



river west church

A Personal Letter from Jesus

Revelation 2-3

Pastor Guy Gray

11.21.2010

In Revelation 2-3 there are seven letters from Jesus to seven churches. Each church gets a personal letter that speaks directly to their own situation. So how does all this speak to our lives here and now? How does it speak to our church?

By Reading Someone Else's Mail, We Get a Glimpse of Jesus' Heart

These seven letters were written for seven very real first century churches. They are included in the Book of Revelation purposely so that we can see Jesus' heart poured out in written form. These letters are rooted in the real world, real cities and the real issues of daily life. They form a vital context for our reading of the rest of the Book of Revelation. Many of us want to rush on and get to visions of the throne of God and the Horses of the Apocalypse. But here we find that Jesus' heart first focused on His church. The Book of Revelation isn't just about fantastic things that are happening in the "unseen" realms, or things that will happen at the end of time. It's about Jesus and His love for His church, right here, right now.

Do You Know How Much Jesus Cares About His Church?

In chapter one, John turned and saw the vision of Jesus. But the first thing he saw was seven golden lamp stands (1:12). The lamp stands represent the seven churches. Jesus was standing in the midst of the churches. Here in the Book of Revelation we see many things about Jesus. In chapter 1 we see the vision of His power, authority and glory. In chapter 4 we see Him as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and the Lamb of God upon the throne. In chapter 19 we see Him as the conquering king on a white horse. These are all amazing visions of Jesus! But maybe this is the most amazing of all. Here is Jesus, who is all the things described in this book, standing in the midst of His churches. Does this tell you anything? Do you know how much Jesus cares about His church? Do you know how important His church actually is? Do you and I care about the church like Jesus does?

But It's Our Mail Too!

The Book of Revelation was written for the seven churches. But it was written for us too. Seven is a symbolic number in the Revelation. It is the number for fullness or completion. That tells us something. These seven churches were chosen because they represent something beyond themselves. They represent Christ's message to His churches throughout the world, throughout the ages. There is something vital that WE need to hear through Christ's word to these seven churches. This is our mail too! That's why, toward the end of each letter it says, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches." Did you catch that? To the churches, plural. In other words, each letter to each particular church is to be read by all the churches. Jesus is speaking through each of these letters to all of His churches, and that includes us!

So in our study, we are going to pay close attention to what Jesus says to the churches. Through these letters we want to hear His word directly to our own church and our own lives. As we do, we will find that Jesus expects much of His church. But we will also find that there is no such thing as a perfect church. We will learn that Jesus cares deeply about how the church relates to the larger culture around it. This is the essence of the letters. How can we be a light for Jesus in our world? What is our relationship with the culture around us really supposed to look like? How do we truly live out our faith, right here, right now?

May the Lord help us to hear what His Spirit is saying to the churches! And to OUR church. Amen.