

## **Revelation: The Lord of the Churches (Revelation 1:17-20).**

**By Pastor Jeff Alexander (4/26/2015)**

### **Introduction**

1. Revelation is a letter to the churches. As with all letters, it has an introductory greeting (1:4), a stated purpose for writing (1:9-13), themes developed in the body of the letter, and closing remarks and exhortations (22:12-21).
2. The interrelationship between the churches and the visions
  - a. True and false Israel compared (2:9 and 3:9); true Israel described (7:4-8)
  - b. Suffering and persecution experienced by the churches (2:10); also seen in the visions (6:11)
  - c. Satan's throne in Pergamum (2:13), with false prophet (2:14); appears as the dragon thrown out of heaven to establish his rule (throne) on earth with his false prophets (12:9)
  - d. Believers at Laodicea offered clean garments and invited to eat with the Lord (3:18, 20); believers at the return of Christ given clean garments and invited to the supper of the Lamb (19:8-9)
  - e. Christ, the "faithful and true witness," at the door of the church (3:14); one "called faithful and true" inside the door of heaven (19:11)
  - f. Other common themes: (1) overcoming (2:7, 11; 12:11; 15:2; 17:14), (2) idolatry (2:14, 20 and 9:20; 13:4, 12-15), and (3) the picture of Jesus bringing judgment by the sword of his mouth (2:16 and 19:15)
3. There are parallels between the imperfect Church of the present and the perfect church in the future.
  - a. False prophets (2:2); true apostles (21:14)
  - b. False Jews (2:9; 3:9); true Israel (21:12)
  - c. Christians dwelling near Satan's throne (2:13); Christians dwelling at God's throne (22:1)
  - d. The church an earthly lampstand (1:20; 2:5); God and the Lamb the lamps in heaven (21:23-24; 22:5)
  - e. The church contains idolaters (2:14-15, 20-23); the perfect church has no idolatry or lying (21:8).
  - f. Christians are persecuted (2:8-10; 13); Christians reign as conquerors (21:6, 7).
4. Promises made to the overcomers are fulfilled in the new creation.
  - a. They will eat of the tree of life (2:7; 22:2).
  - b. They will be pillars in the temple (3:12; 21:22).
  - c. They will live in the heavenly Jerusalem (3:12; 21:23-27).
  - d. They will have the name of God (3:12; 21:27).
  - e. They will be clothed in white (3:5; 21:2).

- f. They will have a white stone and receive the Morning Star (2:17, 28; 21:11, 16, 18-21).
- g. They will rule the nations, sitting on thrones with Christ (2:26, 27; 3:21; 22:5).
- h. They will be saved from the second death (2:11; 21:7, 8).

This shows that Revelation is a pastoral letter written to believers offering hope that, if they persevere in faithfulness to Christ, they will receive an eternal reward.

If we are to inherit the promises of eternal life, we need perseverance in trials, courage to stand as followers of Christ, strength to live holy lives, and loyalty to the authority of scripture and doctrinal purity.

## **I. The Importance of the Vision**

1. Many concepts found in the visionary portion of Revelation are best explained by the vision of the Son of Man (1:9-20) as developed in the letters (chs. 2 and 3).
2. The powerful threat of evil as contrasted with the weakness of the churches portends a tragic end and, thus, must be countered so that saints may overcome.
3. The vision of Christ establishes the holy authority which will ultimately counter and defeat the program of Satan.
4. There is a pattern established in each letter.
  - a. Christ is portrayed with certain attributes particularly suitable to the situation of each church, providing the faith-basis to overcome the specific problems presented.
  - b. The particular issues of each church are reviewed.
  - c. Christ issues either encouragement to persevere or a charge to repent in order to avert judgment.
  - d. Christ, then, issues a call for each church to respond by “heeding” the instruction given.
  - e. To encourage a positive response, Christ promises an inheritance of eternal life corresponding to the attributes presented or to the situation of the respective church.

The fact that must not be missed is that Christ will not tolerate unfaithful professors in His spiritual war.

## **II. The Condition of the Churches**

1. The order and arrangement of each church is so done to demonstrate that the churches, as a whole, are in a poor condition.
2. The churches listed fall into three groups:
  - a. The first and last form the “bookends,” both being in grave spiritual danger.
  - b. The three in the middle have only some who have remained faithful while the rest compromised the faith.
  - c. Only the second and the sixth have proved themselves faithful in the face of grave temptation and severe persecution.

## **III. The Ultimate Motivation**

1. Fear is the natural response of heart to any threatening situation.
  - a. The very nature of God's purpose to allow evil to run its full course will produce an atmosphere of anxiety for all who face evil's awful threats.
  - b. The impulse of one faced with fear is either to flee or to fight.
2. Fear of man can be countered only by the fear of God (Prov. 29:25).
  - a. Men turn from sin when the fear of God is of greater influence than the perceived gain offered by the sin (2 Chron. 19:7, 9; Prov. 8:13; 16:6).
  - b. The fear of the Lord establishes confidence and strength of courage in the heart (Prov. 14:26).
  - c. The fear of God motivates the perfecting of holiness of life (2 Cor. 7:1).
  - d. It is the fear of God that drives a man to know God and to learn the knowledge of God (Psa. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 2:5; 15:33).
  - e. The fear of the Lord is the designation of true piety (Psa. 33:8; Eccl. 12:13).
  - f. It is the Lord's magnificence, when truly seen and understood, that elicits fear of Him (Jer. 5:22, 24).

### **Reflections**

1. The Revelation is designed to produce true fear of God that will strengthen and establish His people to face and resist the onslaught of Satan and His hosts who are seeking to destroy God's kingdom on earth.
2. The fear of the Lord is also closely connected with obedience to God's commandments (Job 5:21; Ps. 19:9; Eccles. 12:13), to hating evil (Prov. 8:13), to trusting God (Ps. 40:3), and to enjoying friendship with God (Ps. 25:14).
3. Reading and studying the Revelation should motivate us to follow Jesus very closely (Acts 5: 11, 9:31, 2 Cor. 5:10, 11; 1 Pet. 1:17).