REVELATION 13 – EPHESUS: CHANGING FOCUS

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Revelation 2:1-4

TO EPHESUS' EPISKOPOS: PERSPECTIVE OF CHRIST

- Christ {infinite} presents Himself to each church {finite} which has varying degrees of maturity {understanding} via snippets appropriate to the message

  - John {Apostle} received complete view of Christ consistent with complete Revelation

  - Each *episkopos* {Overseer} received specific view consistent with Christ's message to that church

- Ephesus' view of Christ: Walks among the lamps holding the stars

  - Christ watches over and guides each *episkopos* {star}; also implies *every* believer

  - Christ *walks* among the churches {lamps} guiding each church through the World

  - Each church, each believer, has unique presentation of Christ's Gospel {Body}

CHRIST'S OMNISCIENCE: CHRIST *KNOWS* YOUR WORKS

- This theme runs throughout Revelation: <u>Your</u> faith is known by <u>your</u> Works

  - James {Jakob} highlights this perspective confusing Church Age scholars (Ja 2:14-18)

  - John supports this concept in his epistle; test the spirits (1Jo 2:4-6, 18-23; 3:8; 4:1-3; 5:3-5)

  - Sinners' <u>works</u> *testify* against them condemning them (Re 20:11-15)

- *Church's* <u>works</u> **shows** its <u>true</u> beliefs; therefore, Christ *knows* your works…

  - Ephesus *endures* and continues to *endure* in Christ's Truth despite being a *neokoros* city

  - Ephesus *tested* self-proclaimed apostles finding them to be liars {False Teachers}

  - They reject those who live by the *old nature*; do not have fruits of the *new nature* (Mt 7:15-21; Ga 5:17-23)

CHURCH OF EPHESUS: HOLDING THE LINE

- Ephesus has been holding the line of Truth since Paul despite being a *neokoros* city for Artemis and Domitian {Pagan woman <u>devolves</u> into Man}

  - They have not grown weary even though it caused <u>riots</u>: Backlash (Ac 19:21-34)

  - They unhesitatingly stood for the Truth {Strange for today's Christians}

- However, they are in the midst of many historical, social and cultural changes including the loss of the final *true* apostle, John. How to preserve the Truth?

  - They were <u>not</u> apostles and probably believed Christ spoke only to apostles; not true (Mk 9:38-40)

  - Old Testament example: Judges guided Israel after Moses and Joshua; imperfect people

CHANGING FOCUS: FROM CHRIST TO RULES

- Doing what Man does best: Guarding Truth through Rules {Creeds}

  - Apostle's Creed (1Pe 3:18-22): Found in various forms but generally defined Church Doctrine by: What would the <u>Apostles</u> Do {Irenaeus, Tertullian, Augustine, etc.}

  - This illustrates how <u>good</u> <u>intentions</u> leads to <u>evil</u> <u>results</u>

- Focus changed from seeking Christ's guidance to depending on men's guidance

  - Gospels clearly illustrated the apostles were fallible men, not to be worshipped

  - Jewish history clearly illustrated evil of substituting rules-laws for God's guidance even to murdering God, Christ, whom they saw as *breaking* God's rules (Mt 12:1-8; Lk 11:17-23)

  - Only <u>one</u> Christ, Gospel, but many people and thus many <u>denominations</u> (1Co 3:1-9; Ep 4:4-7; Col 1:15-20)

PROBLEM WITH RULES: FOCUS AND RESULTS

- Rules, necessary for the Lost, governments: Major flaws (Ro 13:1-7)

  - Laws focus <u>only</u> on the outside; they cannot determine one's heart (1Sa 16:7; Jn 7:17-24)

  - Laws <u>only</u> condemn for failure; they cannot praise for Truth (Ro 3:10-20)

  - Laws <u>only</u> reveal sin; hence, cannot guide into Truth (Ro 7:7-10)

- With no apostles churches began developing creeds {Laws} to define what *saved* should outwardly look like {Morality}

  - Easily deceived by *False Teachers* supplemented by Immature believers {Jude}

  - Allows for the rise of denominations competing as representations of True Faith: Roman Catholicism; Greek Orthodox; Protestantism; Evangelicalism, etc.

INHERENT TO RULES: FOSTERS SIN

- Paul discusses why rules {Law} causes sin (Ro 7:7-14)

  - Flesh has *sin nature*, but it has no expression of Truth

  - Sin is rebellion but if there is no rule there is nothing to rebel against

  - Once rule is given, Flesh rebels giving expression to its inherent *sin nature*

  - Expressions of sin, *Works* of the Flesh, **war** against the Spirit and *new nature* (Ro 8:5-8)

- Rules inherent for sinful people to live together to Control the flesh (Ro 13:1-7)

  - Society creates rules, inherent to God's image {Ten Words}, which causes rebellion which requires more rules resulting in more rebellion: Positive Feedback Loop

  - What or Who can break this Loop? Christ! (Ro 7:24-8:4)

PARENTING:
LIVING, PERSONAL EXAMPLE

- Parenting is a personal, living example of this process (Pr 1-4; 22:6; 31:10-31)

  - Infant: Eats, Sleeps, Excretes while growing and developing ability to *move*

  - Toddler: Begins independent movement and thought with parents developing *rules, safety*, which results in rebellion {Terrible Twos}

    - Potty Training: First major step in teaching child self-control; failure at this step <u>enhances</u> rebellion making subsequent years miserable

  - Childhood: Discipline teaches child to embrace God's *good*; doomed to failure as people ultimately **cannot** Control the Flesh – Look to Salvation (Ro 1:18-28; Ga 5:22-23)

  - Teen: Child encouraged to make decisions and accept responsibility with guidance

  - Adulthood: Become the person <u>each</u> decided; parents protecting adults furthers rebellion preventing salvation: Sins' of fathers to 3rd generation (Ex 34:6-7; Le 26:38-39; De 5:8-10)

SMALL CHANGE IN FOCUS: MAJOR DEVIATION FROM CHRIST

- Cannot be overstated: Small changes in focus from Christ's guidance to Man's *interpretation* fosters today's confusion; begins at home

  - Throughout Church history countless millions have been murdered based on church creeds rather than Christ's guidance

  - Today's churches, and their adherents, would rather follow rules than seek guidance via prayer from Christ via the Spirit IAW the Bible (Jn 14:15-17)

- Christ highlights this small change in the first church, Ephesus, but will explore its ramifications in subsequent churches

  - Are you guided by Christ-Spirit-Word; or do you justify your *belief* based on keeping certain rules {Ten Words} without prayer or Bible? How do you know you are saved?