

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

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Love Well



Who are we? And the promise that Christ will come again

Pastor Christine: July 2, 2017

- I. Revelation 2-3
 - A. The seven churches are addressed according to specific concerns but each is also an introduction to the whole book.
 - B. Christ speaks individually to each church.
 - C. In each of the very different situations the call is to be victorious!
 - D. Victory for those who overcome (Rev. 3:12) is the New Jerusalem.
- II. We read Revelation not to get new information but to revive our imagination
 - A. Everything in the Revelation can be found in the previous 65 books of the Bible, the truth of the Gospel is already complete, revealed in Jesus Christ.
 - B. **There is nothing to say on the subject but there is a new way to say it.** The things that puzzle us in the Revelation have to be seen rather than explained. Sometimes the obvious is the hardest thing to see.
 - C. Apocalyptic literature and the number 7, a summary.
- III. We will overcome only by listening... "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
 - A. We have to use our imaginations: These apocalyptic end of the world words are sensational, bizarre, and famous, because they are so satisfyingly true.
 - B. John's imaginative perception helps us see the glory before us even in a world where evil and tribulation is happening all around us on any given day.
 - C. John used his time to pray and listen so that he SAW God. He experienced God in this beautiful way in order to poetically, pastorally and theologically give us his Revelation.
- IV. The Revelation remains through every chapter until the very end a picture of the whole Bible and a picture for all men.
 - A. It brings us back to our first love, shakes us to our senses where we have strayed off course and emboldens us where we have excelled.
 - B. We needn't be afraid to open this letter, or perplexed because of its obscurities, there is coherence between the beginning and the end.
 - C. Does he know of death and the devil or is it all sweetness and light? (Luther). Imagination is more important than intelligence, there can be no meaningful use of intelligence unless there is imaginative perception (Einstein).
 - D. Revelation has 404 verses, in those 404 verses there are 518 references to earlier Scripture. There is not one direct quotation because John is immersed in Scripture, he submits himself to it. He doesn't just repeat it, it is recreated in him.

Ephesus: Good = Hard workers who persevered, hated wickedness, tested apostles and found false ones, endured hardships for Christ's name, did not grow weary. Hated practice of Nicolaitons (compromise with pagan society).
Bad = You have forsaken your first love (love for God and one another).
Promise = Remember from how far you have fallen, repent and do as you first did and I will not remove your lampstand (church). The right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God (God and believers restored to perfect fellowship).

Smyrna: Good = Afflictions and poverty yet you are rich, (hostile Jewish population, aligned with Rome/emperor worship. Polycarp, governor of Smyrna martyr). Unbelieving and hostile Jews (synagogue of Satan).

Promise = Be faithful in persecution ten days (limited time) even to point of death and receive the crown of life (eternal life). Overcomers will not be hurt by second death (hell).

Pergamum: Good = Remain true and not renounce faith (Antipas slowly roasted in bronze kettle, official center of emperor worship).

Bad = Teaching of Baalam (compromise with worldliness). Like Nicolaitans (immorality).

Promise = Hidden manna (spiritual food). White stone with new name written on it (admittance and name of victor).

Thyatira: Good = Love, faith, service, perseverance, doing more now than at first.

Bad = Tolerating Jezebel (undermining loyalty to God by tolerance to pagan practices: sexual immorality and food sacrificed to idols).

Promise = Authority over the nations and the morning star (ruling shepherd and Israel's future deliverer).

Sardis: Bad = Reputation of alive but dead (city of great wealth and fame). Wake up and be strengthened or die. Remember what you have received and heard and obey.

Promise = A few have not soiled their clothes and will walk with me dressed in white as will all worthy (description of redeemed). Will not blot out name and will acknowledge before Father (will not be erased from Kingdom).

Philadelphia: Good = Little strength but have kept my word and not denied my name.

Promise = Will make hostile Jews bow at your feet (appropriate act of worship in Near East) and acknowledge I have loved you (synagogue of Satan). Keep you from trial when world is tested (testing at Consummation). Overcomers will keep crown.

Laodicea: Bad = You are lukewarm neither cold or hot (they were of no use to the spiritually sick). You need nothing (the wealthiest city in Phrygia during Roman times: banking, textile, medical). Wretched, pitiful, poor blind and naked - white clothes to cover your nakedness (textile giants). Salve on your eyes so you can see (famous eye salve).

Promise = Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Sources:

Revelation For Everyone, N.T.Wright
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New Testament Theology - The Theology Of The Book Revelation, Richard Bauckham
Zondervan NIV Study Bible