

"THE CHURCH GOD WANTS - #1

Revelation 3:7-13

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You know anyway we look at it today one of the most fascinating and yet frustrating books in all the Bible is the book of Revelation.

Sometimes when we read it very closely and we try to decipher its word pictures it appears to us to be a combination of Star Wars and UFO sightings. But in reality when we really look at the book of Revelation it is one of the most significant most important and most appropriate books for our time.

The reason it has such impact for each one of our who are believers is that it not only describes to each one of us the last chapter of our earthly life but it also ushers us into the full meaning of eternal life.

This being the case the book of Revelation is more than an apocalyptic

Tape Is Turned Over

...It is more than some kind of a dispensational history of the rapture, the Tribulation, the Second Advent, Armageddon, Millennium, the Judgement and the eternal ages.

But in reality when God gives to us the book of Revelation inspired by His Holy Spirit by an Apostle by the name of John as a messenger that has come to us through Jesus Christ who really gives to us the message we have to see that it is a reality of what

God is doing in the world today. It is a reality of his historical working in His kingdom in the world.

We ask ourselves today the question when we read the headlines, we look at the newspapers, we watch the telecast, we listen to the commentators, we follow the communicators of our day, most of which leave out God -- we then ask ourselves the question, "What is God doing in the world today?"

The answer to what God is doing is found in the book of Revelation. For in a word what God is doing today - He is building a Church. He is fulfilling what Jesus Christ told His disciples at Cesserea Phillipi in Matthew 16:18 when He said to them -

Upon this rock (upon your confession of faith in me as the Son of the living God - upon this rock) I am going to build a Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I am going to give to you the keys to the kingdom. Whatsoever things you bound on earth will be bound in heaven. And whatever things you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

The book of Revelation is fulfilling that beginning of the Church. The Church as we know it had its beginning at Cesserea Phillipi. It was later empowered at Pentecost where it became a living organism and a living reality.

But the mission and the message was given when Christ sat around with about twelve rag-tag people and He said to them - Upon your humanness, upon your ability to trust in me,

I am going to build a Church and the gates of hell can not prevail against that Church.

Then the miracle of all the ages and the wonder of all wonders God somehow in His economy and by the power of His Holy Spirit reached down and put into human, earthen, clay vessels His divine Spirit.

He asked the question,

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you and which you have of God. You are not your own, you are bought with a price? Therefore, glorify God in your body.

But when God talks about building a church in the book of Revelation shows to us that that is what He is doing in the world today it is not just any kind of a church. But it is a transcendent Church. It is a Church that the gates of hell can not prevail against it.

But it is not a denomination. It is not an organization. It is not an institution. It is not a program. We build the programs; God builds people. And He is working in the lives of His people now - a transcendent Church that the gates of hell can not

prevail against. It is a transcendent Church because God created it in Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1 and 15 - it tell us that Christ created all things.

In Him all things consist and by Him all things hold together for He has been created as the foundation of the Church.

It is the transcendent Church because God has raised up Christ to be the head of the Church.

It is a transcendent Church because God has allowed Christ to reconcile all things to Himself.

It is a transcendent Church because He has given to that body the ministry of reconciliation. It is the Church that is being built as a spiritual body. It is being built as a holy temple. It is being built as a redemptive message. It is being built as a waiting bride. It is being built as a new humanity. It is being built as an equipped army.

What God is doing in the world today -- He is beginning to sift His Church. He is separating the wheat from the shaft. And "He is raising up a Church that is without spot and it is without wrinkle," that is looking and waiting for the greatest event of all times and that is that Jesus Christ is coming back to earth again. Hold fast to what you have and be ready to meet Him in the air. Hallelujah be to God.

Then we ask ourselves, Where is the Church going? If this is God's Church and He is building a kingdom within us, what is the future of this church?

I go across this country and talk to a lot of pastors. In the past four weeks Carmelita and I have probably ministered to something like 600 pastors or better and their wives. In that process I see a lot of defeat. In that process I see a lot of depression. I look at some pastors and I listen to their woes and I wonder with them - Where has God gone?

What we begin to do is to think that when we look into our own little world that that is the only place that God is. I have to remind them that God is now engaged in the greatest revival the world has ever known around the world.

And just because the United States is lethargic, just because we have become secularized, just because we have become humanized, that does not mean that God is not at work. But we believe right now that God is raising up the Church in this nation to precipitate the greatest revival that the world has ever known and bring us ready for the fact that we are going to be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. Amen, amen and amen.

Well, where is the Church headed and where are we going? Our problem is that we are too earth bound. We here in the United States of America - we like this world too well. Hello. We don't want to leave this world. We do everything we can to stop growing older. Pastor Cooper had a problem this problem with being 39.

Wait until he gets 63. You ain't seen nothing yet kid. All the old folks are clapping.

But what we have to understand is that you can't think about the Church in terms of geographical location. You can't think about the Church in terms of denominational understanding.

You can't think about the church in terms of theological doctrinal positions. You know those things we put together. When you think about the Church you got to think about living eternally with Jesus Christ when this world will cease to be. That's where the Church is headed.

I don't know where you are headed as part of the Church but I see the Church headed for First Thessalonians chapter 4 verses 16 through 18. I believe we are headed for rapture.

For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. With the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first and we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

I believe that is where the Church is headed.

But I don't just believe the Church is headed for a rapture I believe the Church is headed for a reward. But you have to understand that after you get ruptured, some people don't know what is going to happen after that.

When you look at Revelation chapter 19 verse 9 the Bible tells us -

Blessed are those and happy are those -
fulfilled are those - complete are those -
satisfied are those who are invited to the
marriage supper of the lamb.

That means we are headed for a great banquet. And in that banquet we are going to have a great time of training and development. For we are going to get ready for the return to come back with Jesus Christ.

And when the banquet is finished and when the work of God on this planet earth has been done He is going to gather together all of the armies of heaven and the armies of heaven are made up of the saints of God who have come in the rapture and who have come out of the tribulation and He is going to have Christ get on a white horse and go before them.

And Revelation 19 and 11 says -

And I saw the heavens open and behold a white
horse and Him that sat upon it was called
"Faithful and True" and with justice and
judgement He doth make war.

And then it says - "His eyes were blazing fire." And it tell us that -

On His head He had many crowns and His name is the Word of God. And He is clothed in a robe that is dipped in blood.

And then it tells us that - "His name is a name that no one knows."

And I like this next part -

Behind Him come the armies of heaven on the backs of white horses and they come and rule and reign with Christ forever and for aye.

The thing that we understand is that this Church is not going under. This Church is not in a state of defeat. God has more people than you can think about. This Church is going over for Him.

The thing I like about Relation 19 - you look at that figure and that symbol of Christ -

Out of His mouth goes a two-edged sword and He uses that sword to smite the nations. And He rules them with a rod of iron. (And the Bible says) Written on His thigh and written on His robe are these words - King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

I want you to know the day is going to come when every dominion and every authority and every power will be destroyed. The day is going to come when every enemy will be under the feet of Jesus Christ.

The day is going to come when He hands the kingdom over to His Father and when He hands the kingdom to His Father there will be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

Why are you preaching that way? Because we got to many dead-head Christians. That's why. I'm sick and tired of dead, dry, dragging Christians. The woods are full of them. God wants some excited people to get ready because this is the greatest life to live. Hallelujah. Praise God in this place.

That's more enthusiasm than you've shown in several weeks about your religion.

But you know it is an amazing thing that we measure everything by the headlines. I don't know of any time that has been very good. It just comes into our living rooms now - piped in four colors. But you don't like this; you don't like praise; you don't want to go to heaven.

You know people get all shook up about what is going to happen and what is going to take place. Is God going to have anybody left? You look at Revelation chapter 7 and you start with verse 9 I think maybe John got a little worried about that and God showed him a few things.

And John said -

I saw a number that no man could number. They came out of every nation and tribe and people and language and they had palm branches in their hands and they were clothed in white

robes and they were before the throne day and night and they were singing a song of praise and worship. Salvation belongs to God and to the lamb.

Because they were qualified to sing about salvation.

We are singing a song today that the angels can't even sing. It is the greatest song that has ever been composed. It is greater than "The Messiah." And it is greater than the great hymns of Fanny Crosby or greater than "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." It is a song of a soul redeemed that has the right by the blood of the lamb to come boldly to the throne of grace and cry "Abba Father." Hallelujah be to God. That is the song that we sing.

That great tribulation number came around the throne that tells us that all the angels that surrounded the throne, the twenty-four elders that represented the Church that had been redeemed and the four living creatures, they all fell to their faces and began to praise God.

If you don't like "Amens" and "Glories" and praises you ain't going to like it there.

What they began to say was - "Amen" - hallelujah. The first thing they said was

Amen, glory and praise and wisdom and honor and thanks and power and strength belong to our God forever and ever.

Then one of the elders got a little upset and couldn't understand who was intruding heaven like that. And he said -

Who are these? John said - You know who these are. These are the ones who have come out of great tribulation and they have washed their robes and they have made them clean in the blood of the lamb. And they worship God in His temple day and night. God is going to spread His tent over them. They are never going to hunger and they are never going to thirst. And the sun is not going to heat on them with its great heat and the heat is not going to scorch them because the lamb who is in the center of the throne is going to lead them to springs of living water and God Himself will wipe away all tears from their eyes. When you look at this cruel world today you can know in your heart there is a better day coming. Amen, amen and amen. Hallelujah.

But you look at Revelation 21 and you begin to see what God is going to do. We get worried about this planet. Is it going to wear out? Will there be enough clean food to eat? Will there be enough pure air to breathe? Will there be enough pure water to drink? Is this planet really worn out? Is it going to do this and is it going to do that?

Well who cares what it is going to do? We know what it is going to do.

Revelation 21 tells us -

That God Himself is going to come down and tabernacle with His people and when He tabernacles with His people He is going to wipe away all tears and when He wipes away all tears there is no more death, neither sorrow nor crying for the former things - the earthly things have passed away and everything becomes new.

That's the kind of revival that God wants to give. That's the kind of Church that He really wants to have.

But you know sometimes we get down in the "mully grubs" don't we? We find ourselves just so worried about so many things. Unfortunately as your senior pastor, I am a human being. After my first two years here as your pastor - when you gave me ulcers. I resigned as "General Manager of the Universe."

I came in one day worried all to death and Carmelita said - "Why don't you learn Paul, you are not God." If anybody ought to know that I should know that. So I resigned as God. Very disappointing. But I resigned.

ILLUSTRATION

But every once in a while you just kind of start thinking about your problems and you get miserable. You notice that? Just three or four days ago - Carmelita and I were to go to lunch and we missed each other and I was frustrated and couldn't find her and she couldn't find me. Just like a woman -- they never show up when they are suppose to.

So I had to go to lunch by myself. And I went to lunch and all by myself. You get by yourself sometimes and you get to thinking about all your problems and it is bad news.

So I sat there and wondered where was she and I got to sitting there and thinking about all my problems. I got to thinking about all your problems that give me problems. I get thinking of all that I am responsible for. If I really want to get depressed I just think about the budget. If I want to have a good case of misery I just think about the budget. That will give anybody misery. I got to thinking about all my responsibilities and all my problems and I got to feeling so bad. I just dug me a hole and got down in the hole.

Gave my order and there off to get the order.

Put my head in my hands and worry - worry - worry - worry - just had my own private misery.

What I didn't know was that one of the waitresses in that restaurant is a member of this congregation.

She saw me over there with my head in my hands. She could perceive - I guess I was putting out negative waves everywhere. She said the Lord told her to go pray for me.

But she debated in her heart -- "He is the senior pastor, who am I to pray for him? This is a public place. If I go pray for him and somebody hears me I could lose my job." But she said the Lord said "Pray softly."

God is not deaf. We haven't learned that yet, but God is not deaf. You don't have to holler - unless you are really in trouble and then you can pray a one word pray. You look up and say - HELP! That will do it.

So I'm in misery. All of a sudden I felt this soft hand on my shoulder. When you are in misery you don't want to see a smiling face. You just want them to go away and leave me alone and let me be miserable.

She said - "Pastor Walker, God sent me over to pray for you." I thought - oh wonderful... that's really great ... I really need that now. She said I hope you don't mind.

What could I do?

I'm 63 - Ph.D. - Senior Pastor - 45 years in the ministry - she is twenty-two - former cocaine addict. She is praying for me. I mean how dare that happen.

So she said - " Oh God - I thank you for my pastor - what a blessing he has been to me - how he has blessed the church and how he has been used in the church. I know he has a lot of burdens.

I know he has a lot of heartache. I know he has a lot of trouble. But Lord he needs deliverance." Marvelous. "Lord, I want you to deliver Him from depression and from this worry that he has got." Then she prays - "God help him to get out of the way so you can do a great and a mighty work." Beautiful.

Needless to say that is exactly what I needed. The Lord just came through at the right time.

Out of the mouths of babes. Amen.

I want you to know I don't care what position you get in, God is going to have what you need if you will just sit down, shut up and let Him talk. Amen. Hallelujah.

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Well you say that sounds fantastic pastor. But how do we make it work?

This church at Philadelphia was called "The Revival Church." You look at these seven churches in Asia - there are seven of them - not only are there specific churches in Asia Minor that Pastor Cooper is hoping to visit some of those ruins there.

But Ephesus probably represented the Apostolic Church from about 33 AD to about 300 AD.

Smyrna probably represented the Martyrdom Church from about 100 AD to 313 AD.

And then Pergamous or Pergamum probably represented at that particular time the Compromising Church - from 313 AD to 590.

Then when you look at the Thyratyra Church it probably represented the Universal or the Roman Catholic Church that was in power for so long from about 590 to about 517.

When you look at the Sardis Church it probably represented the Reformation Church from about 517 to 1700 - the days of Luther and Calvin and Swingly and Knox and Williams.

Then when you look at the Church of Philadelphia where our text is today - the Church that God wants - you see the Revival Church from about 1700 to 1900 - the great revivals - Jonathan Edwards and Dwight L. Moody and George Whitfield and John Wessley, the great revivals of the land.

Then when you look at the Laodecean Church from 1900 you see the modern church - a paradoxical church - on the one hand the greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit the world has ever known.

On the other hand a church that has allowed itself to come into intellectual laziness and liberalistic paradoxical thinking where it has a mere intellectual acquiescence and has lost the burning fire and the excitement of the power of the Lord.

God is wanting to restore us to that sense of revival. You begin to look at that and we begin to see that when He talks about the Laodecean Church he says it is a church (the Laodecean Church) that has lost a sense of its own image. It is lukewarm. I'm going to spew it out of my mouth; it is not on fire; it is a church that doesn't really know what it is. It says -

I am wealthy; I have acquired many riches. It doesn't know that it is wretched and pitifully and poor and blind and naked.

Doesn't understand that.

He gives counsel to Laodecean Church and says -

I want you to get gold that is really refined in fire. I want you to be sanctified. I want you to get some garments to cover your nakedness that are purified. I want you to get some eye salve.

The reason that comes out of Laodecean is because it was a medical center and they manufactured a certain eye salve called "Forgean Powder" that was used for Opthamea and for eye problems. I want you to get real spiritualized so you can see and understand the insight and the power that you need from God. I want you to know that those whom I love I rebuke and I chasten. Therefore, I want you to repent and repent earnestly before me.

Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone will come to the door and open it up to me I will come in and have fellowship with him and I will eat with him and he with me.

To him that overcomes I will give authority to overcome as I have overcome and sat down at my Father's throne.

He gives us that promise to this church. But we say - Oh Pastor Walker, how can we really make this church work?

The first thing he tells us -

These are the words to whom the one who is
holy (if you look at verse 7) the one who is
holy and true who holds the key of David.

And the first step in the church that God really wants is a church that will fulfill the great commission. The commissioner is holy because that is Christ. He is sanctified. He is set apart. There is no else just like Him. No one else. He is true. He is validated. He is authenticated. He is reliable. He owns the key of David - it is different than the key of Hades - and it is different than the key of death. It is the key of sovereignty because He sits upon the throne of David and He establishes it with justice and holiness and power.

And he says - "I hold before you an open door."

Well sometimes we get to feeling that this means just proclamation and proclamation is part of it and preaching of the Word is important. But God depends only on the preaching of the Word then we would be in great trouble.

But God ask for more than just the preaching of the Word. He wants us to live out that Word for Him. "By His stripes we are healed" in His power.

You have heard a lot of sermons. We have heard enough sermons in this congregation to go to heaven 5,000 times. Some of you are saying - "We are still waiting for a good one."

JOKE

I heard the story the other day of a pastor who had been preaching for forty-five years. He was getting ready to retire. He said he wanted to pray that God would give him enough money to retire.

Got up in the attic and had not been up there in many, many years and he happened to look at two great big steamer trunks. He said - "I don't remember those trunks, I wonder what is in those trunks."

So he went over before he prayed and looked in one and there were two eggs in one trunk. He said, "That is unusual." Went over and opened the other trunk and it was just packed full of money - all bills of all denominations just jammed to the top of that steamer trunk.

That was puzzling to him, so he rushed downstairs and found his wife and said, "You know I went up in the attic to pray about our retirement and I had not been up there in years, but I saw those two trunks. You know anything about those trunks?"

She said, "Yes, I do." He said, "Well, tel me about them. There were two eggs in that one trunk, what does it mean?"

She said, "Well over the forty-five years every bad sermon you have ever preached I've put an egg in that trunk."

He said, "Well, I must have been doing pretty good - I've only got two eggs in that trunk."

She said, "Yes, but there is another side to the story." Said, " Every time it reached a dozen, I sold them for cash and put the money in the other trunk."

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Pastor Cooper and I have both checked the attics.

But there is a door open to you. The question is - Will you fill it?

As our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed and no one moving please...