

Revelation - 101

8/17/25 – PM (week 3)

Chapters 3-4 The Seven Churches of Asia (5-7) / The Rapture

Review – Chapter 2 – The letters to the seven churches have three applications:

1. Specific message to the specific church at the time John was writing
 2. Spiritual message / application to all churches of all time, and to individual Christians about their relationship with Christ
 3. Representative message concerning the church age / dispensation. The characteristics that define each “era” of church history from its founding by Christ until the Rapture.
- Ephesus, the “fundamental” church – the Apostolic Church age (first 200 years of the church.
 - Smyrna, the persecuted church – (200-316 AD) - *No rebuke here
 - Pergamos, the compromising church – (300-500 AD) – church & state combine (Constantine the Great, Roman empire)
 - Thyatira, the corrupt church or false church – (500-1500 AD) – Most severe rebuke by Christ (“the Son of God”) – teaching salvation by works.

*All the churches have truly saved people, identified by the “Overcomer” promises to each church. The overcomers are the saved of every generation and church era.

*Elements of each church age overlap into each other, so that characteristics of each are still found in the current and next church ages. The “dating” of the church ages is not dogmatically set by years on the calendar, but by the “age” or era of church history.

Now, we pick up again with Revelation 3 and the Church at Sardis:

I. The Church at Sardis – Rev. 3:1-6 – The Dead Church

- a. Sardis is about 30 miles southeast of Thyatira, and was an important and wealthy city located on a commercial trade route running East to West. It was once the capital of the Kingdom of Lydia. Its wealth came from textile manufacturing, the dye industry, and jewelry trade. It was a center of pagan worship, mystery cults, and secret religious societies.
- b. The prophecy of this church age represents the time of the Protestant Reformation, about 1500-1650 A.D. Major reformers of this time period were John Wycliffe, Johannes Guttenberg, Martin Luther, Erasmus, Zwingli, William Tyndale (translated the first English Bible from the Textus Receptus). His bible was followed by 6 others, leading to the King James Bible of 1611. Also John Calvin and John Knox were prominent in this era.
- c. Jesus reveals himself to this church in vs. 1 as He that hath the seven Spirits of God. First saw this phrase in Revelation 1:4, and it speaks to the sevenfold characteristics of the completeness of the Holy Spirit. He also includes “the seven stars” (the angels of the churches). Remember that the description of Jesus to each church relates directly to the condition of that church. He is seeking / judging the spiritual condition of this church.
- d. The condition of this church – they had a NAME that they were alive, but they were DEAD (3:1). John Philips – “every church is born in a time of revival, in some time of the Spirit’s moving. It is only when the first movings of God are forgotten that a church settles down and becomes institutionalized. The drive and dynamic of the former years is replaced with a more formal, ritualistic, traditionalized and complacent for of activity. The movement becomes a monument.” He tells them to hold fast and repent (vs. 3). To hold to what they had received and heard (doctrine / basics). He warns them that if they don’t, he will come as a thief. (Matthew 24:43 / 1 Thess 5:1-5). But even in this DEAD church, there is a godly remnant (vs. 4). People

who have not defiled their garments (spiritually) – shall walk with me in white robes (heaven’s garments – the righteousness of Christ).

- e. The reminder for our day – white robes and eternal security. “I will NOT blot his name out of the book of life.” This is not an example of someone losing their salvation – in fact it is just the opposite. The overcomers are the saved – and Jesus is promising the saved that they will never, under any circumstance, at any time, have their name removed from the book of life. (*Some believe that ALL names are in the book of life and are blotted out if they don’t receive Christ)

II. The Church in Philadelphia – Rev. 3:7-13 – The Faithful or Revival Church

- a. Philadelphia is 30 miles southwest of Sardis, and was known for its agriculture, grape vineyards, and wineries. It has a long history and several times was almost completely destroyed by earthquakes. The name means “brotherly love” (John 13:34-35). Jesus also references his love for this church in verse 9.
- b. The era of this church age runs from about 1750 – 2000 A.D., with some of these churches still here today (BBC SAVANNAH). This was the era of the Great Awakenings, national revivals and godliness, and the era of intense gospel missionary work around the globe. Leaders of this era include John and Charles Wesley, George Whitfield, Johnathan Edwards, William Carey, Charles Finney, Dwight L. Moody, Charles Spurgeon, Billy Sunday, and so many more.
- c. Jesus reveals himself (vs. 7) as holy, true, and with the authority of a sovereign king (key of David) – Isaiah 22:22. This church has these as well – Holiness (through Christ), Truth (the word of God), authority (open doors for the gospel).
- d. This is the second church of the seven that receives no rebuke (Smyrna was the other). Jesus says he set before them an open door and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word and not denied my name. The Philadelphia church

preaches, believes, and uses the Bible (his word), and the church is not ashamed of the name of Jesus.

- e. The message is one of encouragement – Christ will deal with the forces of Satan. And he will keep this church from the Great Tribulation (described as the hour of temptation, upon all the earth, to try them that dwell upon the earth). He says he is coming quickly, so hold on to what you have – your reward is coming. (vs. 11)
- f. The overcomer will receive four marks of identification as the saved in heaven. 1. A pillar in the temple of my God (stability and strength). 2. The name of my God (we bear his name – child of God). 3. The name of the city of God (the New Jerusalem). 4. “my new name” – a mystery of heaven not yet revealed.

III. The Church “of” the Laodiceans – Rev. 3:14-22 – The Lukewarm (nauseating) church, the materialistic church, the peoples church.

- a. Laodicea was a city founded by Antichus II in the middle of the 3rd century B.C. and names after his wife Laodice. It was about 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia on the road to Colossae. Known for its production of wool cloth, especially for the manufacture of a certain black garment which was widely sought after. The city was also known for its medicine, including an eye salve ointment. There was a river that flowed into the city from the mountains bringing cold water that would mingle with hot springs on the way down that resulted in a lukewarm water the city was known for. The city was destroyed by an earthquake in 60 A.D., but was wealthy enough to rebuild without outside help from Rome. Paul never mentioned visiting the church, but he spoke of it in the book of Colossians.
- b. This church era dates from the mid 1900’s to the present day. It is the LAST of the church ages, and represents a time of compromise, apathy, arrogance, tolerance, and allowance. It is the heart of ecumenicalism (lukewarm – non-offensive), materialism, and prosperity. It is the opposite of the Nicolaitans, where the hierarchy

runs the church. Laodicean is where the people run the church. This is the other church identified as “of” instead of “in” – meaning the church belongs to them, not the Lord.

- c. Christ reveals himself as the “Amen” – so be it, let it be so, “truth”. This is his final word to the church age - Amen! He goes onto identify himself as the faithful and true witness (in relation to their not being a faithful and true witness), the beginning of the creation of God (John 1:1-3). *There is indication that the reality of who Jesus is would be in debate during this church age.
- d. The condition of the church is lukewarm, neither cold nor hot. (Rev. 3:15-17) There is no commendation of anything good about this church from the mouth of the Lord Jesus. In fact, he infers that the church makes him nauseated. John Philips in his book Exploring Revelation says that Jesus was saying “give me all your hate (cold), or give me all your heart (hot), but do not offer me lukewarm love. It makes me sick.”
- e. The message to the church is that though they thought they were self-sufficient (remember rebuilding after earthquake?), they were completely ignorant of their condition. (Rev. 3:17-18). They said I am rich, increased with goods, have need of nothing – but Jesus said they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Their spiritual condition was the exact opposite of their material condition. So He counsels them – buy of me gold (return to Him); buy of me white raiment (righteousness of Christ); anoint thine eyes with eyesalve (spiritual sight and vision – known for medicine there). Ironical that they were told to buy these things – they were rich – but buying the wrong things. He tells the remnant that those who are truly saved in this church era, that he will rebuke (expose, convict) and chasten (to discipline and educate). Proverbs 3:11-12. He further tells them to Repent. This is a church age that doesn’t like the word repentance. This is an age that makes excuse for sin, and wants to always shift

blame and guilt away from themselves. *Very telling of the time we are living in.

- f. Vs. 20-22 (read) – Jesus is now symbolically pleading with the individuals in this church. He has been pushed out of the church, and he knows this church will not repent. They are heading into the great tribulation as a church – but any individual can open the door and repent. “For whosoever will may come!” If they open the door, he will come into him, he will sup (fellowship) with him, and I will sup with Him.
- g. The overcomer will sit with Jesus on his throne, to reign with Christ.

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH – REVELATION 4:1

Remember what Jesus told John in Rev. 1:19

- Write the things which thou hast seen (Jesus earthly ministry)
- Write the things which are (the letters to the existing churches of his day)
- Write the things which shall be hereafter (prophetic and future)

John says “after this” – after the voice and vision of Jesus (chapter one), and after the church age (chapter 2-3)

I. The Event of the Rapture (Rev. 4:1)

- a. It’s meaning – I Thessalonians 4:13-17 (“caught up”)
 - i. Greek word = harpazo, Latin word = rapturo, English = rapture
 - 1. I Corinthians 15:51-54
 - 2. John 14:1-3
 - ii. *the word “rapture” does not appear in the Bible, but the event, the “catching away”, clearly does.
- b. John’s description (Rev. 4:1-2)
 - i. “door opened in heaven” – That’s where God’s people go!

- ii. “the first voice . . . said” – the voice of Jesus (Rev. 1:10-11) This voice is Jesus Christ, the groom, calling for His bride. “Come UP hither”. I Thess. 4:16 – “for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven (where was the door open?) with a shout (voice like a trumpet?)”. I Thess. 4:17 – “caught UP together”.
- iii. Rev. 4:2 – “and immediately I was in the spirit” – a picture of the bodily resurrection of the saints. (I Cor. 15)

II. The People of the Rapture (I Thessalonians 4:13-17) THE SAVED

- a. “those which sleep in Jesus” – (vs. 13-14)- the saints who have passed already.
- b. “the dead in Christ shall rise first” (vs. 16) – John 5:28-29. Bodies will be raised incorruptible / meet the soul that’s been with Jesus in Heaven (“will God bring with him” (vs. 14)
- c. “we which are alive and remain” (vs. 17). will be changed (I Cor. 15) – this mortal must put on immortality. (John 14 – “I will come again to receive you unto myself”)
 - i. Acts 1:9-11 – “in like manner”
 - 1. “a cloud received him out of their sight”
 - 2. “together with them in the clouds” – I Thess. 4:17
- “and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” - SHAZAM!

III. The Time of the Rapture (review timeline – rapture through new heaven and new earth)

- a. Revelation 4:1 – “after these things”
 - i. After the church age.
 - 1. In Revelation 1-3, the church is mentioned 19 times.
 - 2. From Revelation 4-22:16, the word church or churches is never used, it is only referred to in those chapters as the Lamb’s wife. (Rev. 19:7, Rev. 21:9) In Revelation 22:16, the church is called “the bride”
 - 3. (vs. 1) – “I will shew thee things that must be hereafter”
 - a. After what took place in Rev. 2-3

b. After he is called up to heaven

b. Three primary views of the rapture:

1. Pre-tribulational (before the tribulation begins)
2. Mid-tribulational (at or near the middle of the tribulation)
3. Post-tribulational (at the end of the tribulation)
4. A fourth view known as “pre-wrath” is a slight modification of mid-trib, believing that God will take the church out before the worst of the judgments.

c. Why we believe in the pre-tribulational rapture of the church:

- i. The purpose of the tribulation is the fulfillment of the seventieth week of Daniel’s vision concerning Israel (Daniel 9:20-27) – 70 “weeks” of 7 years. 69 of those weeks have been fulfilled (ending when the Messiah was “cut off” – death of Christ). The 70th week is the 7 year tribulation. It is called the time of “Jacob’s trouble” (Jacob = Israel) ***train track illust.**
- ii. The tribulation is about the wrath of God being poured out on the earth. The Bible tells us that the church, “the bride” is not going to endure the wrath of God (I Thessalonians 5:9).
- iii. As previously stated – the tribulation is taking place on the earth from Rev. 4:3-19:10, while the church has already “come up hither”. The bride of Christ is not on the earth during the events of these chapters.
- iv. If we interpret the Bible literally and consistently, the pre-tribulation rapture is the most biblically based interpretation.