

Worshiping Our Holy Creator

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 June 2021

Preacher: Bill Story

[0 : 0 0] Hi. Hi. Hi. Hi. Hi. We're all high now, so. Take out your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Revelation, please.

Book of Revelation. You'll find it at the very end of your Bible. We are going to do something a little bit different today.

Today, we're going to take a look at all seven churches that we've just walked through the last seven weeks in chapters two and three.

So we're going to, we've been taking a close view look at each church. Now we're going to step back and kind of look at all seven together, and I think we'll learn some things because by comparing and contrasting, we see some very important things that we don't see by looking just at each church.

Remember these churches, seven in Revelation means completeness, fullness, and so seven churches are representative.

[1 : 1 3] They were not all the churches of the time by any means, but they are representative. And they are representative of churches today.

They're representative of Christians today. So as we look at all these, I think you'll see you might fit into different churches here and there or have been, you know, I felt like I used to be there, now I'm over here, et cetera, et cetera, as well as our own church.

We want to take an application time of just looking at what is the Lord saying to us? How would he diagnose us? How would he commend us?

How would he confront us? How would he correct us? How would he encourage us? Et cetera. So I think this will be very beneficial. And if I'm the only one speaking, it'll go short.

So if that's what you want, no. So hopefully you'll be able to join in with us as we walk through this. What I want to do, I'm not going to read both chapters.

[2 : 1 9] I had to go off internet to make my phone go closed. I'll wait until that's fixed. I'm actually muted.

Okay. All right. So we're not going to read both whole chapters. Just want to read chapter two since those are the furthest away from where we've been. So I just want to read chapter two and then we'll pray and then we'll, then I want to give a quick review and then we'll jump into things.

So if you're able and you'd like to stand as I read from Revelation chapter two, the first four churches.

To the angel of the church in Ephesus, write the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not and found them to be false.

[3 : 29] I know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my namesake and you have not grown weary, but I have this against you that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Remember therefore from where you have fallen, repent and do the works you did. at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent.

Yet this you have, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches.

To the one who conquers, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. And to the church, excuse me, to the angel of the church in Smyrna, write the words of the first and the last who died and came to life.

I know your tribulation and your poverty, but you are rich and the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

[4 : 41] Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested. And for 10 days, you will have tribulation.

Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.

And to the angel of the church in Pergamum, write the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is.

Yet you hold fast my name and you did not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

But I have a few things against you. You have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.

[5 : 59] So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore, repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give some of the hidden manna and I will give him a white stone with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.

But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

[7 : 14] I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her, I will throw into great tribulation unless they repent of her works.

And I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart. And I will give to each of you according to your works.

But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold to this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden.

Only hold fast what you have until I come. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.

And he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces. Even as I myself have received authority from my father. And I will give him the morning star.

[8 : 27] He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the churches. Not just to that church, but to the churches.

We're all listening to what the Spirit is saying to all these churches. Let's pray. Father, we ask as always that you would come and teach us and open our hearts and minds.

Particularly today, Father, as we want to process this. As we want to kind of look over the last seven weeks of hearing about different churches.

Give us discernment. Give us the ability to see ourselves. To see you. To see what you want us to hear.

This we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. Let me give just a brief introduction to what we're doing. If you have a bulletin, hopefully you do.

[9 : 30] There is a two-sided outline in there. If you don't, there's some over there. Anybody need one? Anybody? We good? Because this will be helpful.

So in there is a two-sided outline. On one side you'll have what looks like the normal sermon notes. At the top it says hearing what the Spirit is saying. And then on the back of that you'll have the chart.

This is valuable information. A lot of information on this chart. Which will make it easy for us to compare and contrast. Okay? Kind of see what he says.

We've got a column of what Jesus likes. We've got a column of what Jesus is against. And it kind of helps us to make some comparisons that way. All right. So let's start with the little outline first.

The typical one that says hearing what the Spirit is saying on the front. Let me just give a little introduction here. So I want to remind you, first of all, chapter 1 was the vision of the Lord.

[10 : 32] This book started with a vision. With John, who is exiled on Patmos on the Lord's Day. And being in the Spirit, he began to hear and see things.

And so he wrote down what he saw. And he wrote down this vision. This remarkable vision of Jesus. So in verse 9 he talks about, I was here.

I was in the Spirit. Verse 10 on the Lord's Day. And I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet. Saying, write what you see. In verse 12, I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me. And on turning I saw seven golden lampstands.

And in the midst of the lampstands, one like a son of man. So we have two parts of the vision. He sees lampstands. And he sees one standing in the middle of the lampstands.

So let's just kind of, real quickly, I just want to remind you. This is the setting for the letters. This is the one speaking. And to each church, he's going to take a facet of what was seen in that vision and apply it to that church.

[11 : 37] Okay? So, first of all, we have a vision of Christ. It is a picture of him as a priest king.

It is a picture that shows him as a priest. He is standing among lampstands. Where do you find lampstands in the Old Testament? The temple.

In the temple. So he is in his temple. But it's not just one lampstand in the Jewish temple. It is seven lampstands that he's walking among.

And those lampstands, he tells us, are the churches. Seven lampstands, seven churches. Now the lampstand is the church. The light on the lampstand is the Spirit of God.

So the churches are holding the light. The churches are not themselves the light because the church's light can go out. He tells the church at Ephesus, if you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand.

[12 : 37] Okay? You no longer will be a witness. So, first of all, we see Jesus among the lampstands. He is the priest in his temple. He's wearing a robe with a sash just like a king.

Excuse me, just like a priest. Okay? In his temple. But he's more than that. As you go on in the vision, you see that he's also a holy king who's judging. His eyes of fire, a voice of thunder, a mouth with a sword.

He has come to judge. He has come to diagnose his churches. And so that's what we're seeing in these letters.

And then we finally, in verses 17 and 18, chapter 1, as John turns to see this vision, which is so frightening, he falls at his feet thinking he's a dead man because he thinks he's seeing the very living God, which he is.

But then he falls at his feet like a dead man. And this son, this one like a son of man, this priest, king, judge, touches him on the right with his right hand, lifts him up and says, fear not.

[13 : 43] This is me. This is me, John. This is Jesus. He's the one who was first and last. He was living.

He died. And now he lives forever. Okay, that's only one person. That's Jesus. So this is Jesus, who is this spectacular vision, who is now a priest in his temple, which is a temple of people.

And he is also the king and the judge. He has come to look at his people, to look at his temple and tell them what they're doing good and what needs to be worked on.

And then he promises them, promises them. What how gracious as they repent, the rewards are off the chart. Okay.

So then the churches, we see they're told, we're told the lampstands are the churches. Churches are holding the light, right? They are the spirit empowered light of Jesus in a dark world.

[14 : 52] So let's not miss this. As we're talking about these seven churches, the key characteristic of their identity is that they are a lampstand. They are holding a light.

Therefore, what is the key identity of the church? If we are a lampstand holding the light, what is our identity? What is our purpose?

To show light. To show the light of Jesus in a dark world. Our key identity, or maybe not identity, our key purpose, our key role is to be a light.

To be a witness. Okay. To be a witness. To be a witness. So when he's talking to the church at Ephesus that has a whole bunch of stuff right, but is not loving. I'm going to remove your lampstand because you've lost your purpose.

He's going to talk to the church of Sardis that's dying, that has a false witness. Oh, you're alive on the outside, but you're dead on the inside. And if you don't repent, I will come against you.

[16 : 00] And then talking to the church in Laodicea, who thinks they're okay, right? We are rich. We are in need of nothing. But you don't even know who you are.

You are not rich. You are poor. You are blind. You are naked. And if you do not repent, I will come, or he says, I'm about to come and spew you out.

You're like lukewarm water. It's not thirst. It's not good for me. It's wanting, I'm wanting to spew you out. So I want you to recognize that some of these churches are in immediate danger.

So on your outline, look at the second point. I have the list of the seven churches there. And they're kind of in a little bit of a, notice Ephesus and Laodicea are on the far left.

The first and the last churches are in the greatest danger. Ephesus has a vigilant witness in truth.

[17 : 01] They are working really hard. They are not a dying church. They are a very dedicated church. But for them, it's all about the truth. And Jesus commends that truth is important.

Getting the doctrine right is important. Pointing out what is false, that is important. But they have abandoned love. And for Jesus, as important as truth is, without love, it's meaningless.

It's meaningless. It's meaningless. That's the only thing he has against this church. They've got everything else right. They've just abandoned love. What's wrong with that?

Okay. So they're in danger. And then look at the last church. They are in danger, about to be spewed out. They're on the other side, whereas Ephesus is vigilant, has lots of good things.

Laodicea has nothing. Listen, there's no fruit in this church. They think they're okay. They're rich and have need of nothing. But Jesus says, but yeah, you're dead.

[18 : 13] And you're poor. And you're naked. This is the church that thinks they're okay. They're satisfied with themselves. But they're fruitless.

But they're not without an opportunity. They're not without hope. They can still repent. And then notice the second and sixth church.

So Smyrna and Philadelphia. Interesting how these are arranged. Because you have the first and last. They're in the most danger. Then the next level. You have Smyrna and Philadelphia. If you look on the chart on the back under the column for confrontation.

See the one, two, three. The fourth column in the middle there. You'll find nothing in the box for those churches. They're not confronted on anything. In other words, they are faithful.

They have nothing that Jesus is against. Right? They are healthy, faithful churches. Okay? So you have that second and the sixth church are there.

[19 : 22] There, by the way, they're the only two churches not told to repent. Every other church is told to repent. Five out of seven churches in the first century are told to repent.

Five out of seven churches that are representative of all churches. How healthy is Christ's church in the first century? Should we go back to the first century and be like the first century church?

We already are. We already are. This is representative. Five of seven churches across the board are in poor condition. Here's five of seven representative of the first century.

Only two are real healthy. Two are in danger of being spewed out now. And three others, you see in the middle there, are in varying levels of trouble.

Okay? Pergamum, they are a fearless, fearless witnessing church. They are witnessing, but they're without discernment because they're allowing false teaching in. Then the middle church, then it gets a little worse.

[20 : 32] First, Thyatira is a little bit worse. But notice they're very, very fruitful. They have love. They have service. They have endurance. They've got a lot going for them. And Jesus doesn't miss any of it.

He says, I do see what you're doing well. You are very fruitful in your witness. Yet, they tolerate Jezebel, who seduces the servants of Jesus into immorality and into idolatry.

Interesting, isn't it? Very fruitful church, yet tolerant. Okay? And then Sardis, so you go from, in these middle three, you go from bad to worse.

So Sardis is just dying. He calls them dead. You have a name to be, you have a reputation to be alive, but really, you're alive on the outside, but on the inside, you're dead. You're dying.

You're sleeping. You need to wake up. And if you don't wake up, I will come against you. So here's a church that's just simply, I think, passive. They're just passive. They're just cruising. They're not doing anything.

[21 : 37] Okay? So there you have the churches. So just kind of interesting to compare them. So I made one observation there was that in general, most churches are not doing well, according to Jesus' diagnosis.

Okay? Now, on your chart on the back, you have a bunch more detail. I'm not going to go through all of that. You can look at it. Notice how it's organized here. There is a very orderly and symmetrical way that Jesus talks to each of these churches.

To each church, he starts each letter with, to the angel of the church at so-and-so. Okay? So there's a church listed in the first column. Then the second column, he then says, to that church, says, or write, thus says the Lord.

But he gives a characteristic. So to Ephesus, he says, to the church at Ephesus, write, the one who holds the seven stars and who walks among the seven lampstands. So both of those images came from the vision in chapter one.

He only brings both of those visions just to Ephesus. Why does he want to mention the stars and the lampstands to Ephesus? Well, that's something to kind of, if you're Ephesus, that's going to be significant.

[22 : 58] Because he's going to say, if you don't repent, I who walk among the seven lampstands, I'm going to remove your lampstand. I'm right in the middle of your lampstands.

And I will take your lampstand away. Okay? That's why that's significant. So you have the statement about Christ in each of the letters right up front. And then the third thing in each letter we see is a commendation usually.

He says, I know your works. And there he usually lists the fruit of that church. So for Ephesus, I know your toil, your endurance. You're not bearing with evil.

You test the false. You're bearing up under my name. You're not denying my name. So he's a lot of good things to say about Ephesus. Right? And so on for the other churches.

And then the fourth category, then it's usually, but I have this against you. Right? So for Ephesus, I have this against you that you've left your first love. Okay?

[23 : 58] And then you go to Smyrna. He has nothing to confront with Smyrna or with Philadelphia. Then you come to a section where he says, therefore, this is what you need to do. This is what you need to confront.

This is what you need to correct. Okay? So I've listed there in the one, two, the fifth column. So for Ephesus, they need to remember, repent, which means they need to start loving.

Right? That's what they have to correct. And do the works they did at first. Or I am coming to remove your lampstand. So repent or consequences. Okay?

And then the final thing that he says to each church is to him who conquers. Right? And then he gives a promise to the one who conquers. So in Ephesus, if you conquer this issue of love, if you start loving like you did before, if you repent of your lovelessness and your apathy toward others, if you will start loving again and do the works you did at first, my promise is that you conquer and you will have the tree of life in the paradise of God.

Okay? So basically promises of eternal life. Now notice in that last column, the conquer column, all those promises come from the very end of the book of Revelation.

[25 : 12] Revelation. They're all spoken of at the end. So he's already pulling that in. Even though he's just starting the book, he's already pulling in chapter 21 and chapter 22 about the tree of life, the crown of life, the second death, all of these.

He's pulling all that in. Okay? So they're part of that. So unless you think, okay, this was first century churches and then what happens in chapter 21 and 22 or thousands and thousands of years away apart?

No, it's not. He's pulling it all together. They're part of the same thing, just as we are. Okay. So that's enough of me. So we have a lot of information here.

Where do we start? Let me ask a question. According to column three, the commendation column, what would you say is what the things that Jesus is looking for?

Now, if this is representative of all churches of all time, what does he look for in a church? What does he want his church to be like?

[26 : 30] So you see all those things. They're different for each church. Some overlap. But what are they? They're good works, of course.

They're good deeds. But what kind of? What is he looking for? Love. Definitely. Love.

What else? Faithfulness. Faithfulness. What? Service. What? Endurance. Endurance. You are enduring. Yeah, he's big on that. What else?

Relationship. Relationship. That's the foundation. Everything else is on. Okay. Because all of those works there are relational.

The love. Service. Faithfulness. Endurance. Right? Some are relational within the church. Some are to the outside of the church. So they're not buried.

[27 : 26] Right? They're enduring for my name. In other words, they're suffering. Several of these churches are suffering. Because it says, you have not denied my name. That means they're at the stake.

Deny Jesus and live or confess Jesus and suffer for it. Some of them die because of that.

Like he mentioned Antipas. Some of them simply lose privileges in that society. So if they don't, you know, conform to the trade, the trade guilds.

If they don't eat the feast at the trade guild feast. Feast. And therefore endorse the God of whatever feast that is. Then they get pushed.

Okay. You don't get a place in our marketplace. You go sell your wares somewhere outside. You don't get, you know, you're not in the union. Right? Okay.

[28 : 23] So they suffer. And so when he says, you have not denied my name. That means they've been called on it. That means they're going to suffer in some way for that.

Okay. So that's, that's huge. So some relationships in the church, some are relationships to the outside of the church. You test those who are false, et cetera. Or you let in false.

What else? It says do no evil. And don't, some don't lie. Don't, you know, do things that are. So what all does that include?

Not bearing evil. Yeah. Well, be as Jesus defines it, right? Not as we define it.

Exactly. Not people, but deeds. Thoughts. Your heart. Yes. Thank you. Very good. Yeah. It's what comes out of the heart, not what's external.

[29 : 25] All right. Let me ask a question the other way. So we have a list of things that Jesus likes. That's what he's looking for.

Those are the strengths and the fruit. Yeah, go ahead, Anne. I'd like to add before you move, seeking his kingdom first. It seems like a lot of these things are really about putting him and his kingdom and his ways first.

Rather than the worldly stuff. Right, because they're going to suffer for it. That's the process of. Yeah. For some of these, it's about putting food on the table. If you can't do your business in the marketplace where you can sell your stuff and get bread, right?

That's tough. That's why one church is called, you know, they're poor. He says, but you're really rich. Because you're putting treasure in heaven and not earth. Yeah. Good, Anne.

Thanks. Okay. So let's look at it the other way. So if column three is about what he's looking for in the church, column four, the one that says confronts, what he confronts them, what he has against them, what concerns him most?

[30 : 36] See, this is a nice way to kind of compare that. What is it that he's against in the church? False teaching. False teaching. We see that twice.

For Pergamum and Thyatira. That is a big concern for him. Why is that? For each one, when he says you're holding to this, some of you are holding to this teaching, this false teaching, or some of you are to the church of Thyatira, you're tolerating this Jezebel, which means, the word in Greek for tolerate just means to let it go.

You're just kind of letting her go do what she wants. You're tolerating it. You're permitting it. You're letting it. You're allowing it. You're not doing anything. So why is he concerned about it?

Well, I see this also as a huge pastoral letter. And I see it very much as we went through 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus.

Yeah. That Paul was instructing and exhorting or encouraging with the, there's a lot of good there and there's a lot of bad or evil.

[32 : 02] And you have to be aware of both. So you have the ears being tickled. Yes. But you have to be aware of it. And you have to be prepared to stand firm.

Right. So, yeah. So in the Timothy reference about the ears tickled, he's saying, you know, they're going to get, people are people. They're going to get tired of hearing the same old truth.

They want to go and hear what they want to hear. Well, this church doesn't keep my attention well enough. I'm going to go over here and hear stuff I want to hear. That was happening in the first century. This is nothing new.

People church shop. Right. And they hear what they want to hear. And so he's, but he's telling them, just be aware of that. It doesn't mean you change your method. You still have to preach the truth.

It doesn't mean you make it as boring as you can. Of course. But truth doesn't change. Right. And where the truth comes from. So some of these churches are struggling with that.

[33 : 05] And there's also godly behavior. I mean, there are elements that are brought up. Yes. We have to practice it as members of the church.

We have to be aware of those because they're also, I think, part of our armor. Yes. And sometimes they think we let go. It's not the right word, but they're so subtle.

Yes. Items. Right. But so critical. Right. That we tend not to see them. Right. Like the infrastructure. Okay. Is how I look at this.

Those are marvelous pastoral reminders. So notice for these two churches in the middle that are struggling with false teaching issues. So why is Jesus concerned about that teaching?

Because of where it leads. Okay. It leads to idolatry and immorality. So in the first church, you just have some.

[34 : 05] In Pergamum. It's not as bad there, but it's there. You have some. Not all. There are some. He says there are just some of you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, which happens to seduce people into these things.

Then you go to Thyatira. It's at another level. It's there's a whole toleration and acceptance of this.

Whoever Jezebel woman is that's influencing the church. Who's influencing the servants in the church to actually act on those sins. Okay. So it's gone farther.

See, you see the difference. But both have a concern. Both have this false teaching that leads to sin. That's the concern. That's why truth is important.

It defines what's right and what's not right. Okay. Yeah. Now, as we go through this, one of the things I'm concerned about, this is what I've been studying here recently too.

[35 : 05] Christianity is not the pursuit of morality. Right. Christianity is the pursuit of God. If we pursue morality, then we end up looking like the whitewashed tombs in Matthew 23.

And we look good on the outside because our external performance is this. But the inside is dead man's bones because we have no relationship with Christ. If we pursue morality, if we pursue works, and our goal is to just check our box on works on this sheet, and we miss Christ, we miss everything.

This goes back to what I was talking about before was relationship. And maybe just, you know, taking one step back too. The commendations, if you look through all of those, they're all about churches that have a relationship with Christ.

If you look at the corrections, even though he talks about works, in every single case he uses the word repent. Repent. Repent to who?

Repent for what? Repent why? Because the relationship is broken. The goal has to be the relationship. If we pursue Christ, and we have a right relationship with him, works will be the out, the normal outgrowth of our relationship with him.

[36 : 29] If we pursue works, we will never get to Christ. Right. Great point. Yeah, and that last church, remember Laodicea, that's the very point Jesus emphasized at the end.

He says, repent. Well, how? Well, behold, I'm standing outside the church knocking. There's a picture. What's wrong with the picture? Knocking outside the church.

Let me in. If you let me in, what happens? Fellowship. It's you and me. We're dining. So that's what repent.

Great point, right? Because that's, I think, what Jesus is saying there in that last church is you're lukewarm because you've lost relationship with me. You think you're okay because you're doing all whatever you think looks right.

But you've forgotten about me. And like you said, if you abide, Jesus says, if you abide in me and I abide in you, what happens? You'll bear much fruit.

[37 : 28] You'll bear much fruit. It's automatic. Don't worry about the fruit. Abide in me. You'll bear much fruit. Just hang on to me. Just look to me.

Just draw your strength from me. Abide in me. Draw for me. Trust in me. Oh, I'm good today, Jesus. I can do this. Right? Well, he says that don't count.

Apart from me, you can do nothing. Nothing that counts. Nothing that matters that I'm looking for. Yeah?

Say show. To extend your point and Mr. Fizer's point, I think that the most common thing that I see among people who are like teeter-tottering on whether or not they should be a Christian or like Christians who have been Christians for a long time, but they just, I think they're getting tired.

But when the topic of being lukewarm, that's the most common, I think, fault of a Christian or someone who's like falling.

[38 : 30] Easy to go there, isn't it? Yeah. Because it's just so easy. And it demonstrates how noncommittal you can be and how much you don't have to invest.

Because like when you die to Christ and you follow him, it means giving up a lot of things. Right. And a lot of people will say, oh, I want to nitpick, I want to check off the book. I want to do what I want to do and I don't want to say yes to some things.

But they also say, well, I do all of these works and all of these good deeds. So really, Jesus doesn't. That should balance out, right? Yeah. Jesus doesn't mind if I don't like, you know, fully maybe do everything.

So I'm just like not going to read everything I'm supposed to read. I kind of like make myself ignorant to the things that I should be doing. I didn't know any better. Yeah. Great point. Yeah.

It's like they're making themselves like not informed for the purpose of making it easier for themselves. Yeah. Yeah. And the second they know about what they ought to be doing, then they're like, oh, man.

[39 : 30] They're like the rich man who had to give up everything and follow Jesus. Maybe I don't want to do that. That's a great point because I wonder if those middle churches, if that's some of what's going on. You know, we're doing the things we know to do, but, you know, keep the blinders on.

Oh, I don't know if that's false teaching and I don't want to, you know, I don't want to start up any trouble. Right. And that's a great point because we're like that. That's what we're like. That's when ignorance is bliss.

Yeah. Yeah. If I don't know, I'm not accountable. Right. And Jesus is saying, uh, different.

Yeah. Great point. So look at the thing. So look in that fourth category that confronts. These are the things that he's against in all churches.

And this is it. He's against those who have forsaken love. Okay. Get that. I got that one. Right. Because that's his new great commandment. Right. Love one another as I have loved you.

[40 : 32] Then they will know. See, it's a witness issue. If you love one another as I loved you, they'll know you're my disciples. That's your witness.

Okay. And then, and then obviously you brought up the next two, uh, false teaching, false teaching. Then you go down to Sardis. What's his concern there? Falseness.

False image. False identity. You're out. You're all about the exterior. I got a reputation of being alive. That's the, that sounds like the Pharisee whitewashed tomb thing.

Doesn't it? Yeah. They, they, they, they are all, but on the inside you're dead. There's no reality. There's no genuineness. There's no faith. Right. So he's concerned about that.

So hypocrisy, you might call it, call it hypocrisy, call it half hearted new, whatever you want to call it. And then the last one is the lukewarm. You think you're okay.

[41 : 30] Pride. You think you're okay. You don't need anything. You don't need me. So what's missing from that category that we typically say is not good in a church or that a church needs?

That's what strikes me. Worship. Worship. Relationship. Relationship. What do you mean? To have a relationship with, with God and be close to him, call on him.

Okay. And, and draw from him. Then a lot of these other areas aren't going to. Oh yeah. Right, right.

Abide in me. Yeah. It's, it's simple but not easy. Right? Safe. Yeah. Faith is simple. It's just not easy. It's not complicated. It's just walk with me.

Walk with me. Trust me. You know, that's simple but not always easy. So, okay. What I don't see. Your church is too small.

[42 : 38] Oh, you don't have enough programs. Where's, where's the mentor program? What about your children's church? What about your youth? How come you don't have a youth program? That's what we hear.

Jesus mentions nothing of that. That's not a biggie for him. Because see, back then, and well, till about what, 70 years ago?

There were no children's churches or youth programs. Right? And it's an American thing as well. Now other cultures have adopted it because our missionaries have gone and said, this is what you need to do.

Not all our missionaries don't. So what makes a healthy church?

Well, column three. What should we be concerned about? False teaching. Losing our love. Losing our genuineness.

[43 : 47] It's not so complicated anymore, is it? Not about all these programs. Not about all these bells and whistles. Not about all these. Now those are nice. I'm not saying those aren't, you know. When people come and tell us, well, you know, you need this to keep the kids.

And say, there's 100 churches outside there that will give you that. We don't need to compete with that. That's not our call. That's not our call. If you want to help your kids learn how to stay in church even after they leave high school, come here.

If you want your kids to unintentionally learn to leave the church later, get them in all those programs. Because that's what they'll always want. It's unintentional.

I was in youth ministry for a long time, so I can say it, okay? I was there. I did it. But you unintentionally train kids to fall eventually.

I know. This isn't a ladder. I've been prevented from ladders. This is only a step. But given my age, I can fall easily. So, okay. Okay, I did my little axe grinding on youth.

[45 : 05] But that struck me. You know? We read churches today according to a different standard than Jesus reads. Jesus is just down there.

Okay, what really matters? Fruit? Faithfulness. You might be able to just kind of keep it there as you define what that looks like.

And then the other thing that surprises me... Well, before I tell you. Tell me. What do you see on here? What surprises you? Or what jumps out at you?

What? Anything? Yes? I would love to... If you could go over practical examples of the love that you did at first, those first words.

Oh, what that looks like? Yeah. I think that means since... Look at all the commendation that church gets, Ephesus. Right? They're doing... They're working hard.

[46 : 05] They're dedicated. They've not grown weary. Right? They're doing all the right stuff. And I think they do it because they do genuinely love Jesus. So I don't think they've lost their love for Jesus. Amen.

Okay? Because Jesus says, if you love me, you'll keep my commandments. Except that they're missing his most important commandment. One another. I think that's what they've loved.

They've lost a love for people. I think they're the church. And I think we see a lot of church. And I think, me personally, I can go here. If I'm not careful.

Because I'm, if you haven't noticed, big on truth. I want to get that right. Because it's really, really important. But if I go just dive all my heart and soul into that, I can start kind of not being as careful and kind to people.

And eventually, okay, you're, you're out. I don't trust you. And, oh, you believe that. Okay, go away. You know, lose my compassion. So it's like they're doing overarching works.

[47 : 09] But maybe individual relationships are failing everywhere. I think so. Do you know people like that? If you get to know me, I'm a little bit like, you know, be like this.

Don't bother me. Okay, because I love this. I love this. And I should love it. Because it's precious.

And it's true. And it's life-changing. It's also in delivery. So you can deliver the truth in love and kindness. Where you can also deliver the truth with a heavy hand.

Yes. If somebody delivers the truth to me. Yes. If I'm on the fence about. And you give it to me with a heavy hand. You've just lost that. Yes. Perfect. Yes. Yep.

Oh, I told you the truth. Right? Or do I speak the truth in love? So do I consider that you, if you're failing in some way, I've been there.

[48 : 12] I'm going to come at you all different if I remember. No. That could be me. Right? Okay, brother, I love you. Let's sit down and talk. You know. Gotcha.

Great. Does it kind of connect to, I have to and I want to also? So, as when they first came to know Christ, they wanted to know everything.

It was, they couldn't get enough. And it was coming from their heart. Yeah. A desire. Yeah. And now it's more of a checklist. Yeah. I have to do this and this and this.

Yeah. It's easy to get there, too. Because we've been there where it's like, you know, I've got all the passion. It's hard to keep the passion, you know. I've got to memorize this whole chapter, you know, or else I'm not serving God.

Yeah. Yeah, and I think that's some of these churches here. It's the have to. They've lost the want to. They're just checking off the box, which is very easy to get to.

[49 : 22] What else? Anything else surprise you? Anything else jump out at you? Yes? I would just say, like, in verse 16, it says, otherwise I will soon come to you and I will fight against them with the sword in my mouth.

It's not like, I will fight against you. Yes. Good, good, good observation. God is so gracious and protective. And it reminds me of, in 1 Corinthians 8, 13, it says, therefore, if I need what I, if I, if I need what I, my brother or sister, to fall into sin, I'll never be me again, so that I will not cause them to fall.

So it's like he, yeah, is just very protective and understanding. Yeah, I'm not coming against all of you. Yeah. But if you love that brother, help them repent.

Yeah. I think that's what he's saying, too. And if you're the one that's causing them to fall into sin, you better watch out. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, great.

Anything else? Yeah, Rick? One thing that stands out to me is this whole concept of conquering that he's described for all seven of these churches. So who or what are we conquering?

[50 : 42] So to the one who conquers. So for the church in Ephesus, what is it that they must conquer? What must they overcome? What is their battle?

Love. So to repent means to start loving. Right? To start sacrificing. To start going the extra miles.

To start having compassion. To start getting in the other person's sandals. Right? And loving them. Yeah. So what is it for Smyrna? What do they have to conquer?

What do they have to conquer? They have no confrontation, but they still have something to conquer. Not to fear. Not fear.

That's what he tells us. Don't fear. Why? Because I don't want to suffer. I'm afraid of suffering. So don't fear. Okay?

[51 : 36] What about Pergamum with the false teaching? What does conquering mean for them? What do they need to conquer? Change their reputation.

Change their what? Reputation. Because it says Whitestone with new name. Okay. Who they are. Identity. Identity. Okay.

Then you get full fast to their original teaching. To teach them what they were taught at first. And it also means correcting some issues about this false teaching. So probably one of the things they need to do is start teaching.

Maybe they're not teaching. Or they're avoiding certain subjects. Okay? So, and then for Thyatira. Conquer means what?

Very specific there. What are they tolerating and what do they need to start to conquer? Or? Jezebel. They need to confront. That's the hard part of love.

[52 : 39] Love cares enough to go confront your brother, your sister, who is off track. And you do that by, right, Galatians 6, taking the log out of your eye, keeping yourself humble, right?

Seeing them as a weaker, somebody who maybe got stuck. So. But you have to go. Because you love them.

I mean, you do that with your kids, right? Do it with your family. Okay? Okay.

And then so on. So I think conquer is doing those corrective things in the fifth category there. So I guess what I was getting at is who are we conquering? And what I take away from this is I'm conquering myself.

I'm conquering my sin nature. And through God's strength and discernment, I'm adopting his mindset to step out away from the things that I see and touch and feel.

[53 : 45] And the people that are pressuring me and the way that Satan is pressuring me to do the right thing. So I'm conquering my sin. Does that seem reasonable?

Oh, yeah. Yeah. And the solution for conquering our sin is always been the same in the Bible. Repent.

Turn back to God. Jesus is standing. I mean, I love the picture at the end, right? I think that goes for all the churches and anyone that needs to repent. Is Jesus standing outside?

Have you let him in? Right? And that's a beautiful picture because it's not come in to get you. It's come in to sit and to dine and talk. Let's talk.

I can heal you. I can fix you. And we don't conquer on our own strength. Absolutely. Because we have none. And if you look at Ephesians 6, the goal of Ephesians 6 and putting on the full armor of God, and it says it twice in that passage, is to stand.

[54 : 50] Correct. We have purchased. So it's not, you know, I'm going to take the world for Jesus in my armor. I just need to stand.

I need to stand in relationship with him. Does that make sense, Bill? Yes, absolutely. That's part of our faith is standing and, you know, we're strong in his grace.

He says, be strong. How? In his grace. That's what I need for my strength. And then by putting, stand by having the truth and righteousness, salvation, et cetera.

The shield. Big shield. Big shield. Which is faith. Trusting what God has said. And the sword. And the sword.

Yes. The sword. Sword of the spirit. So last question. Okay. So one is for you individually. You don't need to share this out loud.

[55 : 51] But what is the spirit saying to you? Okay. What is the spirit saying to you? From all this. He is speaking. What is he saying?

But then secondly, for us together as a church, how would Jesus diagnose Little Log Church? I don't think we fit any one church here.

Although I'd love to say we're Smyrna or Philadelphia. But that would require a whole lot more suffering. Because both of those churches were under attack.

Both of those churches lived with a synagogue of Satan that was slandering them. And where do you think we... How do we do it?

Don't be afraid to say anything. I know we're not... We're struggling. Sure. We're all struggling. Yeah. And that's how we grow.

[56 : 56] Yes. I believe. And things are changing. But if we believe that God is sovereign, he holds everything in his hands for the good.

And so there's going to be a time of growth, a time of pruning, and probably have improvements to be made.

But I think we're very open to that. I think so too. I wonder if we are kind of lukewarm. Okay.

We think that we're doing okay. Okay. I think we can be in any of these, right, at different times. Okay. So that's why I'm saying, how would Jesus talk to us?

Because he would recognize what we're doing well. He would recognize our love and our service and our faithfulness and holding to the truth and all this kind of... But he'd also say, but...

[57 : 59] And that, I know, individually that can be different for all of us. I'd give it. But as a church... But wouldn't that be why, as a church, it's a little different? Because we are all individually struggling with different things.

Right? Yeah. And maybe that's good. Yeah. You know? Yeah. But we can characterize certain churches. Because we... You know, I could see churches that are just like Ephesus.

That's why he says the log in our eye. Yeah, I know. I know. But, you know, I think I can see. More clearly. I see Smyrna, but I think Smyrna is overseas.

So... Because they're suffering and they're under attack and they're being faithful in their witness. Right. Right. Or some of the churches that may be prosecuted and persecuted.

Right. Right. And recognize we're not under that kind of... Our lives are not literally at stake yet. Yet. Yet. Yet. Yet. Yet. That may come, but...

[59 : 01] Yeah. Being aware of... We're always, I think, going to have a thought. I don't think... Is there a perfect church? No, no, no.

So we're always going to have the thought. Yeah. My question is, are you aware of the but? Yeah. And are you up front and talking to everyone in your congregation, mainly for the shepherds of the congregation?

Are you confronting? Yeah. Within those buts. And, you know, I think that's been hard this last year because it's been very limited. I'm finally able to start seeing some people I haven't seen for a while.

Right. Yeah. So by virtue of the fact that your heart is open to the buts and to the talking about it, the disciplining and training your congregation for that, at least it's a move in the right direction.

Yeah. And that's what I wanted to do this week. Not just individually for us to benefit from this, but as a church, how we do it. And we may not have a nail for that, but I think that's, you know, are we aware?

[60 : 20] Are we aware? And I think we say, you know, like Psalm 139, search me and try me and see. Amen. Right? Amen. Because my evaluation can be off. Way off.

And I don't see, I can't see within. So, but his will always be right off. Something that I personally see in Little Lock Church is there is a lot of love.

Is what? A lot of love. There is? I think so. Good. It's hard to skip to be. I thought you said not. Yeah, mine too. Because I see love.

Yeah, I do. I'm a recipient of a lot of that, and I really, really appreciate it. Well, you follow a lot. I follow. Absolutely. Amen, brother.

But Jesus says it's okay to fall. It's about getting back up, right? That's right. The righteous man. And it's my vision of that. It's how the neighbors to get you up. Yeah. That's right.

[61 : 21] Well, in my case, I didn't even know they were coming until I woke up, right? Wake up, and here's James and Rick staring at me. What are you doing on the ground, boy? So, anyway.

Any other thoughts? Anything bursting to the... Okay. This has been great. We need to do this more often.

So, maybe when we get in the middle of the seals and everything's falling apart, maybe we can... How are we doing? How are we doing? No, I don't know. But this was a very appropriate time to take...

One of the things... Yeah, Ron, thanks. One of the things that this always has, each one of the churches at the end, God gives them a chance to repent. Yes. How do we repent? As the Holy Spirit can fix each one of our hearts here...

Yes. We get that same... We get that same... Yes. Chance. Yeah. Even these churches that are in very dangerous position.

[62 : 26] No... Hope is not gone. Even the dead church, right? They can still wake up. Thanks, Ron. Yeah. And look at the motivations he gives.

You know, that last column. It's like... Even Laodicea, who's fruitless and lukewarm... Look what promise they get if they repent. You sit on the throne with me.

James brought that up earlier. Like, isn't that kind of overdoing it? Kind of like, they don't deserve that. But look at the motivation. All the motivations for all these are like...

It's like, no, you don't get second grade. You get... You get the tree of life. And you get the crown of life. And you get, you know... You get all the best. Just hold fast with me.

So, whether they have lots of fruit or no fruit, repent and... The pearly gates are yours. Right? People like that. They like to be rewarded. So, people work towards that.

[63 : 28] Yeah. And Jesus does that. I mean, he does, you know... There are crowns. There are rewards. Right? Raj? Yes? Say shall. Say shall.

Yeah. What does the morning star mean? Ah. It says that there are rewards. And I will give you the morning star. Now, there are different opinions on that. Because in the Old Testament, the morning star is referred to Lucifer.

In fact, that's a name of Lucifer. One name of him is translated morning star. But it's technically different. But in the end of the book of Revelation, the morning star is Jesus himself.

So, I'm going to lean that way. Because I don't think Lucifer is a good promise for people that... But thank you. Because that is confusing.

Yeah. I love how God is telling these churches, just like a daddy. Because God is our daddy. Yeah. The Lord sits down and kind of lays it out. Yeah. Just like an excellent daddy would do.

- [64 : 29] Yeah. If this, then this. It's your choice. But you've got to know what's coming. And I thought I'm just baffled at how people say, well, I will not accept the Lord because he's angry, he's nasty, he's ready to squash me.
- And the Lord is anything but. I mean, the Lord, I mean, so many times I read page after page in my Bible where he's going, if this, now let's talk about this, you know.
- And everything, I'm going, I think they got it. They're just making a choice. Well, and the Jesus that does it first in this book, the Jesus in this book that does it first look very terrifying, right?
- Eyes of fire, right? That's intentional. Becomes the caring shepherd. Are you so compassionate? Yes. But you must take him seriously at the same time.
- Absolutely. Because he is also eyes of fire. And he is also a sword out of the mouth that at the end of the book of Revelation, that sword will finish everything.
- [65 : 35] We got a cricket or something. Big cricket. David, you got some? Oh, no, okay.
- Yeah, Anne. Are we fruitful? Full of fruit? I don't know. Am I right?
- Were you just referring to the church at Laodicea when you said about being fruitful? Oh, no, they're fruitless. Fruitless, okay. They have no commendation whatsoever.
- What defines fruit? Fruit? What are examples of our fruit?
- Sorry. It's okay. Can you define this fruitfulness, the fruitfulness from the church?
- [66 : 43] And answer if you think we are a fruitful church. So fruitful would be everything in that third category of commendation. I know your works.
- And what he means by works or deeds is your fruit. So as individuals in our individual lives rather than, I don't know why I put that on this, but I'm just...
- Well, I think he's saying generally as a church, they are seeing these fruits. And notice a couple of times he does make a distinction. Like in Pergamum, there are some, not all, there are some in that church who are holding to the false teaching.
- And then notice in Sardis, though the church at large is false in name and dead, there are a few. There are a few in that church.
- So he recognizes the distinctions. So there are a few who have not soiled their garments, which means they're bearing fruit. So white garments in Revelation means they're righteous deeds, righteous works, fruit of the Spirit.
- [67 : 53] We would call fruit of the Spirit, right? Is that joy and peace and peace? Correct. Or anything he's listed here. Your toil, your endurance, right?
- You're not bearing with evil. You're not denying my name. You're suffering for me. You're holding fast my name. So Thyatira is very fruitful. Look at that. Even though they tolerate Jezebel, they have love.
- They are loving. They have faith. They are serving others. They are very people-oriented. Yeah. Right? I know what this church is. Yeah. One of the things that you're making to this church is how community-oriented, how people-oriented it is.
- And that's what brings people in to learn the truth, right? If they don't feel accepted or want to. Yes. Oh, absolutely. It's so important. That's where I see a lot of our fruit, as you know, some of the things that I'm involved with, I see a lot of our fruit.
- Yeah. And notice, a lot of this fruit he's talking about, it's not, you know, blasted out. You know, it's just like, okay, a lot of it's behind the scenes. The loving and the enduring.
- [68 : 57] And, you know, that's not big, popular. That doesn't get the fanfare. But it does from Jesus. It's like, I don't miss a beat on that. I saw what, you know, I see.

I know. So he's letting it, you know, I'm your shepherd. I don't miss anything. You referred at the beginning that in the lampstands, these were Christ and his temple.

And his temple is the broader universal church. Yes. So that also kind of addresses, you know, to the end point, what do we see in the church? It's actually bigger than the church. Yes. It's bigger than us.

Yes. But we are the light on this hill. Right. I mean, I love that. It's like, okay, we have an opportunity. It's a little hill. That's okay.

You know, it's a Jerusalem kind of hill. You know, it's not a big hill. But we are the light here. As long as we are holding the light.

[69 : 59] Don't be afraid of the light. The light's, that's the spirit working through us. That's why it's seven. Because when we looked at the vision, you know, the vision in chapter one was about the lampstands.

And that reminded us of Zechariah vision, which had a lampstand in it. And that's where we got the spirit and power part for the church. Because that's what John was drawing.

That's what Jesus was drawing from. That old vision that said, not by might, not by strength, but by my power, says the Lord. That's the picture of the lampstand.

The light on the lampstand. You're just the stand. He's the one that fires it up. He's the power. All right. So it's not about, it's really not about us.

It's about us holding Christ up. And are we courageous to do that? Are we looking for the opportunities to do that?

[70 : 58] That would be my question for our church. Okay. That's for me too. Am I using the opportunities? Am I, not just that, am I, am I looking for the opportunities?

And some of my relationships over the last year have caused me to think about that. I'm going to a chiropractor who doesn't know Jesus. But am I intentional about how I talk to him?

Right. And I was in CrossFit, right. Everybody knew, oh, it's Mark and Shannon's pastor. No, they didn't know it like that. It was very cool. But it was like, oh, you're the pastor.

Oh, yeah, yeah. Okay. Let's stay away from you. No, it's, it's just, you know, just, am I thinking about being a witness? Doesn't mean I have to say something.

Right. But if I've seen somebody regularly like my chiropractor, that means, am I thinking about that? Thinking about maybe, hey, you know, we're studying this week? And I have done that.

[71 : 58] So, just, just for, you know, not pushing, just, just kind of sharing. Yeah. And I, I truly believe in that, that, that if you're carrying Christ with you in your heart, the light is going to shine.

Yes. You have no choice. And we have a ton of workers at our house that can attest to. Yeah.

Yeah. And you have neighbors that are watching you. Yeah. We know a lot of our neighbors. You know, they see. Some are, you know, more difficult than others. But, but, but they, they see, just the way you're at, you offer them, I offer them a bottle of water.

Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. You just cannot avoid. Yeah. Okay. So, that, that's where I'm thinking I have the, maybe Jesus might say, I have this against you.

Where, where, where, where's your, where's the light shining? Shining in here, I think. Is it shining out there? And, like, again, I may not know, I know it's out there too.

[73 : 10] I know it is. But. And how do we get that? Now, how am I doing better at that? Right? How are each of us working? Thinking about that. Just think about it.

Right? I will make you, right? I will make you fishers of men. You follow me. Exactly. My part is to, to make you a fisherman. So, my following Jesus, if I'm following Jesus, he'll take care of the fisherman part.

It's not, it's not all one size fits all. Because, because, you know, Anne's going to look different, fishing, then Lance is going to look different, so on. And Steve, I don't know what you're going to look like, but, you know.

So, he makes that, personally. So, okay. Pastor, you're in. Yes. I think that's exactly how the Spirit and Spirit come out in people.

When you follow Jesus, and then the love, joy, peace, and patience, and all of that can manifest in response to things that usually make you irritated, or things that should inconvenience you, things that should make someone feel not great and not good, you can still respond with grace, because you have the fruits, because you are walking with the Spirit.

[74 : 23] And when you walk with the Spirit, those things come, and then you respond differently. And then people can say, that's not usually how a person should respond. Like, why are they responding? Yeah.

How come you're so humble and compassionate? Well, I've been walking with someone that treats me that way. Yeah. Absolutely.

Thank you. Good perception. Okay. Shall we pray? Are you doing all right? Okay.

Father, we thank you for your shepherding. Father, you are our high priest who walks among us, who sees us, who knows us, who loves us, who tells us the truth, and also commends us, and corrects us, and challenges us.

We thank you, Lord, that you motivate us by wonderful rewards and promises. Help us, O Father, who you know us. You know we are weak.

[75 : 27] You know that we fall, that we are prone to wander from the very God that we love. And so, Father, grant us grace, grant us strength, grant us as a church, Lord, to have that little power that you might open doors and grant us opportunity to share about you, or just to show you to others.

This we pray, Father, in Christ's name. Amen.