

REVELATION WORD BY WORD STUDY 3 (2:1-7)

Introduction: In an intensive study of the book of Revelation, it can be a "known" book in spite of what so many say, "that Revelation is a closed book." Don't ever say "REVELATIONS" if you do, never say you are from this Church. "Apokalipsis" means unveiling, the uncovering. This book is uncovered by Jesus Christ and it couldn't be a closed book of He uncovers it. There are many who say the book was written in code and only the "insiders" know what it means. It is understandable and those who say it isn't are just too lazy to get into the book.

Go back over the background of John, the Isle of Patmos and Jesus around 96 A.D. Why 96 A.D.? Irenaeus, a great preacher of the 3rd century said he had talked with Polycarp, pastor of one of the 7 Churches (Smyrna). Polycarp was martyred in 166 A.D. He knew John and Polycarp said it was written in 96 A.D. A.T. Robertson, one of the world's greatest Greek scholars dates the book at 95 or 96 A.D.

This study is about the 7 Churches. In chapters 2 and 3 we study about 7 Churches and these 7 Churches are guidelines to Churches today and throughout the Church age. This is about the Church era period. People don't change, they are the same in every century and generation: they still lose love for Jesus Christ and drift away, just as they did at Ephesus. The Christians of the 1st and 2nd centuries were just like we are today.

"Ekklesia" originated in 5 B.C. as a large body of Greeks came together in a great assembly, they called it "ekklesia." Later the whole Greek nation came to be called the "ekklesia" (state). When the Jews came together in their synagogues, they called it "ekklesia." Jesus said "I will build My "ekklesia..." born again people, thus the origin of the "Church." The Old Testament never mentions the Church and the New Testament calls it a "mystery" (Colossians 1:25, 26; Romans 16:25, 26; Ephesians 3:1, 6). The "Church" was a mystery. "Church" started out as "kuriokos" the house of the Lord, then language changes changed it to "kirkus" to "kirk" and then to "Church."

Jesus said "I will build..." indicating future action. He was going to start an institution which actually began on Pentecost (much debate here) but the body of Christ will become the Bride of Christ.

The Church age is the first where people are "in-dwelt" by the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, people were "empowered" but not indwelt. They are "indwelt" in the New Testament and God's people are called Christians, Priests, Saints. Each Christian is in full time service as much as any missionary or preacher or evangelist. There are no "laymen" or "part time" workers in God's eyes.

THAT IS THE INTRODUCTION, NOW LOOK AT CHAPTER 2

v1 - "unto the angel of the Church" - "angelos" means messenger, pastor. (James 2:25).

- Pastor of the ekklesia in Ephesus.

-"write"

- Today Ephesus is in ruins, a beautiful setting for a city and it was the greatest religion center of the world.
 - The capitol of the providence of Asia Minor, contained the largest Roman bank in history.
 - In Ephesus was the Temple of Diana, one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. There were 120 columns surrounding the temple. Kings donated the columns and each king tried to out do the other. Inside the columns were jewels, precious stones, etc., each column was worth millions of dollars. Inside the temple was the gigantic statue of Diana behind a giant purple veil. People came from all over the world to see the Temple of Diana. Why a bank in the Temple? Diana, their god would protect it for them.
- Paul started the Church in Ephesus and the Church had some great pastors of whom were Timothy and John. It was Timothy who was pastoring Ephesus when the ladies upset him and Paul had to write to him to "take a little wine for thy stomach's sake..."

Paul wrote, Timothy, don't let the WMU get you too upset.

- It was from the Church of Ephesus that Domitian sent John into exile on this Isle of Patmos.
- Why did Jesus preach to John about Ephesus first? Because Ephesus was the most important.
- "These things saith He..." - Jesus Christ holds the preachers in His hand and is in the midst of His Churches. This spot is the most important spot in our town/city/community because Jesus Christ is in the midst of this Church.
 - Here we have the figure of Jesus Christ represented as holding His preachers and walking in the midst of His Churches.
- We start at Ephesus and then go up to Smyrna, then to Pergamos and here in Pergamos paper originated, also it was here that Cleopatra batted her eyes at Anthony and made gooey sounds to him. He asked her what he could do get for her and she said, "the library of Pergamos.." Pergamos had the greatest library in the ancient world, over 200,000 volumes. Anthony had it moved to Alexandria, Egypt at the expense of the Roman government of course. We move on to Thyatira and Sardis, to Philadelphia and then to Laodacia - in a circle. These messages were sent to the 7 Churches just like we might send letters out today.
- STOP FOR A MOMENT: There are two types of Churches. There is the CHURCH UNIVERSAL. Every born again person is made a member of this Church the moment he/she is born again. Then there is the LOCAL CHURCH and YOU are a member of this Church which is a "Baptist" Church.

- v2 - "I know thy works" - Jesus appraises the Church of Ephesus and He knows the past works, the present and the future works. He knows what you are going to do, what you are thinking. When Jesus looks at OUR Church He knows our works, He is omniscience (all knowing) and the verb means ALWAYS, Jesus knows.
- "thy labor" - They are toiling, hard workers.
 - "patience" - They believed God's promises and they had faith and it rested on those promises of Jesus. They were walking as children of the faith. HERE IS A COMPLIMENT. They were hard workers and they believed Jesus' promises.
 - "canst not bear evil" - Actually it is "evils." They did not tolerate those who did not believe right, sound doctrine. It is most important that you know doctrine. Everyday life brings you in the presence of those who would persuade you to some other. You must know what you believe and be able to defend it. The Ephesians knew for they had had the best teachers in the world - Paul, John, Timothy. They knew their doctrine.
 - "has tried them" - Some had come claiming to be apostles. The qualifications of apostles were outlined in Acts: one had to be present with Jesus Christ, one had to have seen the resurrection, had to have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, certain things had to be witnessed. John was the last living apostle. All the others had died. Apostleship was not passed on. There was no apostle after John. A woman (Jezebell, not her real name, but her character) claimed to be an apostle. "NO!" said the Church. There was never a woman apostle, beside that she was involved in the tongue movement, and she was immoral. She went on to Thyatira and later we will read where she caused some trouble. Ephesus said NO!, so she left town.
 - "found them liars" - All this is Jesus' appraisal of the Church of Ephesus.

- v3 - "Borne"- A military term, meaning to carry on under fire. They had kept the faith, they knew their doctrine, they weren't fooled.
- "patience" - believed the promises of Jesus.
 - "labored" - kept on
 - "had not fainted" - didn't quit

All in all, it was quite a compliment by Jesus of this Church.

NOW COMES THE COMPLAINT

- What's the matter with this Church which John had just left? Sound in doctrine and in service but.....

v4 - "left thy first love" - Have YOU left your first love? Remember the first time you loved Jesus Christ, you had a warm heart. Have you left your first love? Is Jesus Christ first in your life? Is Jesus not the center anymore? They had left Jesus Christ - He wasn't the center of living anymore. Is He with you? If you are dull and not close to the Lord, don't pray...fall in love all over again with Jesus, love Him once again. Have you left your first love? That is what happened to Ephesus and it was awful.

The Church cannot get by running programs when the first love is lost. God will remove His Holy Spirit. When you read God's Word, it makes you love Jesus Christ first. Are you a "oncer?" You go to Church once a week? Have you left your first love? Everything but the Church on Sunday night? Jesus condemned the Church of Ephesus for leaving their first love. Come back to your first love.

v5 - "whence thou art fallen" - Once they were in fellowship, but now they are not. Jesus was talking to believers, Christians who had fallen under the control of their old sin natures. "REMEMBER" said Jesus from whence you are fallen.

"fallen" - fell sometime ago, still are fallen, has become a permanent state.

"repent" - meta-noason - change - think/mind - change your thinking. (A woman buys a dress, takes it home, asks her family how they like it, nobody says anything so she takes it back, thus changed her mind - that's meta-noason. Change your thinking. Were out of fellowship, come back into fellowship, change your thinking.

"do the first works" - what are the first works? They were once in fellowship, did good for Jesus, get back, know the love you once had. HERE IS A CALL BY JESUS TO A CHURCH TO REPENT. Isn't this the same trend today? Haven't many left their first love and need to repent, change their thinking? (Excuses only prove one's lack of love for the Lord).

"remove the candlestick" - How long will our Church be here? How long will we influence for the Lord? Just as long as we are true to the Word and put Jesus Christ first. IF we take Christ out of the center, IF we take His Word out of the center, this church will collapse very, very quickly. People will pass by and say "that used to be.....Church" Take a look at other Churches what have folded. Churches are deteriorating everywhere, go through (nearby city/town) and look at the old Churches that are now empty and falling down. We say "they used to be great for the Lord, but look at them now.." They used to be great for the Lord, but now they are just a shadow of their former selves. WILL THAT BE US? It could be so, so easily.

"except thou repent" - In 262 A.D., the Goths came and destroyed Ephesus. Walk the streets today and there is nothing but ruin and rubble. The great Temple of Diana is rubble, the great coliseum is rubble, all is gone, destroyed.

v6 - "this thou hast" - Jesus found something else in their favor

- "hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans" - (unable in our mixed congregation to go into very much detail).

They were the worse people in the Bible. It all started by one of the original 7 deacons, Nicolas of Antioch decided that something else beside the Word of God was needed. "Experience" is what the Church needed. Need more candlelight services, more special services, etc. Let's get emotional about it, let's get eccumunical, let's invite the Diana worshipers over here and then we can go over there. So they swapped pulpits, but when the Church went to the Temple, they found the great goddess of Fertility, Diana. Acts of immorality became rampant, they worshipped Diana, their goddess with sex acts. Nicolas and his followers began to go away from the teachings of Jesus Christ and became immoral beyond description.

Jesus said "you didn't go for that, I hated it and so did you, you stayed faithful..."

CLOSING WORDS OF ASSURANCE TO THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS:

v7 - "ears to hear" - This is the ending for all 7 letters. Everybody has ears, use them. "Since you have ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the 7 Churches.

- "to him that overcometh" - (1 John 5:4 - overcome) - keeps on believing the promises, keeps faith during all the troubles around.
- "give to eat of the tree of life" - you keep on believing in Jesus Christ and you will eat of everlasting life.
- "in the midst of the paradise of God" - Paradise is a Persian word. There was a Persian garden that was a beautiful place, it was called Paradise. We brought that word over into the Bible to mean the eternal place of God (Thief on cross was to be with Jesus that day in "paradise")

THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA (Bitterness and persecution)

Was at the mouth of the Hermus River, commercial center of Asia Minor, capitol of Turkey, a metropolitan city. Strongly Jewish but they were not very religious, very neglectful of spiritual things. A great sea-town, a great gathering place for overland caravans, boasts today of being the oldest city of Asia Minor. Had Emperor worship and ROMA, the Goddess of Rome. Polycarp was pastor and was martyred there.

60-70 miles up from Ephesus, on the gulf of Smyrna (Aegean Sea), had been destroyed but Alexander the Great came by and said, "a city ought to be built here, I command that a city be built." Thus Smyrna was rebuilt. It was a very wealthy city and had many, many Temples, one for every god (Roman). Many wealthy Jews lived there.

v8 - "the first and the last" - At the beginning of each letter to the Churches, Jesus gives one characteristic of Himself.

- "became dead" - killed on the cross.
- "alive" - the resurrection.

v9 - "I know thy works" - Each letter starts the same. Jesus knows all about them and YOU.

"works and tribulation" - They were being persecuted. It wasn't easy, they had a hard time of it.

"and poverty" - Many of the wealthy were converted and the Romans found out about it. Each year these converts were taxed 10% of all they had and it didn't take long to get all they had. Jesus said, "I know you have been robbed, but you're still rich - poor in money, but rich in Me.." If you have Jesus Christ, you are rich.

"blasphemy" - Not one word against this Church. They were being persecuted by the Romans and by other Jews (who were not converted to Jesus). They were under pressure but they stood true. If Jesus were to look at US what would He say? Where would He criticize us? THINK ABOUT IT..

v10 - "tribulation 10 days" - What does 10 days mean? A day refers to an era. They had already been persecuted by Nero, now they were under Domitian, next there would be Trajan, then Arelia and African who was mean and cruel, then Savarius, another African, the next would be Maximinus and idiot with the I.Q. of about 60. Delia was the 7th, Valarian the 8th, Arelia the 9th and Diocletian the 10th and the worst. 10 Emperors will persecute you (burned Bibles, fed to lions, crucified, wild dogs turned loose to eat them, boiled in oil, tared and burned, 5 million died during this period.

- "he that hath an ear" - You who have ears in Smyrna, let him/her hear what the Spirit has to say to the 7 Churches.

A.D. 54 - Nero - Paul was beheaded and Peter crucified.

A.D. 81 - Domitian - John was exiled on the Isle of Patmos (96 A.D.)

A.D. 98 - Trajan - burned Ignatius at the stake.

A.D. 161 - Arelia - Justin Martyr was killed

A.D. 193 - Savarius

A.D. 235 - Maximinus

A.D. 249 - Delia

A.D. 253 - Valarian

A.D. 270 - Arallian
A.D. 184 - Diocletian

If YOU believe in Jesus Christ, if YOU are faithful, if YOU follow His Word, if YOU put Jesus Christ first, if YOU will do this, YOU will be an overcomer.

"hurt of the second death" - This is only for unbelievers. YOU and I (Christians) will never be touched by the second death. We will die once, but not twice. Every unbeliever will die physically and then spiritually.

"if your faith is in me" - you will not die the second time.

THOSE ARE THE FIRST AND SECOND OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES. As we continue we will see what God is saying to us today. What is Jesus Christ saying to these seven Churches so far?

"Oh, my people ofBaptist Church, I have this against thee, thou has left thy first love..."
Have you?

1. Commendation of Jesus Christ

- A poor Church (yet rich)
- An afflicted Church
- Synagogue of Satan

2. Counsel of Jesus Christ

- Fear nothing.
- Be faithful unto death.

3. Challenge of Jesus Christ

- Overcomers will not be hurt by the second death.
- Listen to the Holy Spirit - Hear Him.

CROWNS;

- Righteousness - for believers who live holy and righteous lives.
- Glory - pastors who are faithful.
- Life - for martyrs
- God - every believer