of Zeus to the goddess Cybele. In 178 A.D.an earthquake destroyed the old city. Today there stands the modern city of Izmir, the population is about 200,000. Ruins of the market place can be seen.

Pergamos is located about 64 miles north of Smyrna (Ephesus 40 miles south of Smyrna) It had a population of 200,000. The out-door theater would seat 15,000 and from the top to the bottom is 165 feet. On the highest hill stands the site of the great altar of Zeus. A name plate says that one town had offered 12 girls on that altar! Here was a famous health resort and hospital. The ruins remain to this day. It is said that Dr. Luke was trained here.

Thyatira, (Acts 16) A modern town of 25,000 people stands on the site and therefore excavation is difficult. But some ruins can be seen.

Sardis is located about 33 miles south and east of Thyatira. There are many ruins to be seen here today..

Philadelphia is located another 26 miles south and east of Sardis. There are a few ruins to be seen in the midst of the present town.

Laodicea is located about 50 miles south east of Philadelphia and the site is 100 miles almost 100 miles east of Ephesus. Very little ruins have been found. John the writer of Revelation was the pastor of these seven churches and rode (walked?) from city to city

We begin to consider Revelation chapters two and three, we see Christ as He judges these Churches.

111. FIRST CONSIDER THE WORDS “CHURCH” and “CHURCHES”.

1. CHURCH

- a. There is one invisible Church. 2 Timothy 2:19, Matthew 16: 18 “I” and “My” Acts 2:47 The Lord added. Ephesians 1:22-23 the Church is the body. 1 Corinthians. 12:12,13, but one body. This Church is perfect and already ONE in His sight. Ephesians 4:1, Ephesians 5:27 present to HIMSELF perfect. Jude 24, Romans 8:30 glorified (in His sight)

2 CHURCHES

- a. There are local, visible churches and none is perfect 1 Thessalonians 2:13,14
- b. Revelation 1:4
- c. Revelation 1:11

!V. GOD HAS ORDAINED TWO HUMAN INSTITUTIONS.

1. The Home was first.
2. The Local Church (and in that order).

Today ,most educational systems, schools of almost every kind, the news media, papers, magazines, radio T.V. ,are all down-grading the home and the local Church. Therefore we need education that will up-grade both Home-life and Church-life. These cannot be divorced. Each needs the other. God intended you to have the security of a good home (regardless of statistics) God intended every believer to have the security of a

good local Church. Christian without a Church home is like a man without a natural home.

V TO JESUS A LOCAL CHURCH IS A CANDLESTICK..

1. Revelation 1:20 a light-holder ,not a light in itself.
2. Revelation 1:11,12, 20 Each Church is a candlestick. Each is independent of the other. Each is responsible to hold up the light. John 1:4-9 Philipians 2:16. Timothy 3:15, cf John 14:6, 2 Timothy 4:2.
3. Revelation2:5 The candlestick can be removed

V1 JESUS IS OBSERVING. HE KNOWS THE CONDITION OF EACH CHURCH.

1. Revelation 2:1 cf 1:12,13, “in the midst” cf Matthew 18:20
2. Revelation. 2:2,9,13,19,; Rev. 3: 1,8,15 He says, “I know” “I know”

V11 JESUS MESSAGE FOR THE CHURCHES.

- 1 He points out the dangers that are faced.
 - a. Revelation 2:4 leaving the first love.
 - b. Revelation 2:10 unfaithfulness.
 - c. Revelation 2:14,15 false doctrine
 - d. Revelation 2:20 being seduced to sin.
 - e. Revelation 3:1,2 activity without true spirituality.
 - f. Revelation 3:8 becoming weary in well doing
 - g. Revelation 3:15-16 becoming earthly rich and spiritually poor and thereby, useless to Him.

A local Church in which there is little or no love for Jesus is going to fail. A local church in which there is no faithfulness is going to fail. Faithfulness springs out of love. To illustrate, a husband who loves his wife will be faithful to his wife. Again, a local Church which is not careful about doctrine eventually, will fail too. A Church must stand for something. It is not a matter of going-along with, but rather standing FOR that gives a Church a sense of purpose. Said Muggeridge: “he belonged to a Church that agreed on almost everything because they believed almost nothing.” “The Christian movement at its inception was not just a way of life in the modern sense, but a way of life founded upon a message It was based, not upon mere feeling, not upon a mere program of work, but upon an account of facts. In other words it was based upon doctrine. Paul certainly was not indifferent to doctrine.” (Carl Henry)

A local Church must set standards for living (cf Titus 2) or soon it will have activity without spirituality. And without the Spirit we will grow weary in well-doing and fail to step into the open doors before us Finally, activity without spirituality will lead a Church into a Laodicean ,useless condition.

2. Jesus predicts the trend to the end of the Church age. At the beginning Revelation 2:1 Christ is in the midst. At the end, Revelation 3:20, He is outside the door knocking to gain entrance.

.3. Jesus promised faithful individuals rewards.

Revelation 2:7,10,11,17 etc. The Churches may fail but individuals need not fail. 1 John 5

V111 CONCLUSION

Revelation 22:20, Heb. 10:35, 2 John 8, 1 Corinthians 4:5, Colossians 3:23-25, James 1:12, 2 Tim. 4:7-8, c/f 1 Corinthians 4:5

If you are true and faithful, you can know that for you there is reward. 1 Corinthians 15:58, Phil. 2:25-30

Additional thoughts. (Some repetition)

A local Church like Ephesus, in which there is not love, not only for one another, but love for Jesus, is going to fail. A local Church in which there is no faithfulness is going to fail. Smyrna saints were faithful, but many in many Churches are not. And it is the faithful people that keep a Church a Church

A local church like Pergamos, in which there is no sound doctrine, will also fail. A Church must stand for something or it will fall for anything. That is not only true of a local church, that is also true of the individual. A Church must stand for something.

It is not a matter of going-along with but rather standing FOR. In marriage, there is a demand of separation. You stand before a preacher and he says, “foresaking all others” That is separation. And in order for a husband to have a proper relationship with his wife, he has to separate in order to unite. I think you can see that. There can be no faithfulness without separation.

Separation from the world does not mean you don’t TALK to the world, it means you don’t WALK with the world. And if you are going to stand for something it is going to cost you something. To illustrate. I thought about Lot. Lot is an example of a compromising Christian. Lot knew nothing about separation. Abraham was the separated man. Lot moved down into Sodom. Lot go all tied-up with material things, earthly possessions That was the beginning of his ruin. Today, all of Lot’s property is under the dead sea

Material things are not lasting things. Lot got all mixed-up with the politics of Sodom. He sat in the gate. Mayor of the city. Sodom thought he was a great man. But he lost his testimony completely. When the time came for him to leave Sodom, even his sons-in-law wouldn’t listen to him. They laughed at him. He had gotten so mixed-up with materialism and politics of the city, that he lost his family. An awful thing! And although Lot got his wife and daughters out of Sodom, he did not get Sodom out of them!

Some Christians wonder why they lose their families. I think it may be because of their lack of true separation. As I thought on these things, I began to think about my parents. They were saved in days of revival in 1918. Some thought they were so very narrow! But as time has moved on I don’t think they were so wrong after all. My parents were saved in revival FROM the world. They were first separated UNTO God. It was not a negative thing, it was very positive. They were not only separated unto God, they were separated unto the gospel. My Mother and Dad worked to get the gospel out. The last

thing my mother said to me when she was dying, “Lorne what are you doing to get the gospel out.? That was my mothers last challenge to me. Her main though in the hour of death was getting out the gospel. Now I can see, my parents were separated from the world BECAUSE they were separated unto God.

Regarding materialism:

God knows we need food and clothing. God knows we need a house in which to live. God knows in our way of life (maybe?) we need a car. God knows what we need..

I can now see clearly, although my Mom and Dad worked hard, and worked with their hands to support a family , that was not the only reason. They worked to get the gospel out. Their attitude towards material things , therefore was right. They were not struggling to accumulate a lot of things. Just the necessities of life. I’m glad about that now. They never did get caught up in the vicious circle. The day my Dad died, I went out and walked around the old farm homestead. And that day it all had lost its appeal.. Everything reminded me of my Dad, but he was gone and had left it ALL.

Today, the barn is gone. The house has been moved away. And that which was my whole life when I was a child, is no more.

In Ecclesiastes 12:6 we read “ the pitcher broken at the fountain, the wheel broken at the cistern.” What does it mean? Someone was there one day, but now they have moved away. Back at that old farm you may find some pieces of old machinery, but everything my Dad laboured to build is now gone and that in my lifetime! All this has been a lesson for and to me. Material things are all going to fade away. So the challenge is, get separated unto God so that you won’t get into the bondage of materialism.

My parents were also separated from politics. When I was younger I thought they were wrong in this. They believed so strongly in Philippians 3:21, that they were citizens of heaven, that seldom did they vote Regarding this point, I am not saying they were right or wrong. But they knew that politics was not the answer to man’s problems. As far as they were concerned , it was like treating a deep wound by putting on a small band-aid!

Today, I am noticing, that on the part of many preachers of the health and wealth doctrines emphasis is being placed on present happiness and present success and all under the banner of “social concern.”

Now I am not saying you won’t have a concern for your brothers, if you get your perspective straight. You will. But that is never going to be your major concern.

When the politics of this world has first place. when happiness NOW becomes first, you have lost your true Christian perspective. The things which are seen are only temporal. The things which are not seen are eternal. Keep that clear.

Martin Lloyd Jones got me to thinking about these things when he asked: “What is the message for the hour? “Our brethren tell us social concern and feed the hungry. Jones wrote, “it should be flee from the wrath to come.” You can feed a body for a few years, but what have you done for him if you have not told him about Christ?

When one gets too tied up with the politics of this world, one will lose the vision of the importance of the gospel. My parents had that figured out.

Another area-sport.

My parents were so busy getting out the gospel that they couldn't understand Christians having time for sports. In fact when I was a boy (and we could play ball anytime we liked to do so, among ourselves) I think my Mom and Dad would have thought that it was the greatest sign of backsliding that could happen to any of their children if they became involved in any professional sport. Baseball! Play ball as a testimony for Christ? That didn't make any sense to them at all. As far as they were concerned that would distract from getting out the gospel, and therefore for us it was wrong.

As far as my parents were concerned, it would be no greater testimony to be playing baseball as a Christian than it would be to sell beer in a bar to be a testimony.

Education? Worldly education. My Dad was not concerned about us going in for so called higher education. He had seen by experience that education apart from the Bible became a devilish thing. Said Luther " to educate without the Bible will only produce clever devils."

To conclude all this :

I can see it more clearly all the time. I am not against politics as such. I am not against sport as such. I am not against education as such. But when these things get out of place, they become weeds in the life of any Christian. So get your priorities straight.

Get separated unto God and you are going to find out that some of these things, as valuable as they are, you will not have time for them. That is the way to look upon true separation.

And the kind of Christianity true separation promotes ,will bring-out or bring to the surface, the anti- Christian spirit that exists in this world.