

Christ's Last Words to His Church Series: God's Desire for Christ's Church Is Crucified Living Revelation 2 & 3

This morning, we are gathering as Christ's Church at Calvary Bible. We are part of the gathering on this the Lord's Day, of all His obedient children, for Jesus asked us and believers to keep gathering to worship Him until He comes.

So this morning, there is perhaps no portion of Scripture is more vital for us as we live out our lives on Earth, than the last book of the Bible before us today. In the final book of God's Word we find that:

Revelation is the: Culmination & Conclusion

This book comes last because it is not only the ***Conclusion of God's Word***, it is also the ***Culmination of God's Plan***. We see everything that started in Genesis: the Perfect Paradise of God, the Rebellion and Fall of the Universe into Sin, the Flood of Water Destroying the rebels, and the choosing and saving of the People of the Covenant—all in their final form in Revelation.

Revelation opens to us the return of the Paradise of God, the End of the Rebellion, the Final Destruction with Fire of the entire sin-cursed Universe, and the safe arrival home of all the People of the Covenant.

For a moment, do you remember the structure of the Book of the Revelation? The way this book is laid out by God is very instructive. What we can easily see is Christ depicted in three very different but very descriptive ways. First:

For the Church on Earth, Portrait 1: Christ is the Great High Priest Revelation 1-3

In Revelation 1-3 we see Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest (especially described in Rev. 1:9-20), who ever lives to intercede for us. These chapters are addressed to, focused upon, and build around the Seven Churches.

For three chapters we see the Risen Christ dressed like a priest in His white robe, and with His burning eyes of purifying fire, as He constantly, and interceedingly walks

through His Church. That is Jesus as He is Today; and that has been the focus of these past few weeks and will be for us again this morning.

The sight of Jesus Christ as the Great High Priest of His Church never shows up again in Revelation, this portrait as the Great High Priest is only in chapters 1-3, only for us in His Church, and Ends when we are all safely home in our Father's House. Next:

For the Church in Heaven, Portrait 2: Christ is the Worthy Lamb that was slain Revelation 4-5, 21-22

Then in Revelation 4-5 we find that Jesus looks differently: as He relates to His glorified Church around the Throne in Heaven He is shown as the Worthy Lamb that was Slain (see Rev. 5:6). No longer is He depicted as the blazing-eyed, purity-seeking High Priest, inspecting the health of His Body the Church and performing corrective surgical pruning to keep us pleasing in His sight.

Instead Jesus is now portrayed as standing before the Throne as the One who was Slain as a perfect, spotless Lamb for ours sins. The choirs of Heavenly saints are singing, the angelic creatures are joining them in worship, and all of Heaven is focused upon the Lamb who is worthy.

That portrait is quite different from the portrait of Revelation 1 with the white robed, white-haired, blazing-eyed Lord of the Church. Jesus as the Lamb receives our worship, comforts His saints, welcomes His faithful-unto-death martyrs, and finally leads us all safely to the banquet in chapter 19, and finally in Revelation 21-22 when we all arrive safely to our place in our Heavenly Father's House.

Then we are introduced to the final image of Christ:

For the Rebels on Earth, Portrait 3: Christ is the Warring Lion of Judah Revelation 6-20

As He relates to His Rebellious Creation, He is the Warring Lion of the Tribe of Judah who prevailed (Rev. 5:5). Jesus is seen quite differently again. He is not shown as a wounded to death, scarred, sacrificial substitute Lamb to the King of the Universe, the Heir to the Title Deed of Heaven and Earth, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

From the Throne, Jesus Christ, the Son of David directs the conquest of the rebellious earth-dwellers as He calls them in this final Book. First He sends the waves of disaster in Revelation 6, then He sends in His chosen Jewish evangelists in chapter 7, then He unfolds His wrath all the way through the end of chapter 20, when His Conquest is done.

This takes us back to the start of the Book of Revelation, to the part that most vitally concerns us.

Remember that Revelation 1-3 is different from all other New Testament books. Each Epistle in the New Testament was written to a specific local church, or group of churches, and then is also applicable to us. But, Christ addressed each word of all three of these chapters to all churches.

Christ's Priority Today is Being High Priest To His Church

Revelation 1-3 it is ***the book that mentions the Church more*** in two chapters than any of the other books of the Bible. In fact only 1st Corinthians (23x) and Acts (22x) mention the Church more than the 20x this book does.

Jesus is shown in Revelation preparing His Church for presentation to His Father. We know that as God the Son, Jesus wants to present us as a pure Church.

Jesus wants us without spot or wrinkle, as He offers us to God the Father. That is what Paul teaches us in Ephesians 5.

Jesus Christ as the One who is charged with "presenting us faultless before" God's Presence (Jude 1:24-25), is constantly interceding for us (Hebrews 7:24-25), and challenging us to walk "worthy" of our calling before God (I Thessalonians 2:12)

These, and many of the other lessons for the New Testament, point to this work of preparation of each individual member of Christ's Church. This process we know collectively as the doctrine of sanctification.

Sanctification is Crucified Living

Sanctification is unleashing the power of the Cross, into our daily choices.

Now look at our text this morning in Revelation 3:14-22. We are going to meet the fifth and final church that got a bad report in Christ's High Priestly visit to their gathering.

Please stand and listen to Christ's letter to them, and to each of us today.

The saints in Laodicea had become neutralized to the power of God through His Word and Spirit—listen to what Christ said:

Revelation 3:14-22 (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— 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 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. 21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."""

Remember, Jesus found cause to be displeased with 5 of the 7 churches. We have already seen the others. Each of the corrections Christ gave, and we have studied, pointed to a change that God desired them to make in their lives individually, and in their churches collectively.

The best way to understand Revelation 2-3 is to say that:

God Desires Each of us to Be

1. Loving Jesus Most (His Message to Ephesus, Rev. 2:1-7);
2. Separating from Sin (His Message to Pergamos, Rev. 2:12-17);
3. Un-Friending Worldliness (His Message to Thyatira, Rev. 2:18-29);
4. Overflowing with His Spirit (His Message to Sardis, Rev. 3:1-6);
5. **Living Crucified** (His Message to Laodicea, Rev. 3:14-22).

The saints at Laodicea had neglected for way too long what they needed for their spiritual souls, because they were so distracted by their materialistic pursuits of pleasure.

They had become so un-needing of Christ—that Jesus said they were blind, miserable and putrid. Jesus wanted to spit them out of His mouth, like a sickening taste, or a spoiled piece of food that could only be vomited out.

That was where the church at Laodicea had come. How could any believer get that displeasing to God? Simply by neglecting the daily call to live a crucified life.

Jesus was crucified to save us and redeem us as His obedient, consecrated servants. He open the way for us to be crucified to the power of sin, the lusts of the world, and the bondage to self. In other words:

To Please God we are expected to: (5) Live Crucified

The believers in Laodicea were not being obedient to the clear commands Christ had already given them, thus they were not pleasing Him.

What had Jesus already asked for them to do, and taught them through their pastor's ministry of the Word to them? Turn back with me to Romans 12.

- **Crucified Living means Surrendered Living.** Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
- **Crucified Living means Exchanged Living.** Galatians 2:20 (NKJV) I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. **Crucified Living means never getting out of sight of the Cross.** Galatians 6:14 (NKJV) But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

No verse more clearly summarizes Crucified Living than Paul's testimony in Galatians 2:20. No verse more clearly frames what each of us should affirm for ourselves today.

Let's do a short lesson in the grammar of the Bible. To remember the cross of Christ we need to remember it not merely as a distant historical fact—no, we must see it as an event that we were a part of, personally and directly and powerfully.

So, when Paul says Christ was crucified, he says that Christ crucified him also. And if you understand the doctrine of our union with Christ from God's Word that means that every single one of us were also crucified that day with Jesus Christ.

Part One: "I have been Crucified with Christ"

The summary of the grammar of this verse would be: it is a perfect, passive, indicative.

The summary of the lesson is that Paul says: "What I am telling you is a fact, I have actually already been crucified by God with Jesus Christ; God crucified me and I didn't do it myself; it happened and was completed in the past, once and for all, and never needs repeating." All my sins past, present, and future were placed upon Him back then two thousand years ago on the Cross of Calvary.

Now, note with me:

- **ONE WORD:** "I have been crucified with" is actually one word in the original text of the New Testament; and it is the verb around which this verse is built. This verb known by Greek scholars as word # **4957**, and is **sustauroo** a verb found five

times in the New Testament; and which literally means 'to crucify alone with'.

To better understand this verb we must notice it's three inspired grammatical parts. When you classify a Greek verb you state the tense, the voice, and the mood. **Sustauroo** translated "I have been crucified with" is a perfect tense, passive voice, indicative mood verb.

- **PERFECT TENSE:** The **perfect tense** in Greek describes an action which is viewed as having been completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated. We all know one very famous usage of the perfect tense. Christ's last cry from the cross, TETELESTAI ("It is finished!") is a good example of the perfect tense used in this sense, namely "It [the atonement] has been accomplished, completely, once and for all time." So here in Galatians 2:20 Paul uses the perfect tense to first say, "*I have been crucified alone with Christ*".
- **PASSIVE VOICE:** The **passive voice** represents the subject as being the recipient of the action. That adds to the meaning as Paul using the passive voice says "*someone else crucified me, I didn't do it myself*".
- **INDICATIVE MOOD:** The **indicative mood** is a simple statement of fact. If an action really occurs or has occurred or will occur, it will be rendered in the indicative mood. Finally, Paul's use of the indicative mood adds the meaning that "*this really happened to me, it is not hypothetical or fanciful thing—it is a fact*".
- **POWERFUL TRUTH:** So if we use all the truth of the grammar taken together, Paul says:

"What I am telling you is a fact (indicative mood),
I have actually already been crucified by God with Jesus Christ
(perfect tense);
God crucified me and I didn't do it myself; it happened and was
completed in the past, once and for all, and never needs
repeating...(passive voice)"

"Jesus died in my place and also I died with Him. So by Christ's death and mine with Him I have died to sin. If a drunk dies, he can no longer be tempted by alcohol because his body is dead to all physical senses. He cannot see the alcohol, smell it, taste it, or desire it.

In Jesus Christ we have died to sin so that we no longer want to "continue in sin." But we are not only dead to sin; we are also alive in Christ. We have been raised from the dead and now walk in the power of His resurrection. We walk in "newness of life" because we share His life".¹

Part Two: "It is no longer I who live, But Christ lives in me"

- **THE EXCHANGED LIFE:** Christ's life is what I am to now live, not my own. Sin wants to be our master. It finds a foothold in our old nature, and through the old nature sin always seeks to control the members of our bodies. But in Jesus Christ, we died to sin; and the old nature was crucified so that the old life is rendered inoperative.
- **THE GRACE-ENERGIZED LIFE:** Christ's strength is what I now draw upon not my own. Paul was not describing an experience we should try to emulate or strive for; he was stating a fact. The practical experience comes as we yield to Christ's control. It is a fact of history that Jesus Christ died on the cross. It is also a fact of history that the believer died with Him².

Part Three: "And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God"

- **THE FAITH-LIFE:** What kind of life is this? It is a life of faith—saved by faith, live by faith, walk by faith. This is what it means to walk in the Spirit. *"Paul didn't tell his readers to feel as if they were dead to sin, or even to understand it fully, but to act on God's Word and claim it for themselves"*³.
- **THE RECKONED LIFE:** *"Reckoning is a matter of faith that issues in action. It is like endorsing a check: if we really believe that the money is in the checking account, we will sign our name and collect the money. Reckoning is not claiming a*

¹ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

² Adapted from Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

³ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

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promise, but acting on a fact. God does not command us to become dead to sin. He tells us that we are dead to sin and alive unto God, and then commands us to act on it. Even if we do not act on it, the facts are still true".⁴

Part Four: "Who loved me, And gave himself for me"

Christ loved me, but He could not *love* me into heaven. He had to *give* Himself for me.

We need to believe and grow by faith to understand that Christ's crucifixion was mine also!

In an incredible way that only God can accomplish and explain—each of us here tonight who are believers—***died at the same time as Jesus almost 2,000 years ago***. We have already died once in a real, spiritually powerful way in Christ on His Cross we celebrate tonight.

Though all of us may look quite alive, the truth is that on this day, 20 centuries ago, we were hanging on the Cross with Jesus Christ. ***When He died, we died***.

And after His death when two loving men took down His body and buried it in a borrowed Tomb, we were also buried with Christ. ***When He died—we died; when He was buried—we were buried***.

And when He walked out of that Tomb early Sunday morning—each of us also walked out with Him! ***When He died—we died; when He was buried—we were buried; and when He rose—we rose***.

That truth should course through the heart and mind of every believer in Christ.

We need to repeat, reaffirm, and remember over and over again that the past work of Christ's death on the cross saved me and keeps me.

*Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ (***past event--justification***); it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me (***present event-sanctification***); and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God (***present event-sanctification***), who loved me and gave Himself for me (***past event--justification***). NKJV*

God Desires Each of us to Be

1. Loving Jesus Most (His Message to Ephesus, Rev. 2:1-7);
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⁴ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.
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- 4. Overflowing with His Spirit (His Message to Sardis, Rev. 3:1-6);
- 5. **Living Crucified** (His Message to Laodicea, Rev. 3:14-22).

APPENDIX:

| SALVATION | SANCTIFICATION |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Romans 3:21-5:21 & Galatians 1:4:</i></p> <p>who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,</p> | <p><i>Romans 6-8 & Galatians 2:20</i></p> <p>“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.</p> |
| <p>Substitution: He died for me</p> | <p>Identification: I died with Him</p> |
| <p>He died <i>for</i> my sins</p> | <p>He died <i>unto</i> sin</p> |
| <p>He paid sin’s penalty</p> | <p>He broke sin’s power</p> |
| <p>Justification: righteousness is imputed (put to my account)</p> | <p>Sanctification: righteousness is imparted (made a part of my life)</p> |
| <p>I WAS Saved by His death</p> | <p>I AM Saved by His life</p> |