

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Chapters 1-3

Seeing Jesus as he truly is and ourselves as he sees us

Ears That Hear

Do we see what Jesus is seeing? Do we hear what Jesus is saying?
How can we know that our hearts are aligned with his heart and will?

Revelation 1-3: Seeing Jesus as he truly is and ourselves as he sees us

“To the churches write . . .”

To the seven churches in the province of Asia . . . (1.4)

- ▶ Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Rome—there were more churches than these seven to whom Jesus is speaking. There were more prominent churches in Alexandria, Egypt and Antioch Seleucia where followers of The Way were first called “Christianoi.” In the Roman province of Asia, there were churches in Hierapolis, Colossae, Antioch (Pisidia) and Cappadocia, So why these particular seven churches?

- ▶ Numbers are significant in Scripture and represent important truths. The number “seven” first appears in Genesis 1 and represents God’s completed work. In The Revelation, seven is the most prolific number. The first chapter features seven churches, seven spirits, seven stars, seven angels and seven lampstands. Throughout the following chapters of The Revelation, there will be many more “sevens.”

- ▶ Since “seven” represents completeness, we must conclude that Jesus chose these churches as representative of all churches and that his messages to them reveal what he sees when he walks among his churches from then until now.
- ▶ Jesus speaks to John and dictates to him these letters from his position in heaven as the Head of the Church. From heaven, every church is seen and under consideration. None—whether megachurches in Texas or Nigeria, or house churches of three people meeting in secret and trepidation in North Korea or Saudi Arabia—is overlooked. Heaven sees every church.

“To the angel of the church write . . .”

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. (3.14-15)

- ▶ Each specific letter is addressed to the “angel” or the messenger of the church. There is an ecclesiastical order seen here from heaven’s perspective and this revelation is, above all, sent to them. The shepherd of each church is the first to read what Jesus sees and thinks when he looks at this church.

- ▶ Just as the business of the Old Testament prophet was to hear the message of the LORD God and to then declare, “Thus saith the LORD,” the business of the angel of the church is to hear for the church, speak to the church, and account for the church. When a pastor speaks, it doesn't matter if he is cool, witty, or engaging, whether the audience applauds or is affirmed. The only thing that matters is: did he deliver the message that Jesus wanted the church to hear so that they see Jesus as he presents himself to them and hears what he has to say to them.

- ▶ To the messengers of each church, Jesus presents the position and perspective from which he speaks and comes to them, his awareness and scrutiny of the church and his personal connection to them, the determination and judgments he has made about the church, and his personal promises to those who take to heart what he is saying.
- ▶ What he has to say reveals that he knows each church as a whole and he know each individual within that church. He sees what both the church and the individual does—no one and nothing is overlooked by him.

This is the one thing then that matters—

**Are we hearing and putting into practice
the words of Jesus?**

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7.21-23)

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.” (Luke 6.46-49)

▶ Intrinsically connected are the words of Jesus and relationship with Jesus—

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” (John 15:5-11)

Ears to hear—

“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (2.7)

- ▶ The words of Jesus really matter and hearing the words of Jesus really, really matters! Jesus uses a particular emphasis that is unique to only him in the New Testament—

“He who has ears let him hear.”

Repeatedly in the gospels, Jesus uses this term to emphasize the critical importance of his words.

“In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.” (Luke 14.33-35)

He went on to say—

In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;

you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

For this people’s heart has become calloused:

they hardly hear with their ears,

and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,

hear with their ears,

understand with their hearts

and turn, and I would heal them.” (Matthew 13.13-16)

- ▶ In Scripture, the heart is the center of a person. Priorities, affection, commitment, identity, purpose—all are a matter of the heart. Whether in the OT or the NT, the heart connection to the Word is the critical component.

I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119.11)

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts . . . Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you . . .” (Colossians 3.15-16)

- ▶ Speaking from his position in heaven, Jesus says to each and every church and each and every person:

**“Whoever has ears, let them hear
what the Spirit says to the churches.”**

- ▶ The question is not whether we have ears, but whether we have ears that hear—and that is determined by whether our hearts respond to the words of Jesus: making his words the core of our identity, putting them into practice, shaping the details of our lives around the words of Jesus until we resemble Jesus—his love, obedience, and way of life—from the inside out.