

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 – vision 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 books 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!
- o 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 [Καῦστρος] 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!**
- o 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 EPHEBUS – 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 [εἶδω] – 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 [Νικολαίτης] is a compound word – Victory [νίκος] 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.”
- o 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.”
- o 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

o 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.”

o 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 [πρώτος] 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.”

o 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**

- o 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!

- o 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 [פֶּרֶךְ] 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.”

