

THE CHURCHES OF REVELATION AND US

(Rev. 1:1-7)

Introduction:

1. We have been engaged in a good study of Revelation. Revelation can certainly be a challenging study but as the inspire writer John said, we are blessed if we do study it.
2. Let us consider again our Lord's message to the churches and then consider our Lord's message to the church in Jamestown.

Discussion:

I. The Churches of Revelation

- A. The church in Ephesus is believed to have been founded by Paul on his 2nd missionary journey, and where he taught for at least three years (Acts 20:31). Timothy was sent there by Paul in order to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3). Secular history tells us that the apostle John spent a lot of time in Ephesus teaching and evangelizing. So, with all that going for it, what did our Lord have to say to the church via Revelation?
 1. They were working for the Lord, they were remaining under the burden of that work (patience = hupomone), and that they were standing for the truth against false teachers (false prophets and Nicolaitans) and false doctrines.
 2. But, they had lost their first love and needed to repent and return to their works in the beginning. This probably refers to the way/why they were doing what they were doing.
- B. The church in Smyrna (synagogue of Satan) is only mentioned in Revelation.
 1. They were remaining faithful in the face of tribulation (great pressure) despite their poverty, and they were being lied about by Jews.
 2. They were going to face more tribulation in the near future but they were commanded not to be afraid, but faithful. No condemnation.
- C. The church in Pergamos (throne of Satan) is only mentioned in Revelation.
 1. They were holding fast and not denying the truth even unto death (Antipas).
 2. But, they had some among them that were looking to make compromises in order to escape persecution (doctrine of Balaam and Nicolaitans), such as worshiping idols and sexual immorality.
- D. The church in Thyatira (the city where Lydia was from-Acts 16:14) is only mentioned in Revelation.
 1. They were working for the Lord, and working more than at the beginning! The Lord praised their love, faith, and patience (hupomone).
 2. But, they were allowing a false teacher (Jezebel) among them to lead some brethren to compromise in eating things dedicated to idols and sexual immorality.
- E. The church in Sardis is only mentioned in Revelation.
 1. They had a reputation for faithful service, but were actually dead to the Lord.
 2. Most of them had lost hold of their faith (weakened) due to a lack of watchfulness (self-examination and righteous judgment).
- F. The church in Philadelphia is only mentioned in Revelation.
 1. They were keeping the Lord's command, but they had little strength (probably meaning they were small in number and influence).
 2. Our Lord was setting an open door before them that no one could shut (possibly an opportunity for growth or a path to escape persecution/destruction (cp. 1 Cor. 10:13).
- G. The church in Laodicea is only mentioned in Revelation.
 1. They were doing nothing worthy of commendation or condemnation.
 2. They were doing nothing or doing something without the heart and thus nothing.

II. The Difficult Questions.

- A. Is the church in Jamestown NY working for the Lord; more now than before? Is the church in Jamestown remaining faithful despite the pressure to conform/compromise from without and within (false teachers and false teaching) despite our poverty/little strength? Is the church in Jamestown faithfully enduring persecution, tribulation, and the lies told about us? Is the church in Jamestown availing itself of the open doors our Lord provides?
- B. Or... Is the church in Jamestown going through the motions of Christianity without the heart and zeal we once had, and ought to continue to have? Is the church in Jamestown making compromises with regards to the saving message of the Gospel? Is the church in Jamestown making compromises with regards to false worship (wrong heart, wrong actions)? Is the church in Jamestown allowing false teachers to teach false doctrines in or out of the assembly? Is the church in Jamestown allowing its youth to be overcome by the world and its false teachings?
- C. What exactly would our Lord write to the church in Jamestown today, and would be happy to read that letter or fearful?

Conclusion:

1. Let us close with the words of the Hebrews writer to struggling Christians (understanding that all Christians struggle), “But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation. Though we speak in this manner” (Heb. 6:9).
2. Let us all examine our faith daily against the standard of our Lord and strive to please Him more today than we did yesterday. Let us examine one another and aid one another to do the same, and together do even more! To God be the glory!
3. Invitation.

MORE ON “THE CHURCHES OF REVELATION AND US”

1. Much of Christianity is inside out, me to we, thought to action. The church is me, we, and universal. So when we ask any of the questions that come from our Lord’s rebuke of the church at the end of the first century we must consider them in all their expressions.
 - Are we doing more than we did at the first (me, we, and universal)? Consider the illustrations of Matt. 13:1-43. Consider the instructions of 1 Thess. 4:1-12; Heb. 10:19-25; 2 Pet. 1:2-15.
 - Are we remaining faithful to the word as we endeavor more and more to serve, despite the persecution (all the many kinds) we face? The pressure to conform, to make flexible what is firm, and to overlook is overwhelming. Are we the ones overcoming or the ones being overwhelmed (John 16:33; Rev. 2:10; 3:21)?
 - Are we, while remaining faithful to the word, taking advantage of changing times for our Lord (1 Chron. 12:32; Matt. 10:16; 2 Cor. 10:5:1-6)?
 - Are we doing all of these things more and more with the same heart that we had in the beginning? Is our loving thankfulness towards God still fueling zealous service (2 Cor. 5; Titus 2:11-14)?
2. We must judge “success” and “victory” as the church in Philadelphia did. Victorious success is faithfulness unto death no matter anything else. Even if we must die alone like our Lord (understanding that if we do we are not alone!).
3. What would the Lord say to you this day? Enter in good and faithful servant, or depart from Me I do not know you? We must know (2 Cor. 13:5).