

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Session 3

Section 2: The Letters to the Churches – Rev 2&3

I. JESUS' MESSAGES TO THE 7 CHURCHES OF ASIA IN REV 2-3

- A. Jesus appeared to John to reveal Himself in a way what would equip the Church to walk in full obedience as overcomers (Rev. 2-3).
- B. These letters give us insight into God's heart.
- C. We prepare by growing in love by encountering the majesty and love of Jesus.

II. THE FOUR WAYS TO APPLY THE SEVEN LETTERS.

- A. **Historically:** the letters were first written to seven historical churches in John's generation to address the actual conditions of seven real churches.
- B. **Universally:** all churches in the first century and throughout 2,000 years of Church history.
- C. **Prophetically:** seven stages of church history. A number scholars have promoted the idea that they also prophetically describe seven stages in the 2,000 years of church history.
- D. **Eschatologically:** to prepare the End-Time Church for the events seen in Rev. 6-19.

III. STUDYING THE 7 LETTERS: THE COMMON ELEMENTS IN THE LETTERS

- A. **Historical context:** it is important to gain information about the situation that each church was challenged with politically, economically and spiritually.
- B. **Revelation of Jesus:** Jesus emphasized a specific aspect of Himself that was most needed in the situation of each Church.
- C. **Affirmation for faithfulness:** Jesus gave affirmation before correction (Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira). Two churches received no affirmation (Sardis and Laodicea).

- D. ***Rebuke for compromise:*** five churches received a rebuke and two did not (Smyrna and Philadelphia). Jesus' correction is not rejection. Jesus spoke of having something against three specific churches: Ephesus (Rev 2:4), Pergamos (Rev. 2:14) and Thyatira (Rev. 2:20).
- E. ***Exhortation to respond:*** Jesus gave actions that He required, often with an element of warning.
- F. ***Promise for overcomers:*** as incentive for diligent faithfulness to Jesus.
- G. ***Prophetic period in history:*** Commonly taught that the conditions in these seven churches of Asia in the first century parallel the spiritual conditions of a long season in church history.

IV. HE WHO HAS AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR: 6 IMPLICATIONS

- A. First, it is an ***extremely important exhortation.*** It was the principle that Jesus repeated the most in His earthly ministry. He spoke this phrase on 16 occasions, 8 times in the Gospels and 8 times in Revelation (Mt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mk. 4:9, 23; 7:16; Lk. 8:8; 14:35; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9). Jesus was the only one in the NT to give this exhortation. He echoed Moses who called Israel to “hear” meaning to “have ears to hear” (Deut. 6:4-5) and the Father (Ps. 45:10).
⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. (Deut. 6:4-5)
- B. Second, it calls us to ***pay careful attention.*** Jesus is saying that there is more than what is immediately obvious.
- C. Third, it takes the ***supernatural help of the Holy Spirit*** to grasp it. Jesus wants us to ask the Spirit for help.
- D. Fourth, it takes a ***focused determination*** to lay hold of the truths being referred to.
- E. Fifth, they often refer to ***eternal rewards.*** Jesus spoke this exhortation most often in context to living for eternity.
- F. Sixth, these are a call to both ***individuals*** and ***corporate*** bodies.

v. REWARDS

A. Rewards in the context of Salvation

1. Salvation is by Grace alone, through Christ alone
2. Jesus Himself is our greatest reward!

B. God's economy includes rewarding those who obey, endure and remain faithful.

1. Jesus spoke a lot about rewards, never rebuking His disciples for the desire of greatness and rewards, but calling them to pursue them in a way opposite of the world's way.
2. Motivators unto endurance in obedience and faithfulness.
3. We were created for this.

God Himself is our greatest Reward

Gen 15:1 God to Abraham: Do not fear, I am your shield and your great reward. Ps 16:5; Ps 73:26; Ps 119:26; John 17:3

Salvation by Grace alone

Eph 2:8-9 Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

We were created for good works

Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Run the race for the crown!

Heb 12:1-2 ... let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross...

Rev 14:14 The harvest for the one with the crown! The crown of Joy that He won in his race.

Stephanos = crown = wreath

1 Cor 9:25-27

Run to win the prize!

2 Tim 4:7-8

Crown of Righteousness

James 1:12

Crown of Life

1 Pet 5:4

Crown of Glory

1 Thess 2:19

Crown of Joy at the coming of Jesus

Rev 2:10

Crown of Life

Isa 61:3

Crown of Beauty

Oil of Gladness

Garment of Praise

Our wealth in eternity

Rev 2:9 I know your tribulation and poverty, but you are rich!
Rev 3:17 You say you are rich, prospered, need nothing, but you are poor, wretched, bind, naked, pitiable.

Rewards vary between believers

I Cor 15:41-42 As the glory of the sun varies from the moon and the stars, so it is with the resurrection of the dead. We will have varying degrees of glory...

Pursue/Overcome/Mature/Excel

Reward

Matt 5:1-12	Poor in spirit	Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven
Matt 5:1-12	Mourn	They shall receive comfort
Matt 5:1-12	Meek	Inherit the earth
Matt 5:1-12	Hunger & thirst for righteousness	Satisfaction
Matt 5:1-12	Merciful	Receive mercy
Matt 5:1-12	Pure in heart	See God
Matt 5:1-12	Peacemakers	Called Sons of God
Matt 5:1-12	Persecuted for righteousness	Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven
Matt 5:1-12	Reviled and persecuted on my account	Great is your reward in heaven
Matt 6:1-4	Giving in secret	Rewarded openly by the Father
Matt 6:5-15	Praying in secret	Rewarded openly by the Father
Matt 6:16-18	Fasting	Rewarded openly by the Father
Matt 6:33	Seek first the Kingdom of God	All that you need for this life
Rev 2:7	Be victorious in your first love	Eat of the tree of life
Rev 2:11	Be faithful unto death	Crown of Life Not be hurt by the second death
Rev 2:17	Be victorious over false grace	Eat of the hidden manna, bright gem with a new name
Rev 2:26-29	Hold fast what you have until I come. Do not tolerate immorality and consuming what is given to demons.	Authority over nations. Rule them as I rule. He will have the morning star.
Rev 3:5	Wake up and strengthen what is about to die.	Clothed in dazzling garments. His reputation will remain and I will declare it before my Father and all the angels.
Rev 3:11	Hold fast what you have until I come that no one takes your crown.	He will be a pillar in the temple of my God - never leaving the presence of God. I will write upon him the name of my God, city, and my own new name!
Rev 3:20-21	Hears my voice and opens Is victorious in moving out of lukewarmness	we will fellowship together. He will sit on my throne with me.
Luk 6:35	Love your enemies. Do good, lending expecting nothing in return	Your reward will be great and you will be called Sons of the Most High.
Col 3:23	Slaves, work as unto Jesus and not men	You will receive an inheritance as your reward.

Heb 10:35	Do not throw away your confidence	It has great reward
Heb 11:6	Believe that God exists and seek him	He rewards our faith.
I Cor 3:14	Build with gold, silver precious stones	He will receive a reward
Mt 10:41	Receives a prophet ...	receives a prophet's reward
Mt 10:41	Receives a righteous person ...	receives a righteous person's reward.
Mt 10:42	Whoever gives a drink of cold water because they are a disciple...	Will not lose his reward...
Mk 9:41	Whoever gives you a drink because you follow me...	Will not lose his reward...
Matt 5:19	Keeps my commands and teaches others to do the same	Called great in the kingdom of heaven
I Cor 3:8	He who plants and he who waters	Each will receive his wages according to his labor.
Rev 16:15	Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his garments...	so he will not be naked and exposed...
Matt 18:1-4	Servant of all	Greatest in the Kingdom
	Condition	Loss of reward
Matt 5:19	Relaxes my commands and teaches others to do the same	Called least in the kingdom of heaven
2 Jn 1:8	Watch yourselves	That you may not lose what you/we have worked for but may win a full reward.
I Cor 3:15	If anyone's work is burned up	He will suffer loss, but he will be saved.
	What about?	
Mt 20:1-16	Parable of the laborers	Equal pay according to generosity of the Master This parable does not address effort... it assumes they all work hard during their time of labor.
	When do we receive our rewards?	
Rev 11:18	The time has come for the dead to be judged	rewarding your servants ...
Rev 22:12	I am coming soon	I bring my rewards with me to repay everyone for what he has done.
2 Cor 5:10	We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ	That each may receive what is due him for what he has done, good or evil...
	Nakedness = Loss of rewards?	
Rev 3:17-18	What is the shame of nakedness?	Is it coming to eternity and having no rewards?
Rev 16:15	Stay awake and guard your garments	Stay aware until death or Jesus returns.
Gen 2:25; 3:7-11	What of the nakedness of Adam & Eve	Some think they didn't see their nakedness because they were clothed with glory - in the image of God... garments of light?

