

REVELATION

Lesson 2

Revelation 2:1 - 3:22

This past week we discovered that the Book of Revelation is a singular, but complex, revelation of Jesus Christ to the Jews, the Church, and the Gentile world as Christ is revealed as the true Messiah, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is coming as King to rule and judge and to set up his earthly kingdom ("the things to come"). We also saw that today ("the things that are") he stands at the center of the Church as the Lamb of God who died and rose again in order to give us eternal life. He is "the first and the last" and is revealed, or unveiled, through this book which he told John in Revelation 22:10 "not to seal up". Therefore we should study and learn all that this most amazing book has for us as we eagerly await his return.

This week we will look at the seven churches: the original addressees of this "letter". Who were they, why only seven when so many more churches existed by that time, what did Christ have to say about them that was good, and what did he criticize them for? In answering these questions we can better understand "the church" that Christ is building and our own individual churches within His Church as well.

May God bless you as you study His Holy Word this week.

Read Revelation 2:1 - 3:22, then answer the following:

1. What is the purpose of the "Church"? To answer this question make a simple table: down the left hand side, list the names of the seven churches; across the top put two labels: strengths or commendations, and criticism or condemnations. Then for each church list the things Christ commended them for and the things he criticized them for. From this table, what do you believe Christ is telling us is the purpose of the Church and what is NOT? See linked Seven Churches Summary, thanks to Rose Publishing for allowing us to copy and use this material for teaching.
2. Name the churches about which Christ does NOT have anything negative to say (there are two). These would certainly then make great church models for us.
3. Which church does Christ call a compromising church? (Since he condemns them for this there is also a message here for the church of today.)

4. Which church does he not have anything good to say? We can also learn much from this church as it represents things which are not pleasing to Christ and clearly are not to be a part of his church.

5. Can you discern why these seven churches were chosen? What do you suppose they represent?

So, let's recap what we learned about the following church letters:

The church in Ephesus - was clearly centered on works, so much so that it had lost sight of its "first love", the real purpose of a church - spreading the gospel message, seeking and saving the lost. It had gotten so focused on its programs and ministry areas that it had forgotten its real purpose.

The church in Smyrna - in a wealthy city full of riches, knowledge, and a lavish lifestyle, it was seen as poor yet standing firm on the gospel. They were not comprising the faith or the gospel to gain wealth, nor were they watering down the message to "fit in" or be "politically correct" with the sophisticated and wealthy citizens of Smyrna. They were surrounded by counterfeit Jews and constantly under attack from Satan yet they held firm. Christ had absolutely nothing negative to say to this church, he encouraged them to continue being faithful even unto death and he would give them a crown of life.

The church in Pergamum - a center of government, education, culture, idol worship, Pergamum was a challenge. Christ commended them, but also warned them. Clearly they had comprised the Gospel message. They allowed worldly

teaching to be incorporated with the teaching of the Word of God and had comprised their faith. In an apparent effort to welcome or include everyone they were allowing false teaching and in so doing comprised God's Holy Word.

As I hope you can already see, if we were to remove the names of these three churches we would readily detect lessons here for churches today. Focused on programs and works, trying to fit in or be politically correct, compromising God's Holy Word; .and we haven't look at all the letters yet. We also see good things, standing firm in the faith, be on guard against the false teachers and phony Christians who will try and comprise or mislead us and others seeking Christ. Christ doesn't tell any of these churches there's no hope. He clearly says there is, and he gives them specific things to do to turn their churches around, or to grow stronger in what they already have.

I encourage you to look at the last four letters this week. See what you can find about those cities and what life was like then and see if you can detect what Christ is teaching each of them. Once we have looked at all seven, we will have great insight into how we can help to build up the body we are a part of and how each of us can avoid the problems Christ points to in these letters.

Have a great week everyone! May God continue to richly bless you as you faithfully study with us each week.

Yours in Christ

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