

Revelation:
Christ in His Possession

I. Christ IN His Possession.

Revelation 1;12, 13 “*And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man...*”

Revelation 1:20 “*The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest ARE the seven churches.*”

Where was Christ seen?

In the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

In other words, right in the midst of His church.

So, just what IS the church?

Church- *Gr* – ekklesia *phonetic:* ek-klay-see’-ah

- 1) A gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, and assembly.
 - a) An assembly of the people convened at the public place of the council for the purpose of deliberating.
 - b) The assembly of the Israelites.
 - c) Any gathering or throng of men assembled by chance, tumultuously.
 - d) In a Christian sense:
 - 1) An assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting.

- 2) A company of Christian, or of those who, hoping for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, observe their own religious rites, hold their own religious meetings, and manage their own affairs, according to regulations prescribed for the body for order's sake.
- 3) Those who anywhere, in a city, village, constitute such a company and are united into one body.
- 4) The whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth.
- 5) The assembly of faithful Christians already dead and received into heaven.

He will *ALWAYS* be found in the midst of His church, because that is what He promised.

Matthew 18:20 *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”*

It's important to realize the the church is uniquely Christ's.

She has been purposely chosen by him.

John 15:9-19 *“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father In my name, he may give it you. These things I commanded you, that ye love one*

another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”

For what purpose has he chosen her?

To become his bride.

Ephesians 5:25-27 *“Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”*

So, then, what is the purpose of the letters to the 7 churches?

To remind them:

- 1) Of who he is.
- 2) Whose they are.

To prepare them:

- 1) For the trials that they will face.
- 2) Of the judgment.

I Peter 4:17, 18 *“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”*

To correct them:

- 1) From sin.
- 2) From error.
- 3) From false doctrine

She is Christ's church.

This is the lens through which we must look at these letters.

With these facts in mind, we will begin to look at the 7 churches of Asia Minor.

They were seven literal churches in Asia minor.

They were all in what is modern day Turkey.

None of them exist today.

They were all situated along a major trade route that insured the letters would be distributed, first to all seven of the churches, and later to all the region, and eventually to all the world.

They descriptions of individual churches throughout all the ages.

They are descriptions of periods of church history.

Called church dispensations.

1. Ephesus-The Loveless Church

The city of Ephesus was closest in geographical location to the Isle of Patmos, and was logically the first letter to be delivered and, thusly, the first to be written to. It was located in the southwest corner of Asia Minor on the sea coast. It was home to the temple of Artemis, and, as such, was a city steeped in Idolatry. It was also a city corrupt with the workings of the occult and overrun with the occultic practices. Financially, Ephesus was a rich city,. However, the Apostle Paul had, in the epistle to the Ephesians, warned them to practice discernment in dealing with the worldly influences of their day. And this they had taken to heart.

How Christ identifies himself.

1. He that holdeth the seven stars.
2. Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

Commendations:

I know thy:

- a) Works
- b) Labour
- c) Patience

“...and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou has tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:”
Rev 2:2d

- d) Discernment

And hast:

- a) Borne
- b) Patience

“...and for my name's sake...”

- c) Laboured
- d) Not fainted

Only one problem, though...

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”
Rev 2:4

They did not LOSE their first love...

They LEFT their first love.

They consciously CHOSE to leave their love.

What love does it refer to?

It could be the love that they initially had for Christ.

OR

It could be the love that they initially had for each other and the lost.

I BELIEVE IT WAS BOTH.

I would call Ephesus the “Martha” church.

Luke 10:38-42 *“Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her,*

Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

They were a working, doing, active church. But what was the motivation?

Love MUST be our motivation. The motivation for all the work that we do and for all the outreach to the lost that we accomplish.

What was the treatment recommended?

- 1) Remember
- 2) Repent
- 3) Do the first works

What was the judgment promised for negligence of the treatment?

"...or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Rev 2:5d

One final commendation.

Thou hatest the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

What is the reward of them that hear and overcome?

"will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Rev 2:7c

2. Smyrna-The Suffering church

Smyrna was a bustling seaport in the day of John. It had been the home of Homer, of the Iliad, and the temple of Athena and had payed host to the martyrdom of Polycarp, who had been it's Bishop. Once again, idolatry was rampant. Additionally, there was a large population of Jews living there, who fought against the church. Financially, Smyrna was wealthy and full of business. It was home to many workers' guilds. Unfortunately, these guilds, as part of their membership, had requirements that their members be a part of the idol worship and occult practices of the time. If not, they were barred from business and trade. As a result, the Christians of Ephesus were, generally, not very well off, as they were, by in large cut off from the general economy. Add to this the persecution brought by the Jews, and you have a formula for poverty the likes of which is hard for us to comprehend. They, did not, however succumb to the pressures.

How Christ introduces himself.

1. The first and the last.

2. Which was dead, and is alive.

Commendations:

I know thy:

- a) Works
- b) Tribulation
- c) Poverty

3. Pergamos-The compromising church

Pergamos was nicknamed "Satan's city" because of it's paganism and idolatry. Christ's reference to "Satan's throne" (vs 13) may have alluded to the city's altar of Zeus. Built on the Acropolis, it was the most famous and ornate alter in the world-100 square feet, 40 feet high, with sculpures surrounding it's base Some historians have suggested that this altar was used in the martyrdom of Antipas. Professing faith in Jesus Christ carried

severe consequences in this bedrock of pagan activity. The church demonstrated conviction and courage by its mere existence, yet idolatry had crept into its congregation. They had yoked the Gospel with paganism, drawing Christ's stern rebuke: "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." Vs 16

4. Thyatira-The Adulterous church

Thyatira was founded was founded under Alexander the Great and was noted for it's trade, particularly purple dye. Lydia, who was one of Paul's converts, was from this region. The church at Thyatira felt a need to be all-inclusive when it came to moral and spiritual boundaries. On the surface, the church was commendable for it's love, faith, service, and patience. But Christ, with his 'eyes like unto a flame of fire' saw through their façade. Spiritual and physical immorality in the form of adultery and eating things sacrificed to idols was their real problem. Much of this stemmed from their tolerance of the 'prophetess' Jezebel and her corrupting influence upon the church. Just as bad was the spirit of Jezebel which corrupted just as badly.

5. Sardis-The dead church

Sardis, the ancient capital of the Lydian kingdom, was situated atop a plateau and sustained several conquests. In this message, Christ refers to himself as 'he who hath the seven spirits of God and who holds the seven stars. The seven spirits of God represents the fullness and completeness of the Holy Ghost's ministry, which the church in Sardis had shut out of it's affairs. The lights were on and people showed up, but the power of the Holy Ghost was missing and neglected. The other churches each received praise from the savior along with his criticism. But Sardis received no commendation-only condemnation. The place was full of "Christians"-but Christians in name only.

6. Philadelphia-The faithful church

Philadelphia was considered the 'Gateway to the east', and was renowned for it's grapes, textiles, and leather goods. Christ only had no condemnation for them-only commendation.

7. Laodicea-The lukewarm church

Laodicea, the ancient capital of the Phygia, gained great wealth through trade and banking. It was also well known for its medical school and costly fabrics. Also, its proximity to Hieropolis and its hot and cold springs, brought much visitation for their rejuvenative properties. Laodicea's water supply, however, was a great distance away. And, while they did have plumbed water delivery to the city, the water was always tepid, or lukewarm and often contaminated upon arrival in the city. Christ's condemnation of the same spiritual condition in the church speaks volumes for the church there.