



Exploring God's Love through the Bible: Love that Purifies the Church

God's Love in The Revelation of Jesus Christ

February 26, 2017

Text: Rev 1:1-20

A Primary Thought: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." -- Jesus, Rev 3:19

- The Revelation of Jesus Christ given to the Apostle John is a very misunderstood book. Some of what is written therein may be veiled to us until the Lord's coming.
- But even if some of the prophetic images are beyond our 100% understanding, there is no question as to the purposes of this Epistle. These purposes are given in the first and eleventh verses of chapter one, and in the exhortations given to each church.

Rev 1:1 *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:*

Rev 1:11 *Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

- Jesus wants His Church to be **ready** for His coming, and to wait in a way that honors Him.
- At its heart, Revelation is the "unveiling of the purified **Bride**," from struggling with sin (each church mentioned except Smyrna and Philadelphia), to tribulation, to resplendent in beauty, made ready and holy....

Rev 19:6-9 *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. 7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. 9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*

Rev 21:2 *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

Rev 21:9-10 *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. 10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,*

- Revelation describes the exaltation of the Lamb (the primary title for Jesus in the book) and the final consummation of the Bride (the Church). It describes the final defeat of the devil and his allies and an eternity with God for all the Redeemed. It is a beautiful epistle that gives us hope!
- Jesus is "in the midst of the seven candlesticks" and holds "in his right hand [the] seven stars." (Rev 1:13, 16, 2:1) **He is LORD of His Church and watches them intensely.** He is passionate about His Church and leads her with grace and **authority**.

LOVE THAT PURIFIES THE CHURCH

CHRIST'S LOVE FOR EPHESUS (REV 2:1-7)

- He knows their works and commends their disassociation from wicked people (v2).
- He blesses them for their hard work (v3).
- But, he rebukes them for leaving their first **love** (v4).

MacDonald writes: "The fire of its affection had died down. The glowing enthusiasm of its early days had disappeared. The Christians could look back to better days when their bridal love for Christ flowed warm, full, and free. They were still sound in doctrine and active in service, but the true motive of all worship and service was missing."

- He encourages them to **remember**, repent, and do the first works again (v5)!
- What great love! How might we apply these verses to our lives and church?

CHRIST'S LOVE FOR SMYRNA (REV 2:8-11)

- Again, He knows their works (v9)! Do you believe He knows ours too?
- He encourages them by describing His knowledge of evils they are facing (v10).
- Smyrna was a **faithful** church. Christ said to them, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. 11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." (Rev 2:10-11)

CHRIST'S LOVE FOR PERGAMOS (REV 2:12-17)

- He addresses them as "He which hath the sharp sword with two edges." (v12) Yikes!
- He nevertheless commends them for holding fast to His Name in the midst of Satan's throne, even mentioning a faithful martyr by name, Antipas (v13).
- But Jesus, in no uncertain terms, **rebukes** their toleration of those who hold to false, perverse doctrines (v14-15).
- They are commanded to repent, or face Jesus Himself fighting against them (v16)!
- Even with such a strong censure, He still lovingly encourages: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. (v17)

CHRIST'S LOVE FOR THYATIRA (2:18-29)

- Jesus lauds this church's increasing charity, service, faith, and patience (v19).
- But the strength of His rebuke concerning the "ministry" of **Jezebel** among them is chilling.
- He rebukes their acceptance of her, her so called prophetic ministry, and her perverse teachings (v20).
- Jesus demonstrates great love and patience in giving her space to repent, but threatens great harm if she does not (v21-23).
- He, with great love, encourages the faithful in Thyatira to "hold fast" until He comes and promises them "power over the nations." (v24-26)
- How might **you** benefit from such an exhortation?

CHRIST'S LOVE FOR SARDIS (REV 3:1-6)

- Christ reminded Sardis that He is fully empowered and has full authority over His church (v1).
- Apparently, Sardis had a strong profession but had fallen into ritualism. They were dead (v1).
- Jesus rebukes their cold-heartedness and commands that they "strengthen" what remained. This is likely a command to wake up and to recapture their zeal (v2).

- They were to realize how desperate their situation was by watching for the coming of the Lord (v3)!
- What love! We too should beware of the “spirit of Sardis” and **remember** what we have received and heard!
- May we “hold fast” to that fire that burned in us when we were first saved and repent of deadness and rote ritual (v3)!

CHRIST’S LOVE FOR PHILADELPHIA (REV 3:7-13)

- Philadelphia (“love for the brethren”) received no rebukes at all. Jesus said to them:

Rev 3:8-11 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. 9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. 11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

- Oh that we might be faithful to the God who loves us! May we always hold fast!

CHRIST’S LOVE FOR LAODICEA (REV 3:14-22)

- This was the church that was lukewarm (v15-16) and full of worldly pride in possessions (v17).
- Jesus, in love, counseled them to “buy” from Him those things which are truly precious essentially, righteousness, purity, and open eyes to see their state.
- He reminds them His rebuke comes from **love** (v19), and bids them to hear Him as He knocks and “open the door.”
- What love! To a rebellious, lukewarm church, Christ offers **Himself** (v20)!

Rev 3:21-22 *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

ENDING THOUGHTS:

CRCC, I pray this “love” survey of Holy Scripture has been a blessing to you. God’s love is immense, powerful, high, wide, deep, long-suffering, and all-consuming. He is love! But He is also wrathful and detests sin. Therefore, in His love, He disciplines us and **corrects** us.

May we continue on in His great love, giving our all to our great God and King. May He use us to win lost souls, disciple hearts, love one another, and conform to the image of the Son.

May our minds be ever fixed on Jesus...

Rev 22:13-21 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. 14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. 15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. 16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. 17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. 18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. 20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Amen.