

Revelation 1 - Part 2

by Robert F. Adcock

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking spiritual power and not relying on human strength, as the church faces a period of spiritual decline and lukewarmness.

Duration: 42:47

Scripture: Revelation 1:9-10, Revelation 3:14-18, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "End Times", "Spiritual Discernment"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the signs of the return of the Son of God, drawing parallels to the days of Noah. He emphasizes the importance of listening to God's voice through His word and the Holy Spirit. The preacher also highlights the responsibility of Christians to have Jesus enthroned in their hearts and to seek spiritual knowledge amidst the increasing knowledge of the world. He warns against being deceived by false teachings and encourages believers to test the spirits to discern the truth.

Transcript

When I come to Faith Bible Chapel and I hear those things, those fellows sing, I say to myself, it's just not fair because I can't sing, know very little about music, and there's just a little spark of envy or something that says it just doesn't seem right, and it's just so beautiful, and my how it complements the service. We thank God for it. I'd like for us to look this morning in Revelation chapter 1, and we'll read from verse 9. I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet 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, unto Pergamum, unto Thyatira, unto Sardis, unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me, and being turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands was one like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot and girded about the breast with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white like wool as white as snow, and his eyes were like a flame of fire, and his feet like fine bronze as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice like the sound of many waters.

He had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shineth in its strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead, and he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth and

doth live, and he that is dead.

And behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen. And have the keys of Hades and of death.

Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Now, if you will, turn to chapter three. Chapters two and three are devoted to the messages to the seven churches this morning. Of course, for time's sake, we're going to devote our attention to this last church, the church at Laodicea.

Verse 14 of chapter three, and unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things saith the Amen, the faithful and the true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. And knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the pot, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed. And that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with fire that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

Be zealous, therefore, and retent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sit with him, and he with me.

Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. And may God add his blessing to the reading of this, his holy word.

I'd like for us to think about these messages to the churches. At the very outset, what we read in Revelation 1 sets, I think, the scene for us. Here is the Apostle John, and he's confined on the Isle of Patmos because he has been a faithful witness for the Lord Jesus, and it tells us that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

And, I would remind you, not the Lord's Day as we know it. I think that the Spirit of God, without question, was able to transport or project the Apostle John into the future of that day of the Lord when he comes again, and remind us of, indeed, conditions as they would exist at that time. This picture that we have painted for us, this portrayal of the Lord Jesus and these things that are so descriptive of him, indeed are all in spite of the unspeakable gift of God.

To think about this wonderful person, the one that we trusted, the one that we have, indeed, entrusted the eternal destiny of our souls into his care. I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him. Indeed, the committal of our souls into his holy care is a wise decision.

As we think about this, and we get to the seventh of these churches, and each one of them has a message for us, but what do these churches and these messages that John gives to us concerning these

churches, what does it teach us? Well, it teaches us one thing for sure, that there's been a decline in the church, and of the church, since the birthday of the church. Now, men, the humanists of today, tell us that men are getting better, and everything we see around us just proves that. Man is not getting better.

Man possesses a depraved nature, and man, because of all of the evil that is within his heart, a part of his very nature, causes the world that he lives in, and everything that he touches, to be defiled by the things that he does. But, when we think of the church, in the day of Pentecost, the church was pure. It was filled with the Spirit of God, and you can see in God's dealings with Ananias and Sapphira that evil would not be tolerated, because a man and a woman, that through deception and lying, were struck down dead.

And, it was a reminder of the holy character of the God that they had identified with, and today, if that same principle was carried out in our lives, perhaps many of us wouldn't be here, because holiness is indeed a part of, and should be a part of, the very character and makeup of God's people. Be holy as I'm holy. Paul reminds Timothy, Godliness with contentment is great gain.

But, indeed, the world that we live in seeks after some shallow, superficial concept of joy and happiness that does not even relate in the remotest way to what is Godliness. That which brings true contentment to the soul. Instead of increasing in spiritual power, the church is pictured in this Laodicean picture that we have for us, this last church that is mentioned, as being lukewarm, being faithless, horrors of horrors priceless, because the Lord Jesus is seen as standing on the outside.

In the book of Daniel, chapter 12, we're told that in the last days many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase. I read recently in a newsletter that between 1900 and 1950, knowledge doubled. There was an increase to the extent that previously known to man, all the knowledge that man possessed, that it was recorded that knowledge doubled.

All that man had ever known between 1900 and 1950. Between 1950 and 1965, knowledge doubled again, and now we're told that knowledge is doubling every five years. How are you going to keep up? It makes you feel rather insignificant, because you realize sometimes, I don't know very much.

You look at the Word of God, you think about the unsearchable riches that are found in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the unspeakable gift of God. You think of all of the ignorance that prevails today concerning the plans and the purposes of God, and indeed you realize that though men are increasing in knowledge, scientific advancement, all of the things that are so appealing to the natural man, and yet I have to sadly report to you that spiritual knowledge seems to be on the decline. I just want to read a few words from Paul in his letter to the church at Corinth, in which he reminds us of some things that I think certainly fit this situation.

He says, "...for the preaching of the cross to them that perish is foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the truth. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

It tells us that the Jew required her sign, and the Greek seek after wisdom. We preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness. But unto them who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." Now, I know that in the world today, the things that are happening of such a spectacular nature in the realm of advancing knowledge, and so forth, impresses many people. But as a Christian, as someone that understands in some small measure the infinite wisdom of God, and what it is revealed to us, men and women created in the image of God, the likeness of God, all that was lost through the fall, the very fact that I have had revealed to my soul that all that was lost can be gained again in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. All that was lost, the glory, can only be restored in the person of that wonderful Savior of ours, the Lord Jesus.

I'm not really impressed with a lot of the things that are advanced today as being, in a sense, opening up new frontiers of knowledge, as it regarding space, scientific advancement, this sort of thing. Because the natural man, in his pursuit after these things, there's so much about it that becomes religious in nature. Secular humanism.

I've mentioned the very fact that man can resolve all of his own problems. He doesn't need God. Man is deified.

Man is not just brought up on par with God. He itself is God. He is above God.

They don't need God. I'm saying that because it is the spirit of the day in which we live. Paul said in the last days, the distressing days, the perilous days, perilous times.

Think about men's hearts failing them for fear. There's a lot of fear and uncertainty in the world in which we live today. Paul says God has not given to us the spirit of fear.

We have a sound mind. We have the spirit of God within us. We have the love of God that has filled our souls.

God doesn't want us to be afraid. If we have a spirit of fear within us, it is not from God. It's from some other source.

This resume of the teaching of the seven churches and conditions in these churches is a description, it's a rather prophetic outline of the spiritual history of the church from the time when John wrote in about A.D. 96 down to the taking away of the church, the rapture, the taking away out of this world of that which is precious in the sight of God. Members of a body, a living body. The church is not the building on the corner, mind you.

It's a living organism made up of men and women born again filled with the spirit of God, a part of the family of God. Indeed, even the spiritual history of that body is one that John marks out for us as being in a steady condition of spiritual decline. Why? Leaven came in.

Sin was tolerated. You read the accounts of these seven churches, and we learn some rather startling things. If we are to interpret these messages of the seven churches, we have to realize that at the time that he wrote this, and perhaps for some time following that, the truth that related to the seven churches as applying to the church in a dispensational way was hidden from the church, hidden from believers.

It took the course of time itself to reveal these conditions. It took time for church history to develop and to be written so that a comparison could be made by what John had written and the actual condition that existed during that period of church history. It's remarkable that as you read this, as you know a little about

the history of the church and the various periods of church history, that the character of these seven churches is indeed descriptive of the church during seven periods of history.

At the end of the first century, the leaven of false doctrine was at work in the church. It starts in Ephesus. Remember that this very distinct weakness of each period does not disappear with that period, but continues on through the whole age right down to the present day.

And when I think about that, it's rather frightening to think when I read in Ephesus, they left their first lot. That condition still prevails in the church today. Among God's people, it amazes you sometimes when you meet someone, and all of the freshness and the growth of having found God's way, having had revealed to that soul that God has a plan and a purpose, and that you have discovered that in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, God can bless.

He can restore. He can make one righteous. He that knew no sin but was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God.

Isn't that profound? Isn't it wonderful to know that in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can stand in the presence of God in his righteousness? But to be aware that all of the imperfections, all of the things that indeed in the sight of God are abominable, they are still present in the church today. And the fact, you could say, in this accumulation of years, in this period of church history, all of the things that John points out for us and reminds us of as characteristics of that particular period, they're all with us today. There's been a compounding of the problems that exist in the church down through these last 2,000 years that is rather frightening, and it would cause each one of us, I trust, to search our own hearts because that's so important.

If revival is to ever come, it must start with me. It must start with you, and we live in a day in which the church should indeed check up and be sure what its priorities are. There's so much that is advanced today as being a program for the church.

A little better organization. The professional religionists of our day have so impressed the masses that sometimes we lose sight of the fact that our God would have one thing be a first priority for the church today, and that is that Jesus Christ might have first place. Let him have the preeminent place, and when people talk to me about serving God, right away I want to know where Christ fits in to their life.

Is he enthroned? Is he the Lord Jesus Christ to you? The spirit of this day in which we live tells us, and even as we look at very specifically the Laodicean church, Christ did not have first place, and indeed starting with the church in Ephesus in which there was abandonment of that first love. They found something else. Something else was substituted, and so it reads as we go down through this list.

Ephesus, a backslidden church. Smyrna, the persecuted church. But that persecution, there was a reason for it.

There'd been sin in the church. It was God's chastening hand upon them. Pergamus, a licentious church, all of the things that were tolerated.

Thyatira, a lax church. Sarnia, a dead church, dead. Philadelphia, a favored but an awakened church that speaks to us of a period in which God was flashing great revivals, and Laodicea, a lukewarm church.

Our Lord has not one commendation for the Laodicean church, but the complaint was that there was lukewarmness, and you know if you want something refreshing and cool when you put it to your lips, you want it to be everything that you expect it to be. By the same token, those that like their coffee and like it real hot, or their tea real hot, and they tell me that it's not that when they put it to their lips that they're terribly disappointed, and I know that liquid that is supposed to be cool or cold and refreshing, and it's not that. It's lukewarm, it's rather nauseating, and yet that's exactly what our Lord says concerning this church at Laodicea.

I know thy works, and you know there should be the realization in the heart of every individual that indeed that power that God possesses of being omniscient and knowing all. There's so many things that are hidden today. You know, we are able to camouflage sometimes our lies.

There's pretense. There's that leaven of hypocrisy, the leaven of hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Pretense that says everything is all right within my soul, going through all of the motions, even being regular at services, and that sort of thing, and yet never really hot or cold in that sense.

And the Lord looks at that condition, and he says that's the condition that existed at Laodicea ever so dangerous, ever so nauseating, disapproved of the Lord. That's his complaint concerning that church. I said at the very outset in the world today, and in what I believe to be the Laodicean period, there's been a substitution by man of more committed, more organization, well organized, but no true spiritual power.

Now, we were in a prayer meeting just a few minutes ago, and I look for this when I'm in the prayer meeting with the president. Are we depending upon our own strength for what we do for the Lord, or are we depending upon his power and his strength? If what we say about the word of God is not empowered by the Spirit of God, it has no power. It is lacking in that one ingredient that God wants us to have.

God wants us to have power, spiritual power. It's incumbent upon us that our souls be cleansed, sin be confessed, and forsaken. In that prayer meeting, there was frequent mention of, let the power of the Spirit of God be upon what we do so needed in our service for him.

In fact, he says, without me you can't do anything. Soul winning has become a big business in the world today. You can turn on the television, you can turn on the radio, and you never heard of so many things that are being done.

Giant campaigns and things, promotional ideas that are being used to propagate the so-called gospel. Very often it may be just the social gospel. It may be lacking in these very ingredients that we're talking about this morning.

Men are clever, and men are able because of that cleverness, and because of their wisdom in the ways of the world to deceive those that are in the world. Let God's people not be deceived. John says, let us indeed try the spirits to be sure of what source they are.

Brother, if you have not the Spirit of God in you, you're none of Christ. And none of this business of looking for that so-called spirit baptism that some speak of today, and speaking in tongues as an evidence of having received the Lord Jesus and been baptized into one body by one spirit. There's a lot that surrounds that subject today that is not found in the word of God.

It has no basis in the word of God, the self-deception. And I am reminded that the word of God says that the heart, the heart of man is so deceptive, and the thing that is so remarkable about that is that it

deceives self. The one that possesses that deceptive heart within him, he is deceived.

And in this case, we have those that no doubt in sincerity thought that they were doing something that was right, but actually they didn't know. In fact, they said, they said perhaps in sincerity, we are rich. There was a boast about it, and I hear so many today that because of the very success that's been enjoyed, and program is growing, membership is being expanded, this is wonderful.

This is of God. Not necessarily so. Again, by clever promotion, that sort of thing, these things can be carried on.

Self-deception. Thou sayeth, that's what the Lord says, thou sayeth that God is going to say something else, and it's quite contrary to what they said. They said they were rich, increased with goods, we have need of nothing.

We got it made. The 21st reminds us that the Lord Jesus wasn't even in their midst. He was outside the door trying to get in.

They said we're rich, we've got everything, all the bills are paid, got a tremendous program going here, things are just wonderful, increased with goods, and have need of nothing. We don't need the Lord. I remember what Bill McDonald said one time.

He said there are many churches today that, indeed, the Spirit of God could depart. There'd be no recognition that he'd even left. He's not relied upon to begin with, and for all those things that men would do to impress others with their holiness of character and their goodness, unless it is truly spirit born.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, and joy, and peace, long-suffering, patience, goodness, faith. All of these things are a product of the Spirit of God, and only he can produce those things in a human life, in a redeemed life for the glory of God. All self-effort is of no avail, for by grace are you saved through faith that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not of works lest any other should boast.

And, brother, look, in working out your salvation with fear and trembling, be aware that it is the Spirit of God, it is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ in us that enables us to live for the glory of God, and we cannot do it in our own strength. We are powerless to do anything for the glory of God, apart from the power that he provides, and any credit that I take for anything in my life that is for the glory of God is a terrible mistake. He, and he alone, can produce anything in this life, in your life, for his glory and honor aside from the power that we, in a sense, receive, appropriate for bringing that honor and glory to his name.

They were boasting, we're rich, we're increased in goods, we don't need anything. We got it made. They knew not, they know it not.

That's the word. They were wretched. It doesn't hardly seem reasonable to put these conditions side by side.

One thing they're saying, this is what the Lord had to say about it, they are wretched, they are miserable, they are poor, they're blind, they're naked. The richness that they had and the riches that they said they possessed, it was a burden to them, and so often it is. Having riches even in this world, Paul says, can be a snare, but they are encouraged to take counsel.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold of true and approved righteousness. The Apostle Peter tells us about the refining process that goes on in the individual life in which God applies the appropriate amount of fire, sometimes that's trial and testing, to each individual life so that, indeed, a given condition might be realized. It might become pure gold.

All of the drops, all of the things that are so worthless in life that they might be brought to the surface, they might be swept away and out of our lives. Pure gold is what he said. Pride in the fire, that which comes forth as the pure righteousness of God.

Quite raiment in the sight of God, there was moral nakedness there. There was impurity there. There was that which had defiled, and indeed there was not that which bespoke of the glory of God manifest in their midst, but rather so much that was morally impure.

Quite raiment was the feats of the purity and the righteousness, again, of our God. Nakedness, spiritual destitution, the pretense that's made sometimes, the boast, and very often that which is done is not being done for the glory of God. There's almost the impression given that there is an arrogance, there is a shredding, there's a brazenness about the attitude of the church at Laodicea.

You see it in the world today. It's not that humility of spirit, not that recognition that God is all in all, and if anything is to be accomplished in our lives for his glory and honor, he must do it. Einstein, the need for the anointing of the eye, the eyes that are sealed shut because of sickness.

Light has come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light. They love the darkness because their deeds are evil, and it doesn't matter if it's down on some low moral plane, or if it's in the church itself, the professing church today. There needs to be true spiritual enlightenment.

The men of this world, to them spiritual things are foolishness. To the truly spiritual man, all of these things indeed are made plain. But there's chasteness, there's a warning, there's repentance needed.

You can't make salvation out of repentance. Some seek to do that. If you repent, if you just turn around and do a little bit better and reform a little bit, first thing you know, they'll pat them on the back, baptize them, and they become genuine church members of some local church put on the rope.

Never having had a true experience with God in salvation, but true repentance, godly repentance, which the heart is broken, there's brokenness before God and a realization that, indeed, we have gone contrary to his will and his way, and in this instance we have shut out the Lord of glory. I think in that 20th verse, it has to be one of the most startling statements in the New Testament. This picture of the Lord Jesus standing on the outside, knocking on the door, seeking admittance back into the church.

The church that he loved, the church that he died for, the church that he shed his precious blood for. Christ outside of the church, knocking, seeking admittance. He was rejected by his own, he came into the world, and he came unto his own, and his own received him not.

But as many as received him, to them gave he the power, the authority, to become the children of God. To be reminded that that nation of people, indeed so honored of God, so blessed of God, they rejected the very Messiah that he sent for them, excluded and crucified by this world. That's the attitude toward the person of God's Son.

We will not have this man to rule over us. That's the cry of the world today. They feel adequate within themselves.

If you think about the life of the Lord Jesus, there was no room in that inn that day. He never owned a home. Those that followed him were warned.

You know the birds of the air, they have their nests, the foxes have their holes, but you know the Son of Man has not where to lay his head. He didn't have a home. This world, in a sense, was indeed hostile toward the Lord Jesus Christ, and when you look away at Calvary, you find out they had one place for him, and they set away with him, crucified him, and they put him upon the tree.

John is reminding us that in the last days, conditions as we see them, as we have described for us in the book concerning the church at Laodicea, they truly exist today. There are marks of this all around us when the disciples ask, indeed what will be those signs of the return of the Son of God? As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in those last days. Marrying and giving in marriage, feasting, all of the things that go to make up mankind in his endeavor to be satisfied, and in a sense to justify, perhaps, in his own eyes.

Everything must be all right, because God hasn't spoken from heaven in a long time. But believe me, if you read his words, if you listen to his voice by the Spirit of God, he will indeed speak to us in these days. He will speak to each one of us, and may the Spirit of God speak to us this morning and remind us that I have an awesome responsibility as a Christian.

Where is the Lord Jesus Christ in my life? Is he enthroned in my heart, or is he outside of my life? Have I shut him out? Am I saying business as usual, and doing so many right things, and yet he is not enthroned upon my heart? And, if you don't know the person of the Lord Jesus Christ in the experience of salvation this morning, our prayer is that the Spirit of God, with all of the power of conviction that he can bring to bear upon your heart, will convict you of sin, of righteousness, and judgment. For his glory and honor, we ask this. Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, we do bow in thy presence and thank thee again for the day, and for the very comfortable circumstances in which we are found. Indeed, O God, in these last days, in these rather distressing times in which we live, we thank thee for the enlightenment that you have provided us, and for this thy holy word, and all that you would have us learn today. We pray that we shall learn.

We pray that we shall acknowledge our need of thee in every circumstance of life, and that in all that we do and say there will be more and more Christ-likeness in each of the lives of your dear children. And for those that stand in spiritual darkness today, we pray thee, O God, by the power of the Spirit of God, awaken them out of darkness. For this we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen.

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