

A SERMON SERIES ON THE LETTERS TO THE 7 CHURCHES

CHARACTER.

OF THE CHURCHES.
8-WEEK MIDWEEK WORSHIP SERMON SERIES



An 8-Week Mini-Series on the 7 Churches in Revelation
Wednesday, July 23rd, 2025

Sermon #1: 'A Challenge to the Churches!'

An Overview Sermon on Revelation 2-3

Intro:

- As I have been in my study this week in my personal time with the Lord, I have been deep in prayer.
 - *As I began late last week in working through and outlining 1st Samuel 23:1-14, I felt the Lord doing something in my heart, but I had no idea what it could be.*
- *On Sunday night and into Monday, I began to feel He was putting something in my heart, but I didn't know what.*
 - By Tuesday I felt the Lord tell me that we needed to step away from 1st Samuel for small period of time.

- ***Then today, God made it clear to me that we needed to go through the 7 Churches in the book of Revelation.***

- Ever since we finished our series in Mark (3-months ago), we have been heavy in the Old Testament.
 - Ezra on Sundays.
 - 1st Samuel on Wednesdays.

- And then, the Lord really hit me.

- *As I've also been preparing to preach Sunday, on Ezra 6:13-18, as I do everyday, I spend a lot of time praying over our building initiative.*

- As I did that the Lord put in my mind the character of the 7 Churches in the book of Revelation.

- ***There were things that the 7 Churches did well, and then were things that they didn't do as good as they could.***

- While I love FBCG, I think this is an amazing Bible believing and community serving Church, God reminded me, no Church is perfect. No Christian is perfect.

- ***I personally believe that God wants us to go through Revelation 2-3 in the next 7 weeks (On Wednesday Nights) to continue to prepare us for our building journey.***

- While the book of Ezra is certainly teaching us the faith and obedience it takes as well as God's Providence, I felt strongly that the Lord wanted me to share with you all about these 7 Churches and to literally, look at ourselves in the mirror over the next 8 weeks.
- ***Look at ourselves in the mirror:***
 - I've reflected all day on what that may look like for us as a Church over these next 7 weeks. We will study 7 different Churches.
 - ***And John, while he was on the island of Patmos under the direction of the Holy Spirit gave some positives and some things to work on to these Churches.***
 - ***If we were one of those 7 Churches in Revelation, what would it look like for us? I'll share that at the end tonight.***
- Tonight we are not going to begin the verse-by-verse exposition of Revelation 2-3. But, I am going to provide a brief overview, and then look at what it could possibly look like if we looked in the mirror tonight.
 - ***Because at the end of this series, in 2 months, we will look in the mirror again, and see just how far we've come.***

'A Challenge to the Churches!'
Revelation 2-3, an Overview

Intro:

- ***For those of you who have ever moved to a new community and had to select a new Church home, you know just how difficult it is to examine and evaluate a Church and its ministry impact.***
 - Some Churches may have huge and beautiful buildings that just house a dying congregation.
 - Small and modest Church buildings may house the exact opposite.
 - ***What could be a strong and thriving Church for the Lord Jesus Christ.***
 - ***The Church we think is 'rich', may turn out to be 'poor', while the Church we think is 'poor', may actually be 'rich'.***
- ***The truth of Revelation 2-3 is that only the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, can accurately inspect each Church and know it's true conditions... Why?***
 - King Jesus knows the internals and externals. While you and I just know the externals, for the most part.
- ***Revelation 2-3 in One Sentence:***
 - While on the Island of Patmos John wrote special messages to the seven Churches in Asia Minor in the form of an X-ray on each individual Church according to the Lord Himself.
- ***If we hear a crack in our ankle or pain in our heart, we'll be quick to go and get an X-ray.***

- But when we ourselves are guilty of being impure in motives in Christ Church or now we aren't doing what we should, we seek to bury the evidence and not be corrected.
- G. Campbell Morgan wrote ***'It is a very remarkable thing that the Church of Christ persecuted has been the of Christ pure. The Church of Christ patronized has always been the Church of Christ impure.'***
 - ***Pastor, why take us through this? We don't want an X-ray.***
 - ***By now, I've been your Pastor for almost 5 years. I've been able to make a lot of mistakes, with which you've been gracious and forgiving.***
 - But I've also been able to get under the hood of the car, see what works great, and what we can improve.
 - I don't want our Church to drive through a long journey, such as a building campaign, with the engine close to out, or the fuel pump in danger, etc. I want us to be as strong and healthy as God desires us to be as we walk into this.
- Paige Patterson in his commentary on Revelation said this, ***'Almost any Church—even a contemporary congregation—has more in common with one of these historic congregations than with others (down the street).'***

- As much as I have prayed and pleaded with God that we don't need to go through Revelation 2-3, I ask that you pray with what God would have to say to you ***individually***.

■ ***Walking through this series each Wednesday night and having the attitude of 'this has nothing to do with me' is the disease and attitude satan wants you to have.***

- The Church is made up of individuals. Individuals are sinners and we are what makes up the Church. So, what we believe and how we act does matter.

● ***As we begin, let's look at 6 facts about the Seven Churches as we overview them.***

1. All Seven Churches follow a distinct and similar pattern in the Scripture Text.

- a. A characteristic of ***Christ*** drawn from Revelation 1 (and other Texts). Theological and Pastoral.
- b. A word of ***commendation*** and praise, if applicable.
- c. ***Criticism*** for their sins.
- d. A word of ***correction*** and warning.
- e. A ***challenge*** and promise drawn from Revelation 19-22.

2. These were seven historical Churches located in Asia Minor at the end of the first century AD.

3. *These Churches were in and around Ephesus. Ephesus was the major city in Asia minor at this time.*
4. *These Churches were located on a major travel route.*
5. *Each of their messages have a word of wisdom and application for all Churches throughout history until Jesus comes again.*
6. *The Parallels and Patterns are evident in each letter to each Church.*

Before we look into the mirror tonight, let's have an overview of the 7 Churches. Feel free to look at the handout I've given you:

Ephesus, Revelation 2:1-7

- ***Christ.***
 - Jesus Holds the seven stars in His right hand, and walks among the seven golden lamp-stands.
 - This statement is drawn from Revelation 1:20.
 - 'As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.' Revelation 1:20
- ***Commendation.***
 - Works, work ethic, endurance, tolerance of evil, judgment of false teachers in their words and actions.
- ***Criticism.***

- You left your first love.
- ***Correction.***
 - Remember, repent and then return to your first works or be removed. You will lose your lampstand.
- ***Challenge.***
 - You will eat from the tree of life in paradise. (Revelation 22:2).

Smyrna, Revelation 2:8-11

- ***Christ.***
 - The First and the Last, who died and came to life. ***Revelation 1:17-18.***
 - 'When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, **18** and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.'
- ***Commendation.***
 - You've put up with tribulation, poverty, and slander.
- ***Criticism.***
 - None.
- ***Correction.***
 - None.
- ***Challenge.***

- Do not fear, be faithful you will receive the Crown of life and not experience the second death. Revelation 20:6, 14 and Revelation 21:8.

Pergamos, Revelation 2:12-17

- ***Christ.***
 - Has the sharp double-edged sword. Revelation 1:16.
 - 'In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.' Revelation 1:16
- ***Commendation.***
 - Faithfulness, honor for the name of Jesus, refusal to deny faith in Christ.
- ***Criticism.***
 - You are guilty of spiritual compromise by holding the teachings of Balaam which has led to idolatry and sexual immorality. You are also guilty of the teaching of the Nicolaitans.
- ***Correction.***
 - Repent or face the sword of God.
- ***Challenge.***
 - Receive My hidden manna, a white stone, and a new name. (Revelation 19:12).

Thyatira, Revelation 2:18-29

- ***Christ.***

- Has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze. Revelation 1:14-15.

- ***Commendation.***
 - Works, love, faith, service, and patient endurance.
- ***Criticism.***
 - You tolerate Jezebel, a false prophetess who led you into idolatry and sexual immorality.
- ***Correction.***
 - Repent and hold fast what you have until I come.
- ***Challenge.***
 - You will receive authority over the nations, and the morning star. Revelation 20:1-6, Revelation 22:16.

Sardis, Revelation 3:1-6

- ***Christ.***
 - Has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. Revelation 1:4, 20.
- ***Commendation.***
 - Works, undefiled clothes.
- ***Criticism.***
 - You are spiritually dead.
- ***Correction.***
 - Wake up, strengthen what remains, remember: repent.
- ***Challenge.***

- You will be clothed in white garments, not blotted out of the book of life. I will confess your name. Revelation 19:8, 14. Revelation 20:12, 15.

Philadelphia, Revelation 3:7-13

- ***Christ.***
 - Holy and true One who has the key of David and who opens and shuts. Revelation 1:8.
- ***Commendation.***
 - Works, keeping of Jesus' word, refusal to deny His name.
- ***Criticism.***
- ***Correction.***
 - Keep holding onto what you have.
- ***Challenge.***
 - You will be kept from the hour of temptation, made a pillar in God's temple, and receive the name of God, new Jerusalem, and Jesus' new name. Revelation 19:12. Revelation 21:2, Revelation 22:4.

Laodicea, Revelation 3:14-22

- ***Christ.***
 - The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. Revelation 1:5.
- ***Commendation.***
- ***Criticism.***

- You are lukewarm, wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.
- ***Correction.***
 - Buy refined gold from Jesus and white clothing, eye salve. Be Zealous and repent.
- ***Challenge.***
 - You will have communion with Christ and sit on His Throne. Revelation 20:4-6.

Time to look in the mirror:

- ***Here are some things that I've noticed as a Church, that we could do better on and focus in on in these 7-weeks as we study in depth, the 7 Churches.***
 - The Danger of Cliques.
 - Being Aware of Visitors.
 - Loving tradition more than Christ.
 - Commitment.
 - Blending with the Culture.
 - Accepting change.
 - Being kind.
 - Embrace organization.