

Revelation: The Time is Near

He Who Has an Ear / Nevertheless

Revelation 2:1-7

A lot of people tend to be afraid of this book:

- Because of the mystery
- Because of the judgment
- Some both

But if we remember what we read earlier...there's a blessing

If we read, hear/understand, keep

Revelation speaks of the judgment of the end. The judgments on the inhabitants of the Earth, the final judgment for believers, the condemnation of the Enemy and the fallen angels, and the similar demise of those who follow them.

God desires no one go to hell. Hell was created for Satan and the fallen angels. If you go to hell, it's because you chose it by following anything other than Jesus.

After all, it isn't Revelation...it is The Revelation of Jesus Christ

And what did Jesus Christ do? He died on the cross and rose again that we might be free from sin and saved from the judgment and rewarded in eternal life in Heaven

There will be hard things in this book

Both to understand and to accept

- About God
- About the Church
- About the World
- About the Time we live in
- About the End
- About Heaven
- About What's Next
- About Christianity
- About Your Own Responsibility and Destiny

Today: The Church

John's vision: Jesus amongst the seven lampstands, the seven stars

Specific churches in that day, specific church ages throughout history, and seven types of congregations

Seven stars - seven leaders of the churches then, seven perhaps types of leadership throughout the ages, perhaps seven types of leadership even today

Lampstands have no guarantee of permanence or place, as we'll see today
The seven church ages, some overlap, some end, some continue to the end

Churches

Different facets, personalities in and of themselves
 Thanksgiving Community Service

Debate over the end times

Arguments on both sides, different views, more than one

In a room full of 10 people you'll have 25 opinions

Calvinism vs. arminianism...both right in a sense
I might say the same thing for some of the end-times views

Yoda future uncertain...Uncertain the future is
Prophecy tells us of a certain future. The future.

However, because it was describing events thousands of years in the future for the writer, things can be a bit murky.

Although the scenarios are clear, it's unclear who the actors are and technology used.

But it is the end times

Spirit poured out

[Joel 2:28-32 NKJV] (quoted again in Acts 2) 28 "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. 29 And also on [My] menservants and on [My] maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. 30 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. 32 And it shall come to pass [That] whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls.

Knowledge increased

Both practically (look at the past 100 or so years...the information age)
 And spiritually

[Dan 12:4 NKJV] 4 "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

To and fro...I commute to Maryland to work...clear across the continent in just a few hours. If I was wealthy, it'd be even faster than that and I'd probably go even further.

The way the world stage is getting set up it seems pretty clear how it could play out at any moment. Of course things could change, but i think the world is ready and preparing itself

- Middle east,
- china,
- uprisings,
- technology,
- cashless society (already a thing in 3rd world countries),
- morality flopped,
- UFOs,
- things the pope says especially about Christians,
- state of the church,
- america divided,
- europe united,
- russia/iran/china alliance,
- middle east aligned,
- israel not favored,
- etc. etc.

Life on fire

Man with car on fire in st louis, physically fighting with the firefighters there to put it out

World not going to have another flood

Global warming

Guilt from SIN warping our perspectives

You think any of that little girl's words are her own? She is a funnel for an agenda. She is being used.

The Irish parliament listening to what the Irish schoolchildren say they should do about "climate change" and yet the Irish schoolchildren go to government school...so the government listens to advice given from children who go to schools where they tell them what they should learn and believe.

Something's fishy.

It is going to get hotter, but not by carbon emissions

But because of judgment on sin. The world is going to be broken. The sun is going to get hotter.

Then it's all going to burn up at God's command.
And there's nothing we can do to stop that.

But we can repent. We can be counted free of the judgment of God because of the judgment put on Jesus.

Creation and ultimately humankind was meant to reveal Jesus. Was meant to revel in his love.

But it's broken. We broke it. God redeemed us. Creation still reveals him, even in its broken state (Romans 1), but mankind still tries to obscure God. Sin still clouds our vision of him. But he will be revealed.

It's going to take shaking the whole world. The fabric of creation, reality itself.

The destruction of governments. Of systems. Of mountains. Of life unwilling to repent.

And

[1Pe 4:15-19 NKJV] 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. 16 Yet if [anyone suffers] as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. 17 For the time [has come] for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if [it begins] with us first, what will [be] the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls [to Him] in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

And even revelation, a book largely filled with judgment on earth, begins with the judgment of God's church (or at least those who would claim to be so)

[pray]

What kind of church do you go to? Does your church want to be?

What kind of Christian are you? What kind of believer do you want to be?

Revelation 2:1-7

Similar structure across the letters to each church

- An address to a particular congregation
- An introduction of Jesus
- A statement regarding the condition of the church
- A verdict from Jesus regarding the condition of the church
- A command from Jesus to the church

- A general exhortation to all Christians
- A promise of reward

Angel - messenger - again, to the pastor, the leadership

If a church is going astray, it is the pastor's responsibility to correct it. We can't expect the body to get going in the right direction unless the head is giving the right instructions

Jesus is the head of the church over the leader of the congregation who is over the people. Not in value, but spiritual authority

[Heb 13:17 NKJV] 17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

A church reflects its leadership

Attitudes, beliefs, actions, dress even

How many people wore Harley shirts in NY

Something like, if a pastor watches a G movie the people will think they can watch a PG movie

Ephesus

This was a famous city in the ancient world, with an equally famous church. Paul ministered in Ephesus for three years (Acts 19:1, Acts 10, Acts 20:31). Aquilla and Priscilla, with Apollos served there (Acts 18:24-28). Paul's close associate Timothy (1 Timothy 1:3) worked in Ephesus. According to strong and consistent historic tradition, the Apostle John also ministered there.

This great city was also world-famous as a religious, cultural, and economic center of the region. Ephesus had the notable temple of Diana, a fertility goddess worshipped with immoral sex. This tremendous temple to Diana in Ephesus was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Another study, but a lot of witchcraft, even perhaps in the temple in a cave mind-altering drugs or from gasses emanating from the mountainside

The message of Ephesians is largely one of grace.

The introduction of Jesus. This isn't from someone else. This message is directly from the Lord.

Golden lampstands...the churches. But they're God's churches. Gold can symbolize deity.

The Good

1. Works - business, employment, act, deed, that in which you are occupied - what is the occupation of your church?
2. Labor - intense labor with trouble or sorrow, even beaten. Continuing in the work despite is being hard "do not grow weary doing good" Gal 6:9
3. Patience
4. Cannot bear those who are evil - don't hold up those who are evil, can't stand the things they do, do not endorse or make excuses for. Is this the church today? Or does the church make allegiances and stand up for the same causes as the evil do?
The Ephesian church pursued doctrinal purity. Paul warned the Ephesians in Acts 20:29-31: For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. From this commendation of Jesus, we know that the Ephesians took Paul's warning seriously.
5. Tested false apostles (if only more people would test the message and those who preach to them vs. the scriptures to see if the message is true)
"This was grand of them: it showed a backbone of truth. I wish some of the churches of this age had a little of this holy decision about them; for nowadays, if a man be clever; he may preach the vilest lie that was ever vomited from the mouth of hell, and it will go down with some." (Spurgeon)
6. Persevered and have patience
7. Labored and not grown weary (commendation for their obedience to the word and strength from the word)

They did all this. Yet the word against them is that they left their first love.

Somehow, even doing all of this. Even hanging on tightly to doing the right thing and not being a part of evil. Somehow they don't love Jesus like they used to.

They're so busy about doing other things, working, laboring, even testing those who might proclaim the gospel.

They've fallen out of love with Jesus himself.

Not quite this harsh, but it reminds me of:

[Jhn 5:39-40 NKJV] 39 "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

Everything we do - spiritually, practically, in the "church", at home...every motive needs to spring forth from our love for Jesus and our reception of his love for us.

What's the cure for this?**Remember** from where you have **fallen**

We treat it as not a big deal, but it is a fall

Much like in the garden, Eve loved the thought of supposed enlightenment and the look of the fruit more than God in that moment. And Adam loved the sight of Eve and being with her and her liking him more than the love of God in that moment. And it cost them everything.

To remember what it was like in the early days

Early days of getting saved personally

Early days of the church in NY. Both went hand in hand.

I long for those days back in the church and have to remind myself often!

Not rose colored glasses.

But doing those things.

Fellowshipping. Loving Jesus. Being there just for His sake. Staying up late to read the Bible. Worship. Forsaking things that would get in the way of that at no thought to the ramifications or cost.

It takes repentance! Not just simply doing the “works” again**Our hearts and souls need to be brought back into the right place before Jesus****The one who walks amongst the lampstands before those “works” will be done in the right way and bring us into the right standing with Jesus.****Works don't mean anything without faith.****A church that seemingly is doing everything right...NEEDS TO REPENT**

Looks can be deceiving.

Does everything look right, but just something is off and maybe you can't even tell what exactly it is? You can't put your finger on it, but the church is missing something.**This is it.**

Late friend, Pastor Tony Schott, used to wipe their calendar every so often at church. To make sure they'd do the first things and keep them the first things. Prayer, worship, fellowship, evangelism, teaching.

“ else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.”

IF THEY DON'T REPENT, THEIR CHURCH WON'T SHINE ANYMORE. THEY WON'T HAVE THE LIGHT OF GOD IN THEM. THEY MAY BE A CHURCH IN NAME BUT NOT IN HEAVEN.

Dying churches, dead churches, empty buildings now...turned into music venues, luxury apartments, etc.

At some point they stopped loving God, then they stopped loving others, then they just completely stopped.

A church may continue for a long time after this...but it is dead. The glory of God no longer remains. And at that point, what's the point? And this is quite evident in churches seeking to find a point, or making their point about things that don't matter (services for nature, for dogs, etc.) And we look on from the outside and go, "What are you doing?" It's because they've LEFT (not lost) their first love.

This you have...you hate the deed of the Nicolaitins

*. Irenaeus (writing in the late second century) described what he knew of the Nicolaitans: "The Nicolaitanes are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles. **They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence.** The character of these men is plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John, as teaching that it is a matter of **indifference to practice adultery, and to eat things sacrifice to idols.**" (Against Heresies, book 1, chapter 26. From the Ante Nicene Fathers Volume 1, page 352)*

*ii. Hippolytus, a student of Irenaeus (writing in the early third century) **associated the Nicolaitans with the Gnostics: "There are, however, among the Gnostics diversities of opinion... But Nicolaus has been a cause of the wide-spread combination of these wicked men. [He] departed from correct doctrine, and was in the habit of inculcating indifference of both life and food."** (Refutation of all Heresies, book 7, chapter 24; ANF volume 5, page 115)*

*iii. Others have emphasized the root meanings of the words that make up the name Nicolaitans. **Nikao-laos means literally "to conquer the people." Based on this, some point to presumptuous claims of apostolic authority and to the heart that sets up hierarchies and separates the "clergy" from the "laity." Perhaps the Nicolaitans fulfilled all these aspects, being both an idolatrous immorality and a presumptuous, hierarchical, "hidden mysteries" system typical of Gnosticism.***

*iv. **The Nicolaitans, like all deceivers that come from the body of Christ, claimed "not that they were destroying Christianity, but that they were presenting an improved and modernized version of it."** (Barclay)*

Which I also hate. (Jesus)

But Jesus doesn't hate anyone. Right. He hates the things people do, especially those things that people do claiming to be of him and leading others astray. Putting distance between people and God.

He who has an ear...he's speaking to everyone...but who will listen?

Some will hear, but won't think it's for them, or will make excuses.

Others will let it go through them, examine them in the light of God and examine themselves.

And will repent.

It's something that must be overcome. That must continue on.

We can't lose our salvation, but I believe we can leave it.

It starts with leaving our first love.

It can only be fixed by repentance. Realizing we're wrong, we've left and we must go back to restore it. That where we are now is not better, it is not enlightened, it is wrong, and in danger of having us removed.

Overcoming grants the right to eat from the Tree of Life in Heaven.

It's not works based salvation, it's works based sanctification. Salvation is guaranteed, but in a sense, we have to keep on in it. No one is making you go to heaven. Although God surely tries at every step of the way.

There are some varying opinions

But some say this church age was from AD 30 - 100. The first generation after Jesus.

They would have grown up knowing Jesus, seeing him walk and ascend. Perhaps it was their parents. But after that. Things changed.

It is every generation's responsibility to carry on the faith. We cannot rely on the faith of our fathers. We cannot rely on the faith of our church elders. They are older.

Even now, at 38, I know my time is soon coming and the faith that will carry on is the faith of the children today.

And what opportunity are they given?

Are they given opportunity to love Jesus and others? Or are they turned off and turned away from even getting that close because the church, it's leadership, the body and their parents have left their first love and are too concerned about works, appearances and who is right and wrong?

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says.