

The SCOTUS Dobbs Decision in Biblical Perspective  
Revelation 2:1-7  
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Revelation 2:1-7 says [1] *“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him (pastors of the seven churches) who holds the seven stars (seven churches of the presbytery John is writing to) in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.*

*[2] ‘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] I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. [4] But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. [5] 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. [6] Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. [7] 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.’*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever, by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

This is the mother church of the churches in this presbytery – the church at Ephesus in Asia Minor. It was a church that was revitalized under the ministry of Timothy and now is under the ministry of the Apostle John and needed to be revitalized again. If our extra Biblical history is accurate, even Jesus’ mother is there with John, who is taking care of her in the context of anticipating the matters at the church of Ephesus. So, the road map is given to them.

We use this constantly in our lampstand ministry for we have three tracks. One track is planting churches and coaching church planters called igniting the flame of the lampstand. Then there is the track of church revitalization which is called Embers to a Flame. The third track is that of church acceleration – how to take a healthy church to the next level and that is called Fanning the Flame.

In the area of church revitalization, we have had this roadmap of remember, repent and recover. How did John address their shortcomings whereby he admonished them that they had left their first love? Revelation 2:5 says [5] **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.* The idea of recover is to recover the first things.

As I was trying to consider how to frame this moment in time, the blessing of the General Assembly yet the work to be done, the blessings of this Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v Wade* and *Casey* – both fabricated opinions that did not come from the constitution for they came from political aspirations of certain justices at the time and they came from the political and cultural winds of the day that were blowing. The reality of that and the establishment of those rulings we have now been in an almost 50 year battle.

This is a battle, I know as a Christian and then as a pastor that I have been engaged in now for 49 years and I will confess to you there have been many, many days that staying in the battle was just being done because it was the right thing. I didn’t really have much hope that things would ever be legally reversed. Isn’t God glorious and gracious? God is absolutely marvelous for I marveled the day after we make that declaration of appeal to our elected officials comes the reversal of *Roe v Wade*. I want to try and put this battle for the sanctity of life in

perspective and then I want to walk through this roadmap of how to take this moment – remember, repent and recover the first things.

I want us to look at this from a Biblical world and life view, not a political one. I want you to look at the politics, the cultural issues, the ministry issues, and the relational issues all Biblically so that we can respond to this moment rightly and be good stewards of this moment as Christians and as Briarwood Presbyterian Church. I thank the Lord for the members who have engaged this battle when many have fallen by the wayside over the 49 years. I thank the Lord for the elders for showing how this must be and how it must be conducted.

The issue of the sanctity of life did not arise with Roe v Wade. That's not when it started. The sanctity of life began in the Garden. Satan is a murderer from the beginning. Abortion, infanticide, homicide, active euthanasia – did not begin in 1973 with a faulty contrived Supreme Court opinion that I'm grateful has been reversed for multiple reasons. That has been with us and will continue to be with us – Satan will continue to do his work as a liar, a thief and a murderer through the schemes and snares that he lays through the unthinking and the absolute rebellious, until he is cast headlong into the lake of fire. There will be those who aid and abet his work out of rebellion against God and the sin nature of man. This issue will be with us our whole Christian life until Jesus comes again.

I'm grateful for this moment, this respite in time. We live in a culture of insanity, absurdity, immorality and lethality. I'm grateful for this decision that in God's kind common grace has put somewhat of a restraint. I'm grateful that at least the pre-born at this moment have been given legal cover from those who would seek to destroy them in rebellion against God. I am even more grateful to be in a state that once this court decision was made, we didn't have to pass a single law for it had already been passed in record time earlier. Now all the injunctions against it have to fall away. I'm grateful for the leadership of many, including some in our own congregation in the leadership of our state and their faithfulness.

I know the evil empire is going to strike back. My heart is that it would not simply be illegal, but that it would become unimaginable. I think in this moment while we remember we will also have to move to repentance, because we have to ask ourselves, at least from my generation, how did the unimaginable become not only imaginable but the unthinkable became thinkable, the undoable became doable and the defense for that life is what became unimaginable in the culture. How did that get here under our watch?

I want to start first with this matter of remembering. The word remember is an amazing word in the Bible and it doesn't think what you and I think of. Having two wonderful daughters I'm constantly reminded of things that I better remember – like a birthday for my lovely, wonderful, incomparable wife which I have memorized after 53 years and our anniversary. There are other things that she expects me to remember and that I ought to remember. It's not simply keep in touch with the facts of life. 'Remember' in the Bible means a lot more than this for it means to take something and set it aside to a sacred position for the purpose of worship and instruction. Remember the Sabbath Day.

I have an opinion – I believe one of the markers of looking at the death spiral of our culture, you can go back to the loss of the sacred embrace of the Lord's Day by Christians. It just became another day – it became 'I ought to work in to going to church today.' I believe there is a direct relationship to that. I believe the Lord's Day is that collection of means of grace and when it is not embraced out of priority, privilege and purpose that we begin to lose something. I believe one of the markers of the loss of the Sabbath Day began with the diminishing of Lord's evening worship. I've done a study on this but not enough where I would

preach it from the pulpit but enough that I would comment on it from the pulpit. Set aside the Sabbath and make it a sacred moment, a sacred engagement for the purpose of adoration and instruction.

When we come to the sacraments this same format is given to us. At the Lord's Supper we remember the body and blood of the Lord. Then we examine ourselves and repent. Then we are to preach the Gospel until He comes again. Remember, repent and recover the first things, the same format. Remember the body where He bore our sins. Remember the blood that He freely gave declaring not only His physical death but dying that death that is due for all eternity in our place as He bore hell – our judgment on the cross. Interestingly, the New Testament Lord's Supper that becomes a way of life for believers, we can also see all the way back in the Old Testament Old Covenant meal – the Passover.

The Passover is fulfilled in Christ who is our Passover and then He establishes this bloodless New Covenant meal. The Passover pointed to what He would do on the cross and the New Covenant meal points back to what He has done on the cross. Note the same paradigm of remember, repent and recover the first things. Remember that I delivered you out of Egypt and slavery. Clean out the leaven – repent of your sin. Eat the meal in haste and take up your staff then and follow Me. Get back to being recalibrated, refreshed and renewed to the basics.

Looking back at Exodus 13 it is something I would apply in this moment for us – it's not a one for one but it is for now. Exodus 13:3 says [3] *Then Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place."* That would be the very first thing I would tell you. Remember and worship the Lord for a moment like we have experienced this past week. Remember and give Him praise.

Look at the things that surround this decision. How did this decision get into our place? I'm grateful for it and I'm praying that God is going to use this moment and the ice of sin would start cracking and the frozen temperature of dead hearts dominating entire cultures would be broken, but the reality is even with the face of persistent perseverance by many of God's people humanly speaking this thing shouldn't have happened. In the last few years, abortions have been rising. This last year one out of every five conceptions ended in abortions. That's like lining up 20 kids in a classroom and you have to pull four of them out. When you look at a playing field start removing one out of every five who were inconvenient, imperfect or unwanted. We have a dominate culture of death.

This is not like 1973 for this is justices who made a decision out of the sovereign hand of God, that is not in step with the culture, in fact is reviled by the culture so much that I'm remembering these justices and their families and their safety. I adjure you to do the same thing. I do not take their safety for granted. It wasn't that there was a culture wanting the sanity of the sanctity of life. On the contrary, we are living in a culture that embraces with all of its resources available the insanity of a culture of death. This glorious statement that rightly honors a constitution that is there to protect life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness was made in the face of cultural head winds. It was not and is not a popular decision reflecting the movement of the culture for it was made against the head winds of the culture.

Humanly, this decision should not have been made. I believe it is a direct intervention of the sovereign hand of God. I praise God for all the ministries that were even started here that have taken on the challenge for the sanctity of life. While it may be the majority report among us, it's not the majority report among the culture yet in the face of it, God brought this decision, even with leaks about it that would heighten pressure to stop it. I honor those who had the

courage and the sanity of thought to make the decision and go through with it. Yet where did we get them? It was out of the context of a challenged president and presidency. You can only see the sovereign hand of God that in the moment that Satan means evil, God has meant that which is good.

All the culture shapers – the big academy, big government, big business, big entertainment industry, the media, journalism – have been and with a vengeance are going to arrayed against this decision yet God brought it forth. I couldn't believe when I read the promises of large corporations of how much money they are going to give to secure plane trips and support to kill the baby – I don't see them giving money only to kill the life. We are seeing a glimmer of sanity in the midst of the insanity, absurdity, lethality and immorality. You must know that in a culture that is committed to sexual revolution of promiscuity and perversion, the sacrament of secularization in a sexual revolution is abortion and has to be held on to at all cost. This is not going away for the battle is not done. This battle enters another phase.

I'm grateful to take this moment, that day and this decision and remember the sovereign hand of God that intervened against the head winds of culture using the courage and sanity of six justices to at least make the sanctity of life affirmed and abortion illegal. I'm going to remember and there is a very important reason I want you to remember it. I've been reading the papers. The Planned Parenthood clinics are closing. I have been sent so many things telling me that these clinics are just women's health clinics and that abortion is only three percent of their business. Tell me why they are closing with the loss of only three percent of their business. Quit telling me that the taking of the unborn life is an act of health providers, because that's not what it is because children are not a disease for they are those who bear the image of God and are to be nurtured and affirmed. Those who are in a crisis moment of a pregnancy, we are to come into their life as so many of you have and I've had the privilege to watch you do it in serving the Lord here for 23 years.

In this decision, I'll honor the justices and the president who put them into place – the three that turned the tide, but this is the Lord's doing. We will not forget to remember the Lord. We will honor what He has done. If we do remember it's a time of instruction for us. What is this telling us? We are not to just go from constitutional decision to constitutional decision. What is it that we ought to do as the body of Christ?

When Jesus came in His Incarnate body, He came as the Messiah – Prophet, Priest and King. We as the body of Christ are to reflect Him as we fulfill the Great Commission and establish a culture of the Great Commandment – to love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind, and our neighbor as ourselves, the culture within the body of Christ, beginning with one another. As God calls us to engage in that then we need to bear the testimony of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King. That means the church in the public square must speak public theology to power. We must speak truth in love to power in the public square – big business, big media, big government, big education, etc. – all those things that say they're the culture shapers. Believers can't do that unless the church is doing its work of evangelism and discipleship. If the church is doing this then Christians can step into the public arena as salt, to retard sin and as light to transform sinners.

Therefore, I believe we are led to repentance. We must not say 'this culture is in trouble so we're going to replace the five culture shapers pastor Reeder told us about and the church and its mission is to be a culture shaper.' That is not the church's mission. Our mission is to make disciples of this nation through evangelism and discipleship. These are men and women who love to worship, who will share their faith with others, who are growing in small group

discipleship, who are multiplying themselves and maturing others, who know how to live in a marriage, who know how to live in Godly singleness and know how to live in a family. That's what we do. The culture shaping will be the consequence, not the mission.

I actually believe it was our dabbling in one church growth that caused us to abandon the Gospel that won't put people in the seats. Where are the series on hell? Where are the series that show sin and its sinfulness? Where is that in the evangelical church today? It's not there because the goal of gathered worship on Sunday became how many numbers attended today? This has nothing to do with my wanting people to come to Christ because as I see the Bible, people come to Christ not by getting into a building where we're meeting but when we leave the worship service going after them in the hi-ways and by-ways and bringing them into our home. I plead with you to bring people to Briarwood on Sundays who don't know Jesus for I promise I will give them the Gospel for I long for that but that's not the purpose of our assembly. The purpose of our assembly is not believer-centered or seeker-centered but God centered and that's what will doxologically do evangelism.

The key is not in the gathered assembly, it's in those who scatter from the assembly with the Gospel everywhere in life. That's what I think we need to repent of and one more, our prayerlessness. I wish a program would solve it but prayerlessness will never be cured until we are convinced that we are unable to do what God has called us to do without Him. Prayerlessness will not diminish until we become convinced that the people out there can't come to Christ – we don't have the ability to take Christ to them and they don't have the ability to come to Christ. Until we get convinced of those two things, we're not going to pray for we'll just look for another program. Finally, until God's glory, the salvation of the lost and the testimony of Christ's church to this world becomes an intolerable burden, we won't pray.

So, we need to repent of being off mission, off message and off ministry. We have lost the worship ministry to entertainment. Evangelism has become salesmanship – we have lost calling people by the Gospel to a living, personal relationship with Christ. Discipleship has become coaching therapy. Discipleship is much more than that – the life on life relationships established in a small group. We need to get back to those basics that God has called us to. In other words, our repentances leads us to recover the first things.

I'm not going to throw any wet blanket on this day for what a glorious day it was to hear the overturning of Roe v Wade. I'm having a hard time now containing myself emotionally for my own life and the length of this battle. I can't imagine even some of you, churches and ministries. We're talking about the head winds of culture but look at the head winds of the evangelical church. In my own denomination, a poll was just established that 57 percent believe that abortion should be allowed. It's pretty good but it needs a lot of work. Then I look around for all the evangelicals for life that I heard about and when I look for their comments I don't find them. I do hear things like 'what about when there's something wrong with the child or the woman pregnant who has this problem' and when those things happen, we want to help with medical assistance.

Our Save-a-life pregnancy center is not over, for it's expanding. The day of adoption agencies is not over and I praise God for Lifeline ministry for it needs to expand in this day more than ever. The day of our foster care ministry has to expand. The day of responding to the woman in crisis, challenging the man who is absent, working on the legal issues to bring men back into the equation with their presence and responsibility – all of that is yet before us, but I will praise God for this day and I know it's the hand of the Lord that has brought us from a legalized death culture of the most defenseless. Now, the church has the great challenge to not

only to remember but to repent wherever we need to and give God our full commitment to get back on mission, on message and in ministry.

I want to show you at least thing where you can see the sovereign hand of God in all this. In 1973 when that decision of Roe v Wade was made the Protestant/Evangelical church was all over the place. Then came all of these discussions and it took us about five to seven years to get our theology straightened on this for we hadn't been thinking about it so this made us think through the theology of life. Secondly, we had to think through how to respond for abortion clinics were getting vandalized and it took us a while for us to figure out how we defend the faith without being defensive and contend for the faith without being contentious. Here is the way in word and deed, here is the public square, the private ministry, the efforts to save the sanctity of life, each child individually, and here's how we do it. But God has brought maturity in our apologetics and in our ministry.

Then look at all the ministries that came out of it. I have to tell this story about Wales Gobel. We were at an event where he was supposed to talk about what it means to be an evangelist and I was going to talk about what it means to be a pastor, after Wales had done his I said 'I can tell you the difference between an evangelist and a preacher right now. I'm a pastor/teacher because there is no way that I could grow that head of hair that Wales has for he has the hair of an evangelist. In fact, he looks like Billy Graham.' Wales had such a heart for the lost but it didn't stop there. Then came the sex education curriculum for the public schools, the Save-a-Life clinic and the Lifeline and now we have Lawyers for Life, Doctors for Life and Nurses for Life ministries. I can't even name all the ministries that came out of this and caused us to do after the 1973 decision that humanly speaking, we probably wouldn't have done. What was meant for evil God meant for good. These ministries we have now don't need to go away because the murderer is not going away.

Then we need to take this to another level of being on mission, on message and in ministry so that the legal battle becomes a statement by us, people who know how to worship God, evangelize the lost and disciple, love one another and grow deeper in their faith which in turn thrusts people out in society who are salt and light so that the culture of death might become unimaginable. That's what I believe God has called us to and where we are now.

I believe we are at the moment of a Gospel resurgence, particularly in the Reformed church. It's what I'm praying for. From recently being at the General Assembly and conversations, I just sense maybe Asland is on the move – the Lion of Judah – and a Gospel driven, sacred, Christ exalting, Spirit filled, Bible preaching, Gospel sharing awakening, instead of this secular awakening. My prayer is all of us will be like Andrew who are just trying to find people to turn to Jesus. All of us will turn into the woman at the well who was called to love, serve and worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. All of us will give ourselves and devote ourselves to the doctrine and discipleship.

The evil empire will and is going to strike back. I believe, you can expect that this administration will bring economic pressure, legal pressure, law enforcement pressure if possible and I believe is going to try and legalize infanticide. I believe the culture shapers are going to get right in line because it's financially profitable. That's why I want to remember this day. When we have to deal with the Gospel deeds of love, mercy and justice and the Gospel words to save the souls of men and women in an LGBTQAI tsunami cultural movement and the evil empire striking back trying to reestablish a death culture, I want to remember this day when the Lord, against the head winds of the culture sent a breath of air to make the holocaust upon the

preborn illegal. Now I pray by a Gospel movement and resurgence that it will become unimaginable and I pray this in Jesus' Name. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, I thank You for the moments to be in Your Word and there are so many things that need to be covered in a time like this but thank You that we can repent of our being off mission, off message, and getting side tracked. Thank You Father that we can repent of prayerlessness, of lethargy and apathy. Thank You that we can now be engaged and You have encouraged us in this day. Lord, I thank You that You tell us to make moments of this, just as when You used Joshua as You brought him through the Jordan River as You piled up the stones and said 'Remember what I did and bring your children back here and tell them' (Joshua 4:1-7). So, we will remember Your deeds this day and in the days to come as we enter in not a culture war, but a spiritual war for the souls of men and women and the culture is just another opportunity to declare the victories of grace. God, give us a great commitment to being a Great Commission church. We are not standing on the sidelines looking on for we want to be engaged. Then Father, may the world see Your people and how they love one another and how they love the lost. Give us a Great Commandment culture within the church to love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind and our neighbor as ourselves, beginning with one another. Father, I know personally that this lesson is so important, so in the days of adversity help us keep a thick skin so that we do not develop a thick heart. Don't let us have thin skin with a thick heart – help us have a thin heart and the necessary thick skin. In fact God, I pray that we would see adversity against us as a Divine benediction as You use our adversaries to provide a benediction. I'm reminded of Matthew 5:11-12 when Jesus said [11] *"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."* We are not to be silent or shamed into silence and we don't retreat. On the contrary, the adversities are simply You using the adversaries to do in us and upon us what we could never do for ourselves. O God our God, may Your sovereign hand be seen and felt through Your Word and by Your Spirit, in Jesus' Name, Amen.