Revelation 2:1-7

Review…

- Revelation of Jesus…
  - REVELATION - the APOCALYPSE - meaning to UNCOVER something that was HIDDEN…
  - This BOOK is meant to UNCOVER or REVEAL to us – Jesus Christ!
- God of GRACE…
  - I love that a BOOK known for the WRATH and JUDGEMENT of God – opens with GRACE…
  - Because God does NOT want to JUDGE us – He wants to give us GRACE – **II Peter 3:9**
  - The WRATH of God - ONLY comes to those who do NOT receive the GRACE of God!
- Vision of Jesus…
  - John – our BROTHER – was on the Island of Patmos on the Lords Day…
  - When he was given a VISION of Jesus Christ – a loud voice behind him…
  - When he turned – He saw Jesus like the BRIGHTNESS of the sun – John could NOT look at Him…
  - He fell down at His feet as if DEAD – but Jesus told him – do NOT be afraid…
  - Because Jesus is the FIRST and the LAST – God who DIED for our SINS - **Isaiah 41:4**
  - Now He has the KEYS to hell and death – **I Corinthians 15:55**
- WRITE down…
  - PAST - John wrote the things he HAD seen – vison of Jesus – **Revelation 1**
  - PRESENT - the things which ARE – the SEVEN churches – **Revelation 2-3**
  - FUTURE - the things AFTER this – the rapture – wrath – and return of Jesus – **Revelation 4-22**

The LOVELESS church…

- **1st – Introduction… vs. 1**
  - 1st – Seven Churches…
    - SEVEN letters…
      - Out of the 27 book of the NT – 21 are LETTERS written to churches…
      - But the SECOND section of REVELATION – gives us SEVEN more letters…
      - Given by Jesus – written down by John – with THREE possible interpretations!
      - SEVEN literal churches in Asia Minor [modern day Turkey]
      - Different KINDS of churches – the TOTAL [seven] church...
      - The HISTORY of the church – from PENTECOST to the RAPTURE!
    - Historical church…
    - Each of the LETTERS to the churches contains FOUR sections…
      - Introduction – Positive – Negative - and Encouragement…
      - Not all of the churches receive all FOUR sections…
      - TWO of the churches receive no NEGATIVE – Smyrna and Philadelphia
      - ONE of the churches did not get any POSITIVE – Laodicea!

- 2nd – The Angel… vs. 1
  - To the angel!
  - There are TWO thoughts on WHO this ANGEL was:
  - FIRST – a guardian ANGEL – who watched over Ephesus - **Psalm 91:11**
  - SECOND – it could be the PASTOR of the church…
  - ANGEL [ἄγγελος] – means messenger – one who gives Gods WORD…
  - Therefore Jesus could be talking about the PASTOR – who gave the church His Word!
- 3rd – The City… vs. 1
  - The church of Ephesus write!
    - Ephesus was the largest and most powerful city in Asia-minor [Turkey]
    - The city was very wealthy - with a population of over 150,000 people...
    - It sat at the crossroads of TWO main trade routes in the Roman Empire...
    - By LAND they were halfway between Macedonia [Greece] and Alexandria [Egypt]
    - By SEA - the city was on the Aegean Sea - part of a major trade route to Rome!
    - It was a major hub of commerce flowing from the EAST to WEST in the Roman Empire!
  - Powerful city…
    - The city was about FOUR miles from the sea – connected by the Cayster [Κάϋστρος] river…
    - The streets were lined with marble - the ruins are still there to this day...
    - Walking down Curetes street - you pass incredible buildings like the Celsus library...
    - Markets [ἀγορά]- with the names of the stores carved in stone – and public bathrooms…
    - They had hot and cold running water inside of the houses [fed by hot and cold springs]
    - Towards the end of the road - there is a theatre that holds 25,000 people!
    - The point being it was a VERY wealthy - VERY powerful - VERY influential city!
  - Immoral city…
    - The temple of Artimus [Dianna] – was one of the SEVEN wonders of the ancient world…
    - When we think of a Greek Temple - Parthenon - still standing today in Athens...
    - The temple to Dianna was TWICE as high - EIGHT times as large [bigger than a stadium]
    - Artimus was the daughter of Zeus - and was said to have fallen from the sky to Ephesus...
    - It was likely a METEOR - with bumps all over it – that they worshiped!
    - Artimus was the goddess of fertility [many breast] - making Ephesus a very immoral place!
  - Second MISSIONARY journey…
    - Paul first visited Ephesus on his SECOND missionary journey - **Acts 18**
    - He returned to Ephesus on his THIRD missionary journey - stayed for THREE years...
    - A revival began in Ephesus – a LOT of people were getting saved...
    - As a result - a certain idol maker named Demetrius - was losing a LOT of money...
    - People were no longer buying idols of Artimus - so stirred he the up trouble…
    - 25,000 people gathered in a riot in the theatre - **Acts 19:30**

- Paul would return to instruct the Ephesian elders at Miletus – **Acts 20:17**
- And the Book of Ephesus – was written by Paul to this same CHURCH!
- The point being there was a SOLID – well established church in Ephesus!

- 4th – The TONE…
  - Describing Jesus…
    - In His INTRODUCTION to each Church - Jesus will look back - **Revelation 1:11-18**
    - Highlighting specific CHARACTERISTICS of the Vision John saw…
    - The choice of CHARACTERISTICS - will set the TONE for the LETTER to that church…
    - With EPHESUS – Jesus will highlight the GOOD they had DONE…
    - And the WITNESS they were giving of Him to the world!
  - These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand!
    - We saw last week the SEVEN stars – are the SEVEN angles – **Revelation 1:20**
    - But do not miss the RIGHT hand – speaking of the STRENGTH of Christ…
    - Jesus is going to COMMEND the church for their GOOD works…
    - But it they do NOT get the credit – their STRENGTH comes from the LORD!
    - The church needs to remember – who is the source of the GOOD they do…
    - It is not our great ideas – or amazing programs – that impact a lost world…
    - The only GOOD any church can do – comes by depending on the STRENGTH of God!
    - **I Corinthians 4:7** – "What do you have that God has not given you? If all you have is from God - why boast as though you have accomplished something on your own?"
  - Who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands!
    - We saw last week the SEVEN lampstands – are the SEVEN churches – **Revelation 1:20**
    - Which are a PICTURE of the MENORAH – lighting the way into the presence of God!
    - But Jesus here is going to give a WARNING to the church…
    - They could do everything RIGHT – but if they miss ONE thing – they could lose their LIGHT!

- **2ND – Positive… vs. 2-3**
  - 1st – Jesus KNOWS… vs. 2
    - I know your works - your labor - your patience!
      - KNOWS [εἴδω] – to SEE and UNDERSTAND…
      - Jesus will make this statement to all SEVEN churches – He sees EVERYTHING!
      - GOOD and BAD – nothing [perfect] is hidden from our Lord!
      - **Hebrews 4:13** – "There is no creature hidden from His sight - but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."
    - In Ephesus – Jesus SAW their:
      - WORK [ἔργον] – to be busy - what they spend the majority of their time DOING…
      - LABOR [κόπος] – to have sorrow - what they STRUGGLED with…
      - PATIENCE – to have consistency – their solution in Jesus…
      - Which the Lord goes on to define one at a time!
  - 2nd – Their WORK… vs. 2 /6

- That you cannot [tolerate] those who are evil!
  - The church in Ephesus – spent the majority of their time doing GOOD…
  - Therefore – they did NOT have the POWER [δύναμαι] to TOLERATE [βαστάζω]
  - Those who were determined to do BAD [κακός]!
  - We are called to HELP those who are overcome by SIN – **Galatians 6:1**
  - But we do not have the POWER to help - someone who WANTS to sin…
  - It is hard to see someone destroy their lives with BAD choices...
  - Yet if they WANT to SIN - there is not much you can do - but wait till they are broken!
- You have tested those who say they are apostles and are not - and have found them liars!
  - The FIRST of their GOOD works – TESTING the apostles…
  - TEST [πειράζω] – to PROVE to see what someone is made of…
  - The Church TESTED men who CLAIMED [φάσκω] to be APOSTLES [ἀπόστολος]
  - APOSTLES – someone SENT by God to as a representative – or ambassador…
  - What they found – is that these men were LIARS [ψευδής]!
  - Be careful when someone says - the THUS SAYS THE LORD – be absolutely sure…
  - People will try to claim they have authority – because they represent God…
  - But we must EXAMINE what they SAY – and see if it lines up with the TRUTH!
  - **I John 1:4 –** "Do not believe every spirit – but test the spirits whether they are of God!"
- This you have - that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans - which I also hate!
  - The SECOND of their GOOD works – HATING [μισέω] the WORK [ἔργον] of the Nicolaitans…
  - There are TWO views as to what this might be referring to…
  - It could be to those who followed the teachings of NICHOLAS…
  - NICHOLAS was one of the SEVEN deacons raised up at the church in Jerusalem - **Acts 6:5**
  - Some of the early church fathers [Irenaeus] taught that he became a HERETIC…
  - Teaching that it was OK to practice adultery – promiscuity…
  - Which would have been well received in the sinful culture of Artimus worship!
- Hierarchy…
  - Nicolaitans [Νικολαΐτης] is a compound word – Victory [νῖκος] and People [λαός]
  - Meaning those who RULED over the PEOPLE – speaking of HIERARCHY in the church…
  - The idea being - leaders who taught people could not come directly to the Lord!
  - There is no HIERARCHY with Jesus – we have direct access to the Father through Him…
  - Jesus did all the work for us - Jesus died on the cross so that we could come to God...
  - Through Him we have complete access – into the very throne room of our Father!
  - **Hebrews 4:16** – "Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God."

- 3rd – Their PATIENCE… vs. 3
  - You have [tolerated] and have patience!
  - Although the church had not TOLERATED – those who were determined to do BAD…
  - They did TOLERATE [βαστάζω] those who were STRUGGLING…

- They did so by encouraging them to have PATIENCE…
- PATIENCE [ὑπομονή] – [ὑπό] under – [μένω] to abide – to CLING to Jesus!
- There is only ONE solution to EVERY problem people bring to us…
- It does not matter if they are struggling FINANCIALLY – Jesus can provide…
- If they are hurting PHYSICALLY – Jesus can heal…
- If they are have a problem with RELATIONSHIPS [marriage – kids] – Jesus can restore…
- The BEST way we can HELP others – is to encourage them to ABIDE in Jesus!
- **John 15:5 –** "He who abides in Me - I in him - bears much fruit. Without Me you can do nothing."

○ 4th – Their LABOR… vs. 2

- And have labored for My names sake and have not become weary!
  - The LABOR [κόπος] of the church – what they struggled with – was serving the LORD…
  - Because it is NOT easy to SERVE Jesus – it often seems like there is no FRUIT…
  - And the temptation is to become WEARY – and to give up!
  - We want to see the good FRUIT from our efforts right NOW…
  - And when the FRUIT does not come - we assuming nothing will ever happen...
  - It can be tempting to want to STOP - thinking things will never change!
- Do not give up…
  - We do not plant a seed - and expect there to be fruit on the branches in the morning...
  - And if we sat there and waited for the plant to grow – we would likely give up!
  - Rather than looking for the fruit - we just need to keep LABORING for Jesus...
  - As we are faithful to ABIDE in Him – in His Word...
  - In His time we will bear FRUIT – we will be used powerfully by the Lord!
  - **Galatians 6:9** – "Let us not grow weary while doing good - for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."

● **3RD – NEGATIVE… VS. 4-5**

○ 1st – No LOVE… vs. 4

- Nevertheless I have this against you - that you have left your first love!
  - BUT [ἀλλά] – although the Church had done a LOT of things RIGHT…
  - They had done ONE thing WRONG – they LEFT [aorist] their first LOVE [ἀγάπη]
  - They had all the right ACTIONS – but they LOST the right MOTIVE…
  - The church in Ephesus was a GOOD church – doing all the RIGHT things…
  - But they FORGOT why they were doing them – they FORGOT about Jesus – **I John 4:8**

- We should doing GOOD things as the church…
  - Reaching out to the LOST – helping those who are struggling with SIN…
  - Standing up to FALSE teachers who are LYING about the TRUTH…
  - But if we FORGET why we are doing all these things – then we have missed the POINT!
  - LOVE must be the driving motive behind everything we DO…
  - Because no matter what we DO – if it does NOT come from LOVE – it means NOTHING!
  - **I Corinthians 13:1-3** – "[Even if I give all I have] to feed the poor - [and] I give my body to be burned - but do not have LOVE - it profits me nothing."

- 2nd – Remember… vs. 5

  - Remember therefore from where you have fallen - repent and do the first works!

    - The solution to FORGETTING – is to REMEMBER [imperative]
    - Because there was a time when the church had been MOTIVED by LOVE…
    - They needed to REPENT [imperative] – turn around – they were going the WRONG way…
    - Go back and DO [imperative] - THE [ὁ] FIRST [πρῶτος] WORK [ἔργον]
    - Go back to being motivated by the LOVE [ἀγάπη] of Jesus!

  - Heart check…
    - As a church – we need to ask – why are we doing what we do…
    - It is because that is what we did last year – or because other churches are doing it!
    - If that is the case – we need to REMEMBER – that it is not about GOOD works…
    - We need to REPENT – turn around because we are not following Jesus…
    - And we need to RETURN to the FIRST – and ONLY – WORK that matters…
    - Letting the world see the LOVE [ἀγάπη] of Jesus flowing through our lives!
    - **John 13:35** – "All will know that you are My disciples - if you have love for one another."

- 3rd – No light… vs. 5

  - Else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place - unless you repent!

    - IF [εἰ] – repeated twice for emphasis – they did not REPENT…
    - Jesus would come QUICKLY – and REMOVE their LIGHT [lampstand]
    - Keep in mind – this was LITERALLY – a church started by the Apostle Paul…
    - It was HISTORICALLY – the first church that we see in the book of Acts…
    - It was the TYPE – of church that seems to be doing everything right…
    - Yet Jesus was saying – their LIGHT was in danger of going out!

  - Light to the world…

    - **Matthew 5:16** – "Let your light so shine before men - that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."
    - The only GOOD works people need to see – is the LOVE of Jesus…
    - That is what will cause men to want to give GLORY to the FATHER – **Romans 2:4**
    - We do not have to look very far today – to see churches who no longer SHINE…
    - Perhaps once they burned BRIGHT – used powerfully for God…

- But when we look at them now – they have FADED – maybe even are GONE…
- And we are left to ask – what happened!
- If we FORGET that our MOTIVE needs to always be to LOVE others…
- Then our LIGHT goes out – we no longer SHINE for Jesus!

- **4TH – ENCOURAGEMENT… VS. 7**
  - 1st – Listen…
    - He who has an ear - let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches!
    - This was NOT written just for the church in Ephesus…
    - It is for ANYONE who has an EAR – they MUST [imperative] LISTEN…
    - Because the SPIRIT of God is SPEAKING [present] to ALL churches [plural]
    - This LETTER is for us – Jesus is writing to us TODAY…
    - If we are willing to LISTEN to what His SPIRIT has to SAY…
    - Do not get caught up in EMPTY tradition – in DEAD religion…
    - Doing church just for the sake of trying to do what is GOOD…
    - We must remember LOVE – live in LOVE – so we can be a LIGHT to the world!
  - 2nd – Overcome…
    - To him who overcomes!
      - This same CONCLUSION - is given to all SEVEN churches…
      - There are a variety of REWARDS described – but all with the same CONDITION…
      - OVERCOME [νικάω] – to those who have VICTORY [present]
      - For Ephesus – VICTORY – meant becoming a LOVING church again…
      - And the reward for doing that – was the TREE of LIFE!
    - I will give to eat from the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God!
      - Those who OVERCOME – will be able to EAT from the TREE of LIFE…
      - The TREE that is in the middle of the GARDEN [פַּרְדֵּס] of God!
      - When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden…
      - They are freely from the TREE of LIFE – so they would NEVER die…
      - But when they SINNED – God removed them from the GARDEN of God - **Genesis 3:22**
      - Those who LISTEN – those who ABIDE – those who have VICTORY…
      - Will be once again allowed into the GARDEN of God…
      - We will be able to freely eat from the TREE of LIFE – in the presence of the Lord!
      - **Revelation 22:14** – "Blessed are those who do His commandments - that they may have the right to the tree of life - and may enter through the gates into the city."