

The Seven Churches

Revelation Chapters 1, 2 and 3

In the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), Jesus Christ announces the establishment of the Church (Matthew 16:18). But, other than that and a singular reference to church discipline, in Matthew 18:17, He had very little to say directly about the Church. That is one reason why the New Testament Epistles are so important for us, today.

It is only in the book of Revelation that Jesus gives an extended account of His relationship to the Church; how the Church should reflect His image; His expectation of the Church; and His righteous and loving assessment of local churches.

In Revelation 1:13 – 16, Jesus is revealed to the Apostle John in the role of Chief Shepherd and Bishop of Our Souls, Head of the Church, and Judge. It is in the letters to the seven churches (Revelation 2 and 3), that we have revealed to us what Jesus loves, hates, expects and will be looking for when it is time for judgment.

In order to experience the full blessing of Revelation 1:3, it behooves each Believer, and member of the Church, to pay special attention to the word of the Lord in these chapters.

The book of Revelation is addressed to the seven churches. (1:4)

- The seven churches of Revelation were actual churches that existed in Asia (Turkey, today).
- The seven churches are listed in Rev 1:11 as: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea.
- A letter from Jesus Christ was addressed to each pastor of each of the seven churches.

Of the seven churches:

- Two of them – Jesus had only words of commendation for them.
(Smyrna, Philadelphia)
- Four of them – Jesus had words of both commendation and condemnation.
(Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis)
- One of them – Jesus had no words of commendation for them.
(Laodicia)

The seven churches are symbolized by the word: lampstand. (1:13, 20)

- The seven churches represent different stages of church history.
- “Seven” is the number of completion. Therefore, each local congregation (pastors and members) is represented in these seven churches.

In each of the seven churches:

- The angel of the church is addressed by Jesus.
- Jesus says to each pastor, “I know thy works.”
- Some aspect of the glory of Jesus Christ is revealed.
- There are words of commendation.

- There are words of condemnation (meant for correction).
- There is a command to “repent,” where needed .
- Ends with a word of promise. (“He that overcometh.”)
- Ends with a word of admonition by the Holy Spirit. (“He that hat an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”)

As Head of the Church, Jesus will judge the church.

- Judgment begins at the house of the Lord. (1 Peter 4:17. 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?)
- Before the judgments are released in the seven-sealed scroll, Revelation 2 and 3 reveals that there will be a judgment for Believers.
- Just as thorough as Jesus is to save, so also will He be to judge.
- Jesus has committed the care of the church to pastors.

The pastors (“angels of the church”) are symbolized by the term: seven stars (1:16, 20)

“AND HE HAD IN HIS RIGHT HAND SEVEN STARS”

- The pastor is in Jesus’ hand. (Symbolizing: God’s care, provision and power.)
- No need for pastors to fear man. They can pastor in power and authority.
- All pastors are in the place of privilege ... in Jesus’ hand.
- Regardless of the size of the membership, the beauty of a building, the dollars in a budget, Jesus declares all pastors “stars.” (A position of privilege and blessing.)
- No pastor has to “go it alone.” There are other pastors, as well, along with them.
- The Lord Jesus Christ will call into account pastors of each local church.
- Pastors will be held accountable for how they handled the church which has been committed to their trust.
- Revelation 2 and 3 are written for pastors to read and take heed.
- In Revelation 2 and 3, it was not “final judgment” for the ones He addressed; they still had a chance to repent.

PASTORS ARE RESPONSIBLE TO GOD FOR THEIR ACTIONS

(No pastor will be able to say to the Lord Jesus, “*The members made me do it!*”)

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS ARE RESPONSIBLE TO GOD FOR THEIR PERSONAL ACTIONS

(No member will be able to say to the Lord Jesus, “*The pastor made me do it.*”)

A blessing of grace and peace, from the Triune God, is given to each church. (1:4 – 5)
 The Son of Man (Jesus Christ) is “in the midst” of the seven golden lampstands (1:13-16)
 He has a right to be “in the midst” the One who is Head over all things to the Church.”
 “In the midst” - He witnesses; He is available.

The Lord will deal with evil in the church. But, He first gives us time to get things in order.