

Part 3 – February 7, 2010

When Jesus Writes to His Churches

Revelation 2-3

Intro

- Real letters to real churches
- Jesus has written to us

1 Corinthians 10:11

Jesus Knows His Churches

[2:2; 2:9; 2:13; 2:19; 3:1; 3:8; 3:15]

- “I know....”

“His eyes were like a flame of fire” (1:4)

“He walks among the seven golden lampstands” (2:1)

“What one thing do all these churches need to fortify them against the enemy’s frontal assaults, to make them savvy to his subtle stratagems, and to make them loyal to God and compassionate toward their oppressors? They need to hear Jesus’ voice. His voice comforts our weak and wounded hearts, diagnoses our diseases, shatters our dreams of ease here and now, and calls us forward to the consummation of his victory in the new Jerusalem. His voice addresses us today in his letters to the seven churches of Asia, for each letter is what the Spirit says to all the churches”

–**Dennis Johnson**, *The Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation*, 67

Jesus is Sufficient for His Churches

[2:1; 2:8; 2:21; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14]

- There is *nothing* “generic” about Jesus

“Wisdom doesn’t speak in boilerplate. It’s never a one-size-fits-all formula. Or, contrary to the Christianese equivalent, it’s never 3-steps-to-Victory. So every psalm, every letter, every gospel, every prophet is different. The same redeemer God speaks and engages diverse people. And because the people face different problems and are prone to different struggles, his words and actions always come hand-crafted.”

–**David Powlison**

1 Thessalonians 5:4

- Jesus is sufficient to meet the churches in their need, but He does not promise to take away their need.

John 17:15

Jesus Commends, Corrects, and Counsels His Churches

Smyrna & Philadelphia: Persevering in suffering

[2:8-11; 3:7-13]

- Polycarp & a legacy of faithfulness
- Christ the True Defendant

Ephesus, Pergamum, & Thyatira: Incomplete faithfulness

[2:1-7; 2:12-17; 2:18-29]

- Loving truth is not misguided but insufficient

“Unlove is deadly. It’s a cancer”
–Amy Carmichael

- “I love your love, but I hate your tolerance”
- “Unity” People vs. “Purity” People

Sardis & Laodicea: Dying & dead

[3:1-6; 3:14-22]

- A lifeless church with a “reputation of being alive” (3:1)
- “Wretched, poor, blind, and naked” (3:17)
- Buying gold when you’re broke

Isaiah 55:1-2

- A dinner invitation

“Jesus’ knock is not that of a homeless traveler, standing outside the locked door of the human heart, seeking shelter. ...He is, on the contrary, pictured as the master whose servants are expected to be ready to open to him at his return. The house is his own in which he graciously and remarkably (cf. Luke 17:7-8) condescends to dine with his servants”

—**Dennis Johnson**, *The Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation*, 92 &

—**Richard Bauckham**, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation*, 108

Luke 12:37

Jesus Rewards His Churches

[2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26-28; 3:5; 3:12-13; 3:21]

- The “one who conquers” receives the presence & commendation of the Master

“Christ is mine. Everything is mine” –**Martin Luther**

“The critical question for our generation—and for every generation—is this: If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, ...could you be satisfied with heaven, if Christ were not there?”

–**John Piper**, *God is the Gospel: Meditations on God’s Love as the Gift of Himself*, 15

Read for next week: Revelation 4-5

Questions to Consider:

1. What does the vision of the throne communicate about God?
2. What does the vision of the Lamb communicate about the character of God’s rule?
3. Where else do we see a Lamb in Scripture?
4. Why is the Lamb worthy to open the scroll?