

Christ's Last Word to His Church SERIES:  
**Christ's Question to Us:  
Do You See Yourself in the  
Picture of the Seven Churches?**  
Revelation 1-3

This morning we are looking back at where we've been. Much like getting home from a trip and spending time looking at the pictures that you took while traveling.

We have invested the past year, looking at the only part of God's Word dictated by Christ, for the express purpose of: being sent to His Church, being read by His Church, and being obeyed by His Church.

There is no part of the Bible so **clear**, so **personal**, and so **direct**: as these three chapters. What exactly did we find in Revelation? We found that:

## **Christ Actually Posted a Picture**

Jesus has posted a picture in the "ultimate FaceBook" of: His Word.

His family and friends are all who claim to be believers in Him.

The responses to His posting will determine who are "really" His Family (those who are related to Him by the new birth); and who are just "friends" (those who are not related by birth, but act like they are, and talk about Him). So this passage helps us differentiate between the two groups.

- **Christ's Genuine Family:** those who personally and actually know Him, and are related to Him by the new birth. Jesus calls this group those who "do His will" (Mat. 7:24-25).
- **Those who are just online "friends":** those who don't personally know Him; but only know Him from pictures and second hand info from others who talk about Him. Jesus calls this group those who "call Him Lord, Lord, but won't do His will" (Mat. 7:24-25).

Back to the picture. These three chapters are unlike any others.

The posting Jesus made 2,000 years ago is a picture of Him, walking through His Church. It is a panoramic shot of all the ages of His Church:

- From ***Pentecost when the Church was born***, through all the ages of trials, triumphs, and tribulations; and
- All the way up to the ***Rapture when He takes the Church out of the world*** so that He can resume His plan for His Chosen People of Promise, the Jews.

Revelation, doesn't make sense unless you understand that the turning point in the Book is: the absence of the Church on Earth, from chapter 4 onward.

That is why the Church is challenged to read these words, and promised a special blessing if they do so. The last book of the Bible makes all the other books fit.

There are so many parts of the Old Testament that don't seem to make sense. The Scriptures very plainly talk of a:

- Long lasting earthly kingdom;
- With Jesus ruling over a time of global peace;
- A time of universal prosperity on this place we call Earth;
- A time of world-wide admiration for the nation of Israel.

That seems like Jewish mythology, or a children's fairy-tale, but not like anything possible. Because there are hundreds of verses across a dozen books of Scripture that say those strange things to our ears, it makes many conclude they can't mean what they say.

The vast majority of Christ's Church for centuries have concluded that much of what is written by the Old Testament prophets: is enigmatic, strange-sounding, and best left alone, or re-interpreted to mean something much different than what they said. But, the truth of Revelation 1-3 is that:

## **Revelation is the Simplest Book**

The Book of Revelation is one of the simplest books of the Bible to understand: if you believe what the rest of the Bible has already said.

Revelation just shows God carrying out all the promises He has already made in the Old and New Testaments.

A simple plan unfolds across the pages of this final inspired book of God's Scriptures, His personal, written revelation to His people. Here is an outline you need to remember. This is what God sent as a gift to every member of Christ's Church:

- Revelation 1-3 portrays **Christ on Earth with His Church.**
- Revelation 4-5 portrays **Christ in Heaven with His Church.**
- Revelation 6-19 portrays **Christ working with Israel on Earth.**
- Revelation 20 portrays **Christ setting up the Kingdom He promised:** to Abraham's physical descendants, for the purpose of fulfilling all the vast number of promises God made in His Word, to Israel.
- Revelation 21-22 portrays **Christ inviting all the redeemed, of all the ages, to join Him** living the banquet of delight consistently promised from Genesis through Revelation, in a city called Heaven & New Jerusalem that merges the Old Testament and New Testament people of God into ONE family of God.

That is the plan God has, that He wrote about, and that He gave to us.

That plan is simple and wonderful, and that plan is ours from God.

In Revelation 1-3, Jesus sent us a message, He posted a picture of His church and tags those in the picture who please Him, and tags those who don't. The key is the challenge:

## Who Can Hear His Voice

Jesus attached a simple challenge: "If you hear what I am saying DO something about it." This portrays an element of salvation: true believers hear and respond to Christ's voice.

Remember back in the Gospel by John? Jesus said in John 10, that there are only two types of people: His sheep and the sheep that are not His. The key that differentiates the two groups is in their hearing.

Jesus said: My sheep hear my voice, I know them, they FOLLOW Me. Simple. Jesus made everything complexly-simple. Simple statements. Simple truths. Complex results.

So where do you see yourself in the picture? Believers hear Christ's voice and respond to what He shows them.

## First, has Christ been crowded out of first place in your life?

*Revelation 2:1,4-5 (NKJV) "To the angel of **the church of Ephesus** write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: 4 **Nevertheless I have this against you**, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; **repent and do the first works**, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—**unless you repent.***

Their hearts got slowly filled with other things so that Jesus no longer held the position of first place in their hearts, in their schedules, in their concentration; and all that signaled that He was no longer their supreme love.

- **Believers respond by repenting of** anything that constricts the priority of Christ's supremacy in their heart and life.

## Second, have you started to fear persecution?

*Revelation 2:8,10 (NKJV) "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: 10 **Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.** Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

- **Believers respond by repenting of** any fear in their heart.

## Third, are you slacking off in resisting the worldliness Christ hates?

*Revelation 2:12,14,16 (NKJV) "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: 14 **But I have a few things against you,** because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. 16 **Repent, or else** I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.*

They have the symptoms of friendship with the world, and had blended right into the activities, entertainments, and habits of the lost world around them and were no longer distinctively Christlike.

- **Believers respond by repenting of** any friendship with the world that displeases God, and instead seek to draw near to God.

## Fourth, have you forgotten to fear Christ's chastening?

*Revelation 2:18, 20-24 (NKJV) "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: 20 **Nevertheless I have a few things against you,** because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 **And I gave her time to repent** of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 22*

*Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. 23 I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And **I will give to each one of you according to your works.***

They were tolerating sinful teachers and wicked teachings, and had allowed the infectious disease of false doctrines and practices to permeate Christ's Body the Church.

- **Believers respond by repenting of** listening to and following any false teachers or false teachings, and return to listening to and obeying God's Word instead.

## **Fifth, are you examing yourself (I Cor. 13:5) to see if you're really saved?**

*Revelation 3:1-3 (NKJV) "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "**I know your works**, that you have a name that you are alive, **but you are dead.** 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. 3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard; **hold fast and repent.***

They appeared dead at the moment, and no longer looked alive in Christ, their minds no longer appeared filled with new life from Christ, they were walking corpses acting, thinking, walking like all those dead in trespasses and sin around them.

- **Believers respond by repenting of** just going through the motions of acting like Christians, and instead remind themselves to allow His powerful grace to work within them.

## **Sixth, are you seeking to please Christ each day in every part of your life?**

*Revelation 3:7-8, 11 (NKJV) "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens": 8 "**I know your works.** See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 11 Behold, I am coming quickly! **Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.***

- Jesus portrays the Philadelphians as normal believers, those who please Him as they: struggle through life, resisting the world, repenting of sin, exercising their calling, and avoiding the deadliness of unconfessed and forsaken sin.

## Seventh, Materialistic Christians Can Become Spiritually Blinded & Distant from God

*Revelation 3:14-17, 19-20 (NKJV) "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. **I could wish you were cold or hot.** 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. **Therefore be zealous and repent.** 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. **If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.***

They had neglected what they needed for their spiritual souls. They were so distracted by their materialistic pursuits of pleasure, and had become so un-needing of Christ.

- **Believers respond by repenting of their apathy for Him and start sacrificially giving Him their attention.**

### Responding to Jesus Today

Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday when He visited the Seven Churches of Revelation 1-3, today as He visits us, and forever.

He still longs for our submission and participation in the sanctifying work of the Spirit, using His Word in our lives. Why not pause and in your hearts look up into the loving but very firm eyes of our Savior—and ponder His questions for them, and see how they apply to each of us.

Today, what are Christ's eyes seeing here in our midst today?

1. Do we need to repent of letting Jesus get crowded out of first place in our time and treasures like those in Ephesus?
2. Do we need to repent of getting on friendship terms with the world that God hates like those in Pergamos?
3. Is there false teaching and teachers we are tolerating that God's Word had already said are WRONG and we need to repent of our listening to and tolerating like those in Thyatira?

4. Are we just going through the motions of church, devotions, and ministry? Do we need to repent of powerless prayers and ministry like those in Sardis?
5. Do we need to repent of any apathy in our sacrificial seeking and serving of Christ like those in Laodicea?

Jesus is here and He is waiting for each of our responses today! When we sing the words of our first chorus during communion: ask Jesus to do what you are singing! Listen to the last stanza:

***At the Name of Jesus*** by Caroline Maria Noel (1817-1877)

At the Name of Jesus, every knee shall bow,  
Every tongue confess Him King of glory now;  
'Tis the Father's pleasure we should call Him Lord,  
Who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

In your hearts ***enthroned Him***;  
there ***let Him subdue***  
***All that is not holy, all that is not true***;  
Crown Him as your Captain in temptation's hour;  
Let His will enfold you in its light and power.

Appendix:

## **The Seven Habits Christ Desires**

### Habit One: Jesus wants us to get zealous about Him & Repent of any Spiritual **Neutrality**

v. 15 **"I know your works** that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, **I will vomit you out of My mouth.**

- Spiritual **Neutrality** is when we stop aggressively resisting sin in our lives.
- Spiritual **Neutrality** is when we say that it no longer matters that every part of our life come under Christ's control. Remember I Corinthians 6:19-20:

*1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NKJV) Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; **therefore glorify God** in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

Jesus died to pay the penalty for all my sins, taking my place He suffered for me, erased the record of my sin and now offers me to live each day in His sanctifying power. Spiritual neutrality is failing to say no to sin.

### Habit Two: Jesus wants us to get dependent upon Him & Repent of any Spiritual **Self-Sufficiency**

v. 17a Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and **have need of nothing**'—

- Spiritual **Self-Sufficiency** is when we think we are making it on our own, and don't need the Lord's power, guidance, and presence.

*Psalm 16:11 (NKJV) You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

- Spiritual **Self-Sufficiency** is when we stop needing to stay in close contact with the Lord. It is when we drift away, and start making it on our own.

We are to be seeking God's will before our own in all the decisions of our lives. Christ is to be first in priority. Jesus is to be the greatest influence upon us.



## Habit Three: Jesus wants us to Listen to His Word & Repent of any Spiritual ***Insensitivity***

v. 17b and **do not know that you are** wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

- Spiritual ***Insensitivity*** is when we lose our spiritual sight, and no longer see ourselves as God's Word explains we are. We lose touch with the mirror of the Word that shows us what needs changing each day as we wait before the Lord.
- Spiritual ***Insensitivity*** is becoming what James calls a "forgetful hearer" Look again at James 1:22-25 (NKJV):

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

## Habit Four: Jesus wants us to Start Investing with Him & Repent of any Spiritual ***Wastefulness***

v. 18a **I counsel you** to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, **that you may be rich;**

- Spiritual ***Wastefulness*** is when we abandon Christ as our investment counselor and the Bank of Heaven gets neglected and the treasures we lay up are buried here on Earth.
- Spiritual ***Wastefulness*** is when we begin to measure things by their earthly and not eternal worth. Slowly we begin to trade the precious time we have for objects that will only rust, burn, rot, get stolen, and weigh us down in life. The Bank of Heaven gets neglected and the treasures we lay up are buried here on Earth.
- Spiritual ***Wastefulness*** is when we ignore Christ's words in Matthew 6:19-21 (and spend our lives laying up our treasures on Earth instead of Heaven: is sickening to Christ. So Jesus Christ calls each of us to repent today of any Spiritual ***Wastefulness***.

## Habit Five: Jesus wants us to Dress ourselves His Way & Repent of any Spiritual ***Neglect***

v. 18b and white garments, **that you may be clothed**, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed;

- Spiritual **Neglect** is when we become more concerned with what we look like to men rather than to God. We impress people outwardly rather than pleasing God inwardly.
- Paul explains the necessity of daily clothing ourselves with Christ in Romans 13:12-14 (NKJV):

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us **put on the armor of light**. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

- Spiritual **Neglect** or not putting on our spiritual armor: is sickening to Christ. So Jesus Christ calls each of us to repent today of any Spiritual **Neglect**.

## Habit Six: Jesus wants us to Care for our Eyes & Repent of any Spiritual **Blindness**

v. 18c and anoint your eyes with eye salve, **that you may see**.

- Spiritual **Blindness** is when we begin to stumble along, acting more and more like lost people who do not know, can not see, and do not follow the Lord. Acts 26:18 says that Christ opened our eyes at salvation, and now we can see. To allow neglected spiritual hygiene to slowly darken our spiritual sight is horrible.
- Spiritual **Blindness** is just that: blindness to things of God. We no longer see Him in His Word.
- Spiritual **Blindness** is when we stop noticing His Hand in our lives, extended to us to hold onto and follow Him through life.
- Spiritual **Blindness** or not reading God's truth in His Word: is sickening to Christ. So Jesus Christ calls each of us to repent today of any Spiritual **Blindness**.

## Habit Seven: Jesus wants us to Hate sin for Him & Repent of any Spiritual **Laxity**

v. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and **repent**.

- Spiritual **Laxity** is when we drop our guard about unconfessed sins in our lives.
- Spiritual **Laxity** is when we forget how horrible sin always is to Jesus. Our sin cost Christ His very life, His intimate fellowship with the Father, and made Him feel the wrath of God in our place. Get rid of sin, don't sweep it under the rug.
- Spiritual **Laxity** is when we forget He wants us walking in the light, seeing our sin as He does and immediately seeking His cleansing as we repent and forsake all sin. Jesus hates it when we hide and cover for our sins, instead of confessing and forsaking them. Listen to Proverbs 28:13 (NKJV)

He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

- Spiritual **Laxity** or not regularly confessing and forsaking our sin: is sickening to Christ. So Jesus Christ calls each of us to repent today of any Spiritual **Laxity**.