

“What Potential!”
The Seven Churches ~ Revelation 2-3

Introduction:

1. As We Look At The Lord’s “State Of The Church” Address, We Have Already Looked At Who Is Giving The Address – The Lord – In Chapter 1!
- Now, We Will Turn Our Attention To Who Is Getting The Address – The Seven Churches, Which Have Already Been Identified In 1:11 – In Chapters 2-3!
2. As We Look At These Seven Specific Letters, There Are At Least Four Things That We Must Remember & Keep In Mind!

1. *The Presence Of The Lord In Our Church!*

- Jesus Promised In Matthew 18:20 - “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them!”
 - This Promise Continues To Be Fulfilled In The Churches Of Revelation & Our Church Today!
- Jesus Christ Is In The Midst Of All!
 - He Is In The Midst Of The Seven Churches!
 - 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!”
 - 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!”
 - He Is In The Midst Of A Single Church!
 - The Lord Reminds The Church Of Ephesus Of His Presence In 2:1 - “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks!”
 - The Lord Is In The Midst Of Our Church Tonight! He Is Present With Us!
 - How Do We Know This?
- Jesus Christ Is Giving A Message For All!
 - The Book Of Revelation Was Written For Every Christian!
 - 1:3 - “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand!”
 - A Universal Blessing! No Restriction!
 - The Letters To The Churches Were Written For Every Church!
 - 2:7 - “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches!” (Used 2 More Times!)
 - The Message & Meaning Applies To Every Church! Relevant!
 - The Lord Is Giving A Message To Our Church Tonight! He Is Present With Us!
- Jesus Christ Demonstrates His Might For All!
 - According To The Introduction Of Each Of These Seven Letters, The “Angels” Or “Messengers” Were Each Part Of The Church They Represented!
 - See 2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14!
 - Where Were These Messengers – The Seven Stars – In John’s Vision?
 - 1:16 - “And he had in his right hand seven stars!”
 - The Place Of Power & Protection & Pleasure!
 - Exodus 15:6 - “Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy!”
 - John 10:28-28 - “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. / My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand!”
 - Psalm 16:11 - “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore!”
 - We Are In The Same Place! And The Lord Is Demonstrating His Might To Our Church Tonight! He Is Present With Us!

2. *The Power Of The Lord Over Our Church!*

- Because He Is Present With Us – And Because Of His Relationship To Us – He Has The Power And Authority To Assess & Address Our Church!
 - He Is The One We Must Submit To! He Is The One We Answer To! After All, This Is His Church!
 - He Formed The Church! (1 Corinthians 12:28)
 - He Feeds The Church! (Acts 20:28)
 - He Favors The Church! (Ephesians 5:25, 29)
 - He Functions Within The Church! (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23 - “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church” / “Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body!”)
- He Has The Power To Commend Our Church!
 - He Does So To 6 Of The 7 Churches! Even The Ones That Have Some Problems, In His Grace & Mercy, He Points Out The Areas Of Faithfulness That He Does See!
 - Only Laodicea Is Not Commended For Anything, As It Represents A Faithless Church!
 - Are There Things That The Lord Would Commend In Our Church?
 - The Faithfulness / Generosity / Love Of Our Members! Keep On Being This Way!
 - But, Are There Other Things That We Are Weak In Or Struggle With?
 - Of Course! So:
- He Has The Power To Challenge Our Church!
 - Again, He Does So To 6 Of The 7 Churches! With Every Concern, He Provides A Challenge!
 - Only Philadelphia Is Not Criticized Nor Challenged – As It Represents The Faithful Church!
 - The Challenge Is To:
 - Repent! (Pergamos - 2:14, 16)
 - Remember! (Ephesus - 2:4, 5a)
 - Remain! (Sardis - 3:1-2)
 - What Do We Need To Do When Confronted By The Lord’s Challenge?
 - Respond! If We Don’t:
- He Has The Power To Chastise Our Church!
 - And He Gives A Penalty / Correction To 4 Of The 7 Churches!
 - Example Of Laodicea - “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent!” (3:19)
 - The Purpose Of Every Penalty Is For His Church To Return To Him! Hebrews 12:6-7 - “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. / If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”
 - How?
 - To Ephesus, He Said He Would Remove Them!
 - To Pergamos, He Said He Would Rebuke Them!
 - To Sardis, He Said He Would Return To Them!
 - Do We Need The Lord’s Chastisement? Hebrews 10:31 - “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!”
 - We Won’t Need It, If We Respond Through Repentance And Submission!
 - Because His Power Is Based On:

3. ***The Perception Of The Lord Of Our Church!***

- The Lord Can Assess The Condition Of Our Church, Because He Knows Everything About Our Church!
- John Described The Lord’s Eyes As “A Flame Of Fire!” (1:14)
 - The Lord Reminds The Church In Thyatira Of His Piercing Perception & Knowledge! 2:18 - “And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass!”
 - And Then To This Church, And Every One Of The Seven Churches, The Lord Says: “I Know Thy Works!”
 - This Is The Lord’s Omniscience – All-Knowing Perception!
 - As Warren Wiersbe Puts It: “Only The Head Of The Church, Jesus Christ, Can Accurately

Inspect Each Church And Know Its True Condition, Because He Sees The Internals, Not Only The Externals!”

- Describes These Letters As An “X-Ray Of Its Condition!”
- Reminds Us Of 1 Samuel 16:7 - “For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart!”
- He Knows All Of Our Strengths!
 - Like Ephesus, He Knows Our Patience & Labor!
 - Like Pergamos, He Knows Our Grasp Of His Truth!
 - Like Philadelphia, He Knows Our Obedience!
 - Our Strengths Come From His Strength!
 - We Need To Keep On Living In His Strength!
- He Knows All Of Our Weaknesses!
 - Like Ephesus, He Knows Our Carelessness!
 - Like Pergamos, He Knows Our Compromise!
 - Like Thyatira, He Knows Our Corruption!
 - Like Sardis, He Knows Our Feebleness!
 - Like Laodicea, He Knows Our Foolishness!
 - Our Weakness Come From Our Own Flesh!
 - We Need To See Ourselves As He Sees Us, And Turn Away From Our Flesh & Live For Him!
 - Galatians 6:8 - “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting!”
- When We Learn To See Ourselves As The Lord Sees Us, We Will Also Recognize:

4. *The Potential For The Lord By Our Church!*

- A Church Has Great Potential!
 - We See This In The 7 Churches Themselves!
 - But What Do These 7 Churches Represent?
 - Some See 7 Different Ages Throughout Church History – And Consider That We Are “Living In The Laodicean Age!”
 - But Is This The Point Of These 7 Churches?
 - If It Is, Then Any Revival Or Reform Is Hopeless, If We Are Living In The “Laodicean Age” – The Age Of The Lukewarm, Foolish Church!
 - If It Is, Then The People Up Until This Age Were Foolish To Look For His Imminent Return!
 - It Is Better To See These 7 Churches As Representing A Broad Spectrum Of Churches In Every Age!
 - From The Faithful Church – Philadelphia – Where Nothing Negative Is Said About It – To The Un-Faithful Church – Laodicea – Where Nothing Good Is Said About It! And A Spectrum Of Churches Between Them!
 - We See This Spectrum Across All Churches In All Ages!
 - It Is Useful To Assess Our Church! Where Do We Fall Along The Spectrum! What Will It Take For Us To Become A “Philadelphia?”
 - Our Church, As Long As It Exists, Has Great Potential!
- Potential For Unfaithfulness!
 - Going Down The Spectrum Toward Laodicea!
 - The Lord Was Concerned About Each Of These Churches Sliding Down The Scale! So He Tells Them What To Do!
 - We Need To Be Concerned About Our Own Potential For Unfaithfulness & Vigorously Guard Against It!
 - We Can Easily:
 - Leave Our First Love, Like Ephesus!
 - Look Alive On The Outside, But Be Dead On The Inside, Like Sardus!
 - Be Neither Cold Or Hot – But Lukewarm, Like Laodicea!
 - But, By God’s Grace, There Still Is In Every Church The:

- Potential For Faithfulness!
 - Like Philadelphia – Keeping His Word!
 - And When We Are Faithful, God Rewards!
 - In Spite Of Our Past!
- There Is Great Potential In Our Church Tonight!
 - Which Direction Are We Going? Will We Go?

Conclusion:

1. Even Though Our Church Is Not Named Here, We Are One Of Those Seven Churches!
 - Let Us Strive To Become The Faithful Church & Remember:
 - The Presence Of The Lord In Our Church!
 - The Power Of The Lord Over Our Church!
 - The Perception Of The Lord Of Our Church!
 - The Potential For The Lord By Our Church!

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