

## ***Session 1 The Importance of Jesus' Message to the 7 Churches***

### **I. JESUS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

*We are looking at Revelation 1, 2 and 3 in this course, but only a little bit of chapter one tonight, just an overview on it. I remember some years ago I did an entire course on Revelation 1. I cannot remember what I called it, but we took all of the phrases about Jesus describing Him in Revelation 1 and looked at each one of them; it is on the website somewhere. I love Revelation 1. Ben said it right: it is the most detailed description of the majesty of Jesus anywhere in the Bible—Revelation 1.*

- A. The book of Revelation is called the **revelation of Jesus** because it reveals the majesty of His heart and leadership. Second, it reveals events that will occur in His end-time plan to purify the Church, bring in the harvest, replace all the governments on earth, and transition it to the age to come.

***<sup>1</sup>The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him [Jesus] to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to...John. (Rev. 1:1)***

*Let's look at this in verse 1: the Book of Revelation is called "the Revelation of Jesus." It is the only book that has that title that God the Father gave Jesus the commission to reveal Himself. That is interesting that the most powerful force in the universe is the revelation of Jesus, and the Father has authority over that revelation, and He commissioned the Son, "Go, make this part of Yourself known." And so the Book of Revelation is the unveiling of the Lord Jesus by the Lord Jesus. That is what is so remarkable!*

*Look what it says in verse 1 "The revelation of Jesus which the Father gave the Son"—I am adding those titles—"to show His servants"—here is the phrase "the things [the events] that are going to take place." So the point of this book is the man Christ Jesus. That is the number one theme of the Book of Revelation. It is not the plan, but it is the man **behind** the plan. The reason I am saying that is that some people get preoccupied with the plan and they miss the man, but the name of the book is the unveiling of the man; that is what it is about.*

*In these three chapters, Jesus shares a vision of Himself to John the apostle. Most commentators say John was in his nineties. He was on the Isle of Patmos, just outside of Greece, in the Mediterranean. He was in prison for his faith, and Jesus appeared to Him.*

- B. In Revelation 1-3, John shares a vision which highlights **30 descriptions of Jesus'** majesty, ministry, and personality, and **18 eternal rewards**. Each description and reward communicates insight into Jesus' leadership that are necessary in equipping the Church to overcome compromise.

*In chapters 1 to 3, I have identified thirty descriptions of Jesus. There are thirty of them: of His majesty, His ministry, and His personality. Not only are there these thirty descriptions, but we also have eighteen different eternal rewards or you could say twenty-two, as you can add it up a couple of different ways; some of them overlap and seem to be saying the same thing. Each of these descriptions of Jesus, these thirty descriptions, and each of these eternal rewards communicate something specific about Jesus that is necessary for the Church to be equipped for the greatest hour of pressure in human history. These thirty descriptions of Him and these eighteen, yay, twenty-two eternal rewards are critical for equipping the end-time Church to prevail in the most difficult and challenging time of history, but also in the greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit as well.*

- C. I identify **30 descriptions** from Jesus' titles, appearance, and actions in Revelation 1-3. I recognize 24 descriptions in Revelation 1— 7 descriptions in 1:5-7 and 17 in 1:10-16; and 18 in Revelation 2-3, totaling 42. Since 12 are in both Revelation 1 and Revelation 2-3, I identify 30 distinct descriptions.

- D. Jesus revealed His majesty as the Son of Man (Rev. 1). He used the title *Son of Man* more than any other (85 times). The Son of Man is a title from Daniel 7:14 and speaks of the Messiah who will rule all the nations with His people. This title emphasizes that Jesus is fully God and fully human.

***<sup>10</sup>I heard...a loud voice...<sup>11</sup>saying, "I am the...First and the Last...<sup>13</sup>in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man...<sup>14</sup>His head and hair were...white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; <sup>15</sup>His feet were like fine brass...His voice as the sound of many waters; <sup>16</sup>He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a...sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. <sup>17</sup>And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead...***  
**(Rev. 1:10-17)**

*I want to highlight to you that Jesus revealed Himself here as the Son of Man. Most of you are familiar with that title as you would have recognized it in the gospels because Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man far more than any other description during His ministry. As a matter of fact, it was eighty-five times, which is far more than any other title or description Jesus gave of Himself. The interesting thing is that all eighty-five of these references are referring to one verse in Daniel 7:14, the only one time in the Old Testament where Daniel saw the Messiah as the Son of Man. In these eighty-five times that Jesus references it in the gospels, He was saying, "I am the Man from Daniel 7. I am the Man from Daniel 7," and they would look at Him and think, "Do you actually realize who you are claiming to be? Do you know who the Son of Man is?" Only one reference in the whole Old Testament to the Messiah as the Son of Man, and He said, "Yes, this is exactly what I am trying to tell you! I am He."*

*I have a little snapshot of Revelation 1 here on the notes because Jesus uses or draws from this revelation in chapter 1 when He speaks to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. To each of the churches that He talks to, He says, "Remember what I told John. I want you to know this facet of My personality and My ministry because it is going to be critical for you to overcome the compromise that is tempting you or to persevere in the pressure and persecution that is coming against you." There is so much here! It is like a marvelous jewel in Revelation 1, 2 and 3, but let's just get a feel for it.*

*In verse 10, John is on the Isle of Patmos, off the coast of Greece, and he hears a loud voice. He turns around, and this Man says, "I am the Alpha, the Omega. I am the First and the Last," and there are many implications to that. John looks at this Man in the midst of the seven lampstands, and then later on, in chapter 2, Jesus explains, "I walk in the midst of the churches." That is, "I am with the Church, John. I am not just leading the Church from afar"—the churches are the seven lampstands—"I am in the middle of them. I am present in their midst. They do not always recognize My presence, but I am there." That is one of the things He is saying in that description. John sees that in the midst of these seven lampstands, and we find out that the seven lampstands are the seven churches of Asia that Jesus is going to give this prophetic message to.*

*By the way, these seven churches of Asia are all in what would be known as modern-day Turkey. All seven of those ancient cities are in what we know as Turkey today, which would have been Asia Minor back in that day.*

*So he looks, and he sees the Son of Man, but he does not really recognize Him because, verse 14, "His hair is white like snow." John understands that "hair white like snow." It takes him back to the Daniel 7 vision where the Son of Man—in the only time Messiah appears as the Son of Man in the Old Testament—is next to the Father, and the Father has hair white like snow. And so he is thinking, "Wait, You are like the Father! You are eternal like the Father is!" That is what John is recognizing. He doesn't really know quite what is happening because he is awestruck by what he is seeing.*

As he continues to look, "His eyes are like a flame of fire." Beloved, we know the Man that we love is a Man with eyes like fire. The Man with burning eyes—that is our Savior, that is our King, and the reason He has burning eyes is because He has a burning heart. And it is critical for these seven churches to encounter not just the doctrine of the Messiah but to encounter the Man with eyes of fire. This is going to be essential for the end-time Church to walk in victory. It is much more accurate doctrine, but a current encounter with the Man.

Then verse 15, "His feet were like fine brass." That spoke of the certainty that He was going to judge the hostile kingdoms that were coming against God's people, so that is actually an encouragement. These are not just symbolic things. They do speak of many things, but he is actually seeing this in Jesus' person.

"His voice is as the sound of many waters." You know, for two thousand years the nations have been ignoring and dismissing the voice of Jesus, but I tell you He is coming back, and when He comes back, every single knee will bow, every tongue will confess, and every king will bow before Him. He will never be dismissed again. He has a voice of authority that will be capturing all of the attention of all the nations when He returns. However, we are not waiting for Him to return to understand the majesty and the power of who He is.

Verse 16, "He had in His right hand seven stars," and the Lord makes it clear these seven stars are the seven senior apostolic leaders over these seven churches; they are actually men. He is saying this: "I am carrying My leadership in My right hand. They are near to Me, and they are dear to Me. My people, My leaders, are in My hand, and I am going to help them." That is the message behind this, but again there is much more. I am giving an interpretation just ever so brief.

"Out of His mouth went a sword." He has powerful words to pierce through any scheme of darkness, to liberate any bondage. His words break bondages and have power over the enemy and much more as well.

And then he looks at Him right in His face—he is looking all up and down Him—His face is brighter than the sun at the strength of noonday. He still does not quite grasp what is going on. He trembles, and he falls at His feet as a dead man. And I like to say this, because it says in Revelation 1 that Jesus bends down and puts His hand on him and says, as it were, "John, John, John, it is just Me. It is the One you put your head on, on My breast, at the Last Supper sixty years ago, remember? John, My dear friend, it is just Me. Or did you not really know who I was when I walked among you?" John is shaking; there was no man more intimate with Jesus than John, but he is absolutely awestruck because he had never seen this measure of power and majesty in his dear friend Jesus. He saw Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, but here he falls as a dead man, and one thing that this speaks to me is that when we see Him more according to who He is—and we will never see Him fully who He is in this age—but the more we see Him, the more easily we die to our own agendas. We let go; we do not care.

I have prayed a prayer over the years and would like to offer it to you because Paul the apostle had this same kind of encounter, and he said in Philippians 3:8, "The excellency of the knowledge of this Man—I give up everything! It is worthless to me; it means nothing to me when I see the excellency of this Man." And so I have prayed over the years, "Lord, if you let me see what Paul saw, I can respond like Paul responded." I do not want Paul's ministry. I don't want to do what he did. I want to do my commission, and I want to respond in the abandonment that Paul did.

The reason Paul was abandoned? Some people say, "Oh he was so zealous!" No, that is not why he was abandoned; it was because he saw clearly. Beloved, I do not try harder, but I put more attention to see more clearly because when we see more, we give more. The challenges in the Church are from the lack of seeing Who it is that we are relating to. He is more than biblical doctrine. He is more than just a way of salvation. He is the Man with burning eyes whose face is like the sun, and the more we see Him the more easily we will step away

from our own agendas. It will only make sense then to die to everything that gets in the way. Though John fell as a dead man—he was literally overwhelmed—spiritually there is nothing that liberates our heart like seeing Him more clearly.

I want to say it again: I encourage people, “Do not try harder to be dedicated. See more clearly. Spend more time cultivating this insight.” Because I believe that I do not read the Word because I want to prove I am dedicated and want to tell the Lord, “See how sincere I am,” but I read the Word because the sparks of insight liberate my heart, so I read the word because I want a free heart and the Lord loves it when we read the Word. I am not trying to earn anything from Him. I know that is the way to a liberated heart and to see more clearly.

Of course there is no passage more intensely revealing of His majesty, His ministry, and His personality than Revelation 1. You are going to find it through the seven churches, which is Revelation 2 and 3. We will take one week on each of the seven churches, and you are going to find that Jesus is entrusting a specific message to each one of those churches.

## II. THE ANGEL TO THE CHURCH: LEADERSHIP

- A. Jesus gave a specific message to each of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2-3. The “angel to the church” refers to the senior leader over each church that was addressed. The word “angel” is *angelos* in the Greek. It may refer to a human or angelic messenger (Lk. 7:24, 27; 9:52). It was translated *messenger* when referring to John the Baptist (Mt. 11:10. Mk. 1:2).

***<sup>1</sup>“To the angel [messenger] of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars...’”<sup>8</sup>“To the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last...’”<sup>12</sup>“To the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword...’”<sup>18</sup>“To the angel of the church in Thyatira write...” (Rev. 2:1. 8, 18)***

I have just a little snapshot of it here: “To the angel of the church of Ephesus,” that is a city in Turkey. “To the angel of the church in Smyrna,” that is another city of Turkey as well. All seven of them are. “To the angel of the church of Pergamos,” and the angel is the human messenger. It is the senior apostolic leader over that work of God in that city in that timeframe. And of course it is not one person, a one-man leadership, but this leader would bring this revelation to the team of leaders, the eldership over the Body of Christ in that city, and they were responsible to make sure that the message given by Jesus to John was taught. John wrote the letter to the messenger of that city.

- B. The “messenger” of each of the seven churches was the one responsible to steward that message faithfully and not let it be distorted through compromise, fear, or neglect. They were to proclaim the message that Jesus spoke through John and to establish an action plan to implement the truths.

I believe it was the primary apostolic leader of that city whom the Lord would make responsible to make sure this message that the Lord gave to the church in that city would not be distorted, would not be neglected, but they would have action plans to walk out what Jesus said. Of course He would hold the whole eldership responsible. However, always in God's kingdom there is a head among equals among leadership. There are always leaders among leaders, and He gives this to this leader and says that “Ultimately you and the eldership will be responsible that this message is not neglected or distorted but that it is actually walked out.” And so that is why the message was given to that human leader.

Some people believe that it was given to an angel. The word, angel, means messenger and in the New Testament it can be a human messenger or it can be an angelic messenger; it just depends on the context. However, I am

*convinced he is giving it to the leadership of the church; he is not giving it to an angel and then having the angel appear to the whole church. That is not exactly what was happening.*

### III. COMMON ELEMENTS IN UNDERSTANDING JESUS' LETTERS TO THE 7 CHURCHES

- A. **Historical context:** It is helpful to understand the situation of the city where each church was. Each had specific challenges politically, economically, spiritually, etc. Jesus selected these churches for varying reasons, also knowing they would give insight into preparing the end-time Church.

*Now when we look at these seven churches—and we will be looking at this for seven weeks in a row—we are going to cover a number of things, so this is just an outline of how we are going to look at each one of these seven messages to the seven churches.*

*The first thing we are going to look at every week of course is the historical context. Meaning, there was a specific situation happening in the city of Ephesus and that city had specific challenges that they had to overcome. The Lord emphasized a specific facet. He said, as it were, "John, when you talk to the apostolic leader of Ephesus, emphasize this part of who I am and tell them this is what I want them to focus on. And here are a specific set of promises"—I mean, all of the promises are available to all of God's people but—"I want them to know that these promises will help them in the area they are being tempted to draw back and compromise in." And so these messages are quite specific and strategic and prophetic. Therefore we will look at little bit on each of the seven cities week by week. You know what was the situation around Pergamos? What was the situation around Laodicea? And the historical context in situations is quite interesting actually, and again there will be more on the notes than I will cover verbally in the sessions because of time.*

- B. **Revelation of Jesus:** All seven messages begin with Jesus highlighting an aspect of His majesty seen in Revelation 1. Eighteen aspects of Jesus' majesty are highlighted in Revelation 2-3.

*Jesus highlights a couple of those thirty descriptions that I just mentioned that He gives in Revelation 1, 2 or 3. He is saying "This church with these temptations and these pressures will need this part of My personality emphasized more, so spend time emphasizing this aspect of who I am to them." Of course they are to speak of on all of who He is, but I find it very interesting what part of His majesty Jesus connects with what temptation they are being challenged with.*

- C. **Affirmation for faithfulness:** Jesus gave a specific affirmation to five of the churches. However, two churches did not receive an affirmation (Sardis and Laodicea).

*He gives an affirmation, but the tragic part is He only gives an affirmation to five of the churches; two of them He has no affirmation for. I cannot imagine anything more tragic for a church than the Lord not affirming anything. That is unthinkable tragic for me, and that is a possibility, but it does not have to be. And for the five churches where He does affirm things they are doing, the reason we really value it is that it shows us what moves Him. Here is the resurrected Christ, and He says, "It particularly touches Me that you are doing this," and we think, "Wow, note to self, to the end-time leadership team in His church in whatever city you are: make sure your ministry is embracing these things because these are the things that Jesus specifically highlighted and that moved Him and that He values." The fact that two churches received no affirmation is a sober warning that it is possible for a church to function and yet not be functioning in a way that receives the Lord's affirmation. He loves them; however, He looks at them and is saying, "There is nothing I can highlight that you are doing that I want to draw attention to."*

*I cannot imagine how many ministries He might think that about. I don't want to know, but I want to make sure that, as for me and my house, it is not going to be true of us. We want to look at these things that move His heart, and we want to make sure we are doing them. Not that this is a checklist, but as a leader I look at these and think, "Are we doing this? Are we avoiding that? Are we saying this? Okay." So for those of you who are called to leadership, which are many in this room, in a practical kind of a strange way of saying it: this is a leadership checklist, though far more than that, of course. Go down the list; check your life and check your ministry with the things that He says to these seven churches.*

- D. **Correction for compromise:** Jesus' correction is not rejection. He corrected five churches: Ephesus (2:4), Pergamos (2:14), Thyatira (2:20), Sardis (3:1), and Laodicea (3:15-17). He did not correct two churches (Smyrna and Philadelphia). His strongest rebukes were for passivity, immorality, and idolatry (covetousness and/or sorcery: 1 Cor. 10:20-22; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5).

*The other thing He gives is not just an affirmation; He gives a correction for compromise. By these corrections, it is not rejection. When the Lord gives a correction, it is not a rejection. Rather, it is because He loves us, as it says in Proverbs 3:12, "The Lord disciplines His people like a father who delights in his son." He disciplines us because He delights in us. Now, when the Lord corrects us individually or our church, we might say, "Oh Lord!" However, we do not want to get defensive, or try to find out ways, Bible verses, to explain away our compromises. Beloved, when the Lord corrects us, He is contending for our greatness and our liberty. He is contending for our greatness in the Spirit and our liberty. And what I mean by "our greatness" is that we would walk in all that God has ordained for us; that is what I mean by "great." That we would make choices that God would call great; that God agrees with those choices.*

*Well, there were two churches He did not correct. Can you imagine being among a body of believers when the resurrected Christ appears with eyes of fire and He says, "I have no correction for you!" Beloved, that is a glorious way to live, and I have good news: He is coming back at the Second Coming for a Church worldwide that is as a prepared Bride, that is spotless and full of glory. And so I believe that what He revealed about Himself and about the Church in these three chapters really is a Church after His own heart and that is the kind of Church He is coming back for. However, He is not going to just wave His hand and it is going to pop out of the ground instantly. He is going to call leadership teams to these things, and they are going to be intentional about cultivating these values and truths and imparting them to His people. That is why whether you are twenty years old or eighty years old and God has called you to leadership, whether you are in it or you are going to be in it, we really care about what He identifies here because this is what the Spirit is going to be emphasizing. This is what the resurrected Christ highlighted in His glory when He talked about the Church. This is remarkable!*

*Now I want you to highlight this when you study the whole seven churches: that His strongest rebukes were for three things. First is passivity, spiritual passivity. "Well, I really love God, you know, but I just really do not have time. I am really busy, and I am a little bit mad at the Church, and I am not happy with my position, and I don't... and I don't... and I don't..." There are many, many reasons why people draw back into passivity. They are disappointed. They are bruised by the way they are treated. Things are not like they thought they would be. Their expectations do not happen like they thought they would. We do not want to enter into passivity. When we do and we recognize it, we want to get out of it because He really spoke strongly about passivity. So there are a lot of reasons people get into passivity, and one of the big reasons is their disappointments and the delays of promises and things did not happen like they thought and so their hearts got bruised in the process. I get that. I have experienced that a number of times, but the Lord says, "Do not camp out there! You only have one time on the earth and you do not want to be passive, especially when I highlighted it."*

The second thing that He emphasized a number of times is immorality, and the third one is idolatry. Now idolatry you might say "What! What's the idolatry?" I have noted here the verse Galatians 3:5, where Paul said, "Let me tell you what idolatry is." He boils it down; in essence it is covetousness. You think, "Wait, worshipping an idol is loving money?" He says, "Yes, that is what it is," because when you study idolatry in the Old Testament it shows that the reason Israel worshipped idols was to cause their land to be fertile, to make more money. To cause their cattle and livestock to be more fruitful so they would make money. It was about money. So they would interact with spiritual powers, demons. They did not think it was demons, but it was. They had all of these gods; they would interact with them, and things would really appear to get better, so much so that they really bought into it after some generations. It was about love for money. They wanted money and power outside of the will of God.

Now, in our Western world, we do not think of interacting with spiritual powers to get more money and influence, but that was what was happening, and it was very, very clear to Paul that it was about money. So really the three things that He challenged most were passivity, immorality, and a wrong attitude towards money. Beloved, those are the three primary challenges and strongholds coming against the Western Church and maybe more than the Western Church. Immorality, passivity, and wrong approach to money. I am talking about covetousness. I do not just mean some misunderstanding on biblical principles. I mean their value towards money is outside of the will of God for their life. All over the Western Church these three issues are what the Lord is dealing with.

So as a spiritual leader, I say, "Lord, I do not want to attack them, but I do want to address these," because to the degree that we walk in freedom our lives are powerful before God. And what I mean by powerful before God, I don't mean our ministry and that everybody thinks, "Wow, aren't they powerful!" but that God looks at our heart responses and He values them and esteems them. I want to make an impact on people, but far more than that I want to offer to the Lord on the last day a heart of faithfulness so that He will say, "That was good. That was well done!" These three issues—immorality, passivity and covetousness—are strangling the Church in America right now, and very few leaders address these issues. The Lord is going to change this because the Spirit is going to emphasize it. When I look at much of the church across America, we are talking a whole lot about how to get more friends, how to get more happiness, more ease, and more money and to feel better about our sin without repenting; for a whole lot of the church that is the focus of it. All kinds of cool seminars on how to get more money, more friends, more comfort and to feel better about your sin without repenting and using biblical language to do it.

Why am I saying that to you? Just to kind of beat up on somebody out there? No, so that you are not deceived by that message, because many Christians unaware that is the diet they are very comfortable with. When you read Revelation 2 and 3, you will say "Oh my goodness, that is not okay with the Lord!" because the Spirit is going to lead the church beyond this and into freedom from it.

- E. **Exhortation to respond:** Jesus highlighted specific actions that He required them to engage in. He urged some to *repent of compromise* and some to *resist fear* of persecution or rejection.

He gives each of these churches an exhortation to respond. The two basic categories of exhortation: He urges them to *repent of compromise*—of the passivity, the immorality, or the covetousness—or He exhorts them to *resist the fear of persecution, the fear of the stigma of being rejected*. And so not all of the folks were drawing back because they were into passivity, immorality or covetousness; a lot of them were drawing back in fear of persecution or the stigma and the rejection that would come in their social order if they stood true to Jesus. So those were the two main areas: the compromise in those three areas mentioned and the challenge not to cave into the fear of the stigma of being true to Him.

- F. **Promise for overcomers:** In Revelation 2-3, Jesus promised 22 eternal rewards (2:7, 10, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). Most of these promises will find their greatest fulfillment in the millennial kingdom. They include: to eat from the tree of life (2:7); to receive the crown of life (2:10); not to be hurt by the second death (2:11); to eat hidden manna (2:17); to receive a white stone (2:17); to receive a new name written on the stone (2:17); to have power over the nations (2:26); to receive the morning star (2:28); to receive white garments (Rev 3:5); to receive a name that is not blotted from the Book of Life (3:5); Jesus to confess one's name before the Father and angels. (3:5); one's persecutors to worship before their feet (3:9); one's persecutors to know that Jesus loves them (3:9); to be made a pillar in God's temple (3:12); to have God's name, the New Jerusalem, and Jesus' new name written on them (3:12); to receive gold to be rich (3:18); to receive white garments (3:18); to have anointed eyes to see more (3:18); to eat with Jesus (3:20); and to sit on His throne. (3:21).

*Here we have the promise for overcomers and some of the twenty-two eternal rewards. Again, you can combine some of them together, so you could say it was twenty or eighteen, but I have counted twenty-two of them. And, oh my goodness, these are glorious! He says, "To eat from the tree of life; to receive the crown of life, to not be hurt by the second death." At a casual first read, you might think, "Well, those are all automatic. They are all synonymous with being born again." There are many implications to these twenty-two rewards, many implications. I did a class back in 2016 where we looked at every one of them; we went nine or ten weeks and looked at every one of these and saw what the scriptures said about these in various parts of the scripture. I want to assure you that these are not promises which are just guaranteed to every born-again believer. These are promises that the Lord offers to those who overcome the passivity, the immorality, the covetousness, and the fear of persecution. Not that they are not in trepidation about persecution, but their obedience is greater than their fear. I mean, I think if somebody is going to hit you or throw you in prison, you are not going to like it. And it is not that we are absolutely free from any concern of that, but our love for Jesus is stronger than our fear of the persecution. That is the essence.*

*Well, there is so much more than what meets the eye about these twenty-two promises. Again, remembering the course in 2016 when we looked at them week by week, and I mean they are magnificent, it is almost like the Lord says, "I will give you a whisper, but I will put more in the scriptures on each one of these. You search out what the scriptures say about these, and you will get a bigger picture." And so it is kind of like that in the brevity of chapter 2 and 3; it is so brief! These little descriptions and these little statements of rewards, it is like the Spirit is saying, "If you want more, search the scriptures and I will tell you more because there is a mountain of understanding behind every one of these implications, and so I just offer those to you right there."*

#### IV. HOW TO APPLY THE MESSAGES IN THE 7 LETTERS

*How are we going apply the messages of these seven letters?*

- A. **Individually:** The letters were intended to inspire obedient love and persevering faith in individuals. *Obviously individually. That is where we have complete authority in our lives to respond, yet Jesus not only spoke these to individuals, but to churches. He spoke to groups, yet He spoke to "he that has ears to hear," to individual hearts, to us as individuals, born-again believers.*
- B. **Corporately:** The most powerful application is when local churches walk in these truths together. Jesus gave insight on how to prepare the end-time Church for the most difficult time in history.



*And He said "I am also speaking these to the entire Body of Christ in an area." It is so powerful when an entire spiritual family decides—I don't mean one hundred percent, but the vast majority as there is always that one guy that does not want to do it, but when an entire body decides—"We are going after this together; we are really going to do this together." There is a corporate dimension that is so powerful.*

- C. **Historically:** The letters were first written to seven historical churches in John's generation to address the actual conditions of seven real churches. Some see parallels of the spiritual conditions of these seven churches in Asia in the first century to the spiritual conditions of successive periods in church history. (I am not sure this can be substantiated, but it is possible).

*There is a historical dimension to this. Meaning, He was really talking to the church in Ephesus in the first century, really talking to them about them.*

*There is quite a popular theory or suggestion that these seven churches are not just historically about "the" church in the city of Ephesus or "the" church in the city of Laodicea, but also were seven successive periods of church history. Many commentators agree with a theory that the first two hundred years was the church of Ephesus, and then the next hundred years was the church of Smyrna, the next hundred years, three hundred years, etc. I am not convinced of that, but it might be true. I mean, a lot of commentaries offer that, and I think maybe, but I am not sure. However, it is still interesting to read, and I just wanted you to be aware that there is a historical application to this as well.*

## V. HE WHO HAS AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR: 3 IMPLICATIONS

- A. The exhortation that Jesus repeated the most in His earthly ministry was to have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. He emphasized it at least 16 times—8x in the Gospels and 8x in Revelation. (Mt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mk. 4:9, 23; 7:16; Lk. 8:8; 14:35; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9).

*Okay, I am going to give you a pop quiz, so put your hand over your notes, just on your honor, because the answer is right there. What do you think is the number one exhortation Jesus gave from His own lips in the Bible? What exhortation did He give much more than any other single exhortation? Yes, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Sixteen times Jesus gives this exhortation. It is the most emphasized exhortation in the teachings of Jesus. Now when I first saw that I was shocked. I thought "Wow!" and I looked at other ones, "Repent!" or "Love" or something. No, it was this.*

*Remember at the beginning of the class tonight I said that if you see more clearly your heart will get free. And so you want to see more because, if you understand more about Him, your heart will be liberated. Do not grit your teeth and try to overcome bitterness, overcome immorality, overcome covetousness, or overcome rejection. Gritting your teeth will not get you free. Seeing what He is like liberates our heart. Well, obviously He understood that about Himself, and so He said, "I want to tell you something. He that has ears, let him hear."*

***<sup>7</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Rev. 2:7)***

1. There is both an individual and a corporate response that the Spirit desires to these truths. Jesus spoke this exhortation to individuals—"he" who has an ear, let "him" hear. Jesus also desired that these truths be applied corporately—"to the churches."
2. Jesus was the only one in the NT to exhort people to hear what that the Spirit was saying. He echoed Moses' call that Israel "hear"—thus, to "have ears to hear" (Deut. 6:4-5).

***<sup>4</sup>Hear, O Israel...<sup>5</sup>You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart... (Deut. 6:4-5)***

3. First, it signaled that the truth being proclaimed was *very important to Jesus*.

*When He is saying here, "I want you to hear this," He is saying, "This truth that is highlighted." Whenever He says that, the next or previous phrase is especially important to Him. He is saying "I want you to know—stop—this truth" the verse before and/or after when He says this. The sixteen times, beloved, you can be sure that is a top priority of the Holy Spirit to reveal to you. It is especially important, number one.*

4. Second, it calls us to *pay careful attention*. Jesus is saying that there is more than what is immediately obvious. Jesus calls us to pursue diligently the deeper truth being set before us.

*When He says that, He is saying, "Not only is it dear to Me, but I want you to be very careful to pay attention to this one. There is more than what meets the eye here." That it is not immediately obvious is what He is saying. You might underline it, and use all of your markers—green, red, purple—and point arrows at it, and put stars around it, but He is saying, "No, there is much more than meets the eye here; there is much more than what you think is there."*

5. Third, it takes the *supernatural help of the Spirit* to grasp it. The unaided mind of a devoted believer will not be able to grasp fully truth being set forth without asking the Spirit for help.

*It is going to take the help of the Holy Spirit to get this. Do not just read it and read a few commentaries. Ask the Holy Spirit. Even the most devout believer needs the Spirit helping them understand the verse, and the truth is a verse or two before or a verse or two after that exhortation. So He is saying "You are going to need the Spirit's help. The Spirit is here to help you."*

*And so whenever I see that phrase, I look at the verse before and the verse after and I say "Okay, okay, game on! This is a big one!"*

*You read it and think, "Okay, now it does not seem that big," and the Lord might say, "It's okay that you think that, but why did I point to it and put an asterisk on it? Because there is more there than that meets the eye."*

*Interesting that in Revelation 2 and 3 He says this phrase specifically related to the eternal rewards. He is saying, "There is more here than that meets the eye. You are going to care more about this than you think, because I know the rewards that I am giving you."*

*That is the main exhortation.*

## **VI. WHO ARE OVERCOMERS? THERE ARE TWO DIFFERENT BIBLICAL CONTEXTS**

*In each of the seven letters to these seven city churches, He uses this phrase, "to him who overcomes." so we really care who the overcomers are. There are quite a few theories as to who the overcomers are. I have read them over the years, and some of them are challenging; some of them are very eccentric. However, I want to say from the biblical context there are two very different contexts where John the apostle, the same man, uses the word "overcomer." He uses it in two different ways and in two very different contexts, and you do not want to confuse these two contexts. I have read different commentaries of scholars and some "not-scholars" where I see that this context gets confused and then they put the two together as synonymous many times.*

- A. First, **overcoming worldly unbelief**. All believers overcome in this general way by believing in Jesus and refusing heresies as outlined in John's epistles (1 Jn. 4:1-5; 5:4-5).

*The first context of overcomers is in 1 John 5:4-5. It is overcoming worldly unbelief; it is overcoming the world. John applies this to every believer in that they overcome by resisting heresies by resisting the spirit of the Antichrist. Meaning, the spirit of the Antichrist in that day meant saying Jesus had not come in the flesh. That is*

what that really meant, just to sum it up quickly. He was challenging the people of his day to be overcomers by resisting heresies about salvation. And so the challenge was to have genuine faith in Jesus.

***<sup>4</sup>Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 Jn. 5:4-5)***

- B. Second, ***overcoming unfaithfulness***: In a believer's life, this is specifically defined in Rev. 2-3. To overcome means to walk in spiritual maturity or to be consistent in obedience.

***<sup>20</sup>“You allow...Jezebel...to teach...My servants to commit sexual immorality...<sup>26</sup>He who overcomes...until the end, to him I will give power over the nations...” (Rev. 2:20-26)***

He looks the church of Thyatira in Revelation 2:20. He says to the church of Thyatira, “You allow this woman named Jezebel”—number one, who names their daughter Jezebel? My goodness, do not name your daughter Jezebel! I am just saying—This gal named Jezebel became a leader in the church, but she had a twisted view of the grace of God and taught that it was okay to be involved in immorality.

And so Jesus, in verse 26, says, “I want you to overcome immorality. Overcome that teaching and resist it, and if you do I will give you power over the nations in the age to come.” I mean a little bit in this age, but particularly in the age to come. He says, “If you overcome that spirit, I will give you authority over the nations for a thousand years in the resurrection, and it will be a correlation.” However, the point here is that He is not telling the church of Thyatira to overcome their worldly unbelief and become born again. They are already born again. He is telling them to overcome the encroaching immorality that is coming into the church and not give way to it because it was becoming more and more accepted in the church of Thyatira, just like it is in the church in America. And so He is not exhorting them to be born again; He is exhorting them here to be faithful. He is exhorting them to resist heresy about the incarnation and the deity and humanity of Jesus and His salvation. He is exhorting them to be faithful to His leadership. That is what is going on here. “Be faithful to My leadership.” That is what the second type of overcoming is about.

1. To the church of ***Ephesus***, overcoming meant to *return to their first love* for Jesus until the end of their life. To the church in ***Smyrna***, it meant being *faithful in persecution* even to death. To the churches in ***Pergamos and Thyatira***, overcoming meant to *resist immorality and idolatry* for the remainder of their life.

I will sum this up really briefly. For the church of Ephesus, the issue was to overcome by returning to their first love. They were born again, and He knew they were born again. For the church of Smyrna, He wanted them to overcome the fear of persecution; they were drawing back, and some of them were being tempted. For the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira, to overcome immorality and idolatry which would be covetousness, and there were demonic spirits involved etc. I give a few of the others here so you have a snapshot summary of what He is saying here.

2. To the church in ***Sardis***, it was to be watchful to *cultivate a vibrant relationship with Jesus* (prayer life) and to hold fast the things that God entrusted to them in the past. To the church in ***Philadelphia***, it was to *persevere in mature obedience* until the end of their life. To the ***Laodiceans***, it was to overcome *spiritual lukewarmness*.
- C. Summary: as unbelievers, we ***overcome unbelief*** on the day we become born again. As believers, we ***overcome unfaithfulness*** only after we endure in obedience until the end.

*In summary, as unbelievers we overcome unbelief and we resist the heresies as we believe in the deity of Jesus. We believe in the humanity of Jesus. We believe in the penal substitution of His death on the cross. We believe in His right for judgment. We believe in the essential doctrines of His personhood in His accomplishing salvation. That is what we believe. That is how unbelievers overcome the world: by believing those things*

*But as believers—I am just saying what I have already said—we overcome unfaithfulness by enduring and resisting that temptation—again it was passivity, immorality, or covetousness mostly—or by resisting the fear of bearing the stigma and the persecution, and we overcome, not that we are perfect, but when we fail and come up short, we rise up again and commit ourselves to obey.*

*There is a spirit of obedience that we have long before our obedience is mature. And I tell folks that if you are waging war against that fear or that besetting sin, I mean you are sincere, then you are not looking for Bible verses to explain it away so you can live in sin. A lot of folks are looking for Bible verses to prove that immorality is okay. I mean they are twisting the grace of God verses and doctrines, and it is sad to me, not just because it is ridiculous logically, but I am thinking of their life. We only have one life on the earth, and you are not going to fool Jesus when you stand before Him.*

*I say, “No! Do not do that! I mean, He has eyes like fire and you are not going to trick Him.” Some folks are trying to rationalize their sin and back it up. They get a few friends behind them, and they all agree together, thinking they are going to change the word of God because they get on social media and agree that this is okay. No, there is only one authority, and it is the word of God.*

*However, there are others that are falling into different sins, and they hate it. They rise up and say, “Lord, I admit it is wrong. I am waging war against it!” And there is a spirit of obedience working in them, but it is just not mature yet. Beloved, that is valuable. It matters, and that counts, because eventually that obedience will become mature, if you have that spirit of obedience. It starts with that cry in your spirit against that area or against that fear.*

## **VII. WHO ARE OVERCOMERS? 3 VIEWS**

*Who are the overcomers? Again, there are two ways we overcome the world: the day we are born again and in overcoming compromise by living a life enduring to the end. That is the long-term overcomer. And so who are these overcomers? There are three basic views that you will commonly run into when you read commentaries on Revelation 2 and 3. I believe the first two views are wrong, and the third view I believe strongly is the biblical view and what Jesus meant.*

*Let's look at the two I believe are wrong. I feel very strongly about this and the reason is that I do not want to win an argument, I want to win hearts. I want to contend for people's greatness and their liberty. I do not want to win a biblical argument and say, “I have more verses on it than you do.” So what I want is the guy to get free, and I want him to live the next ten or twenty years in liberty, and when he stands before the Lord, the Lord says, “Well done!” That is what I am fighting for when I am presenting this kind of stuff. I am thinking of their destiny. So do not ever get into an argumentative spirit as that is never, ever going to edify or help anybody. Winning arguments—I have no interest in that one. When I was younger I did, but I do not really care about that now. I just want to win hearts because I even care about that guy who is all mixed up; I want him to walk the next thirty years in liberty and greatness before God.*

- A. **The “all believers” view:** This view wrongly teaches that all believers are overcomers, stating the very act of believing in Jesus is all that is needed to be an overcomer (1 Jn. 5:4-5). Faith in Jesus rather than faithfulness to Him is emphasized in this position. Here, both the spiritually mature and immature believers are equally overcomers. Thus, all the rewards in Revelation 2-3 are fully and automatically given to all believers as being synonymous with the gift of eternal life.

*The “all believers” view: I believe that this is a wrong view of this. They read the overcomer in Revelation 2 and 3 as synonymous with the one who overcomes heresies against Jesus. “I believe in His humanity. I believe in His deity. I believe in the penal substitution of His death. I put my confidence that He accomplished the righteousness of God for me. I believe!” That is not what John is talking about here. He is not convincing them to become born again. He is convincing them to resist compromise and fears. And so I believe that this view is wrong. They see all of these twenty-two rewards as fully and automatically given to every believer the day they are born again. The day they are born again. So the thief on the cross would walk in all twenty-two of these in the fullness, and I think that that is a wrong approach.*

1. Our love and obedience in this life is deeply connected to our rewards in the age to come. Some falsely teach that these rewards are given to all believers in fullness regardless of how they live. This view takes these rewards out of their context which requires repentance from certain things and being faithful to the end.

*I will tell you why it is a wrong approach. Our love and obedience in this life are deeply connected to our rewards in the age to come. Again, our love and obedience in this life are deeply connected to our rewards in the age to come. We do not earn our rewards, and some people get confused by that asking, “How can I resist pride and earn a crown? I mean I change an attitude and get a crown? You call that earning?”*

*The Lord is so abundantly generous! He gives us a thousand times more than our repentance could ever earn, and so there is so much grace in the reward He gives. You know, He gives a million dollars for changing an attitude. I think, “Wow! Nobody pays me that well!” Well, He does. And so there is no sense of earning it; you could not begin to change an attitude or turn against a sin and earn the level of what He is giving. Again, the analogy is that it is a million dollars for changing an attitude; nobody would give that. It is gracious and generous beyond measure. It has nothing to do with earning it by your works. Your works matter, but He pays so much more than we would esteem that same person for doing that same work in their life. We look at them, pat them on the back and say “Good job!” and then forget it. The Lord says, in effect, “No, I am going to reward you forever!”*

*And another thing, eternal rewards are not about people having superiority so they strut in front of others. I have heard people say over the years that they do not care about rewards. I say, “I think you might because Jesus says you will.” I have a conviction that He knows a lot more about it than you or I do, and He says that we will care, so I think there is a lot more there.*

*They have this idea, “You mean I am going to try to get really obedient so I can strut in front of people?” No! Do not have a carnal paradigm of rewards! Rewards are not about being over people, so you can flex your muscles in the age to come. That is a carnal view of authority and it is nothing like that. Those with the greatest humility now will have the greatest authority in the age to come, which is the very opposite.*

*Rather, rewards are Jesus expressing how He feels about the way you loved Him in this life. Jesus looks at us and says, “You gave that cup of cold water because you loved Me? Well, I am the wealthiest and most generous Man that ever lived, and I am going to let you know how I feel about the way you loved Me.” And every believer is going to care about that! Trust me, they are not going to get their rewards and then go to their friend and say*

*"Ah-ha, I beat you!" They are going to be overwhelmed at the generosity of Jesus and how deeply He is moved by our weak love.*

*I look at Him and say "Lord, it is pretty fragile," and He says "I know, but it is real because weak love is still real and I esteem it!" We are going to be overwhelmed by His generosity. And so get out of the idea of "I do not really care about rewards! You know, Jesus really over-did this one. He got us all excited about getting rewards and He should not have!" Well, I think He should have, and so I am going with Jesus all the way on this that He knows a lot more than we know about this.*

2. In Revelation 2-3, Jesus was not exhorting them to be born again. He was offering born-again believers rewards as incentives to greater diligence in the face of temptation and pressure.

*In Revelation 2 and 3, He is not exhorting them to become born again. He is offering them incentives to greater diligence. And the incentives are that it moves Him! It moves Him, and that is the incentive! If I can obey Him and respond in humility and be diligent when I do not feel like it in my flesh, and He cares about it, and He remembers it, then I want to do it! If He does not care about it, well, I do not care then. But if He does care? Are you kidding? And He writes it in His book? And in Revelation 2 and 3 He makes it clear, "I am putting this in My book!" Every one of you has a book of your life story, and every deed you have done in obedience, humility, and kindness is in that book; every cup of cold water you have given. That is remarkable!*

***<sup>11</sup>For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup>Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup>each one's work will become clear...and the fire will test each one's work...<sup>14</sup>If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Cor. 3:11-15)***

*Paul talks about this—most of you are familiar with this passage—in 1 Corinthians 3:11. "Be clear: there is no other foundation that can be laid" than the death and the life of Jesus, His cross and resurrection. It is done. It is finished, but verse 12 "if you build on this foundation..." You can build with gold, silver or precious stones or you can build your life with words and deeds that amount to wood, hay and straw. Verse 13, for every born-again believer, their works, their words, and their deeds, the way they spend their time and money and the words they say will be evaluated; that is verse 13. Every one of have works. It is the way we speak, the way we spend our time and money, and the decisions we make; our life decisions will become clear. "The fire of His eyes," you know His eyes are like fire. He will look and evaluate the truthfulness of every one of our works, again, our deeds and our words and our money and the way we spend time.*

*Verse 14, "If anyone's work" or life decisions—you can put the words "life decisions" there—"which he has built" upon the foundation of the free grace of God, if it endures the fire of His eyes, he will receive a reward from the Lord. If that person's life decisions are burned up, he will suffer loss, the loss of the reward he could have had. It is the loss of what could have been his, "but he will be saved." He is still born again, but like as though by fire. It is like the man whose house is on fire and has all of these treasures in his house, and he runs out of the house and just barely escapes. All of his garments and everything burns, but he escapes though running through the flames, and everything he lost in the fire is the imagery that Paul is giving.*

*He said, in essence, that a lot of believers are going to be saved, but when the Lord looks at their life decisions, the way they spent their time, the money, the way that they spoke and they were happy and okay about it and they did not repent of it even though it was wrong, He says, as it were, "They will go through the fire of My eyes*

*and many will be saved, but they will not bring anything out of the house, out of this life, with them. All that they invested in will go up in flames, but they will be saved at least."*

*You read that, and you think "Oh my goodness, that is intense!" but this is real. It is not figurative. It is real.*

*And so I do not believe that "every believer gets every reward instantly at the new birth" is what Jesus is talking about. He is not talking about how to become born again. He is talking to Christians about being faithful to resist compromise and fear to the end of their life.*

- B. **The "loss of salvation" view:** This view wrongly teaches that believers in Revelation 2-3 are being exhorted to faithfulness to avoid losing their salvation. In this view, failing to overcome in an area of their spiritual life is synonymous with losing one's salvation. This view suggests that we must overcome all spiritual immaturity to avoid losing our salvation. This implies that only mature believers are saved. For example, the diligent workers in Ephesus who lacked fresh love for Jesus would have lost their salvation if they had died before renewing their first love (Rev. 2:2-7).

*The second view is the "loss of salvation" view, and these guys are a lot more hardcore. They say that if you do not persevere in every one of these, then you will lose your salvation. I think that is a pretty intense view. Meaning, only spiritually mature Christians end up saved, and everyone else loses their salvation? I have talked with a few guys who said, "Yeah," and I replied, "Have you thought of the implications of that?"*

*To the church of Ephesus, Revelation 2, the first church we will look at next week, Jesus said "Church of Ephesus, you work hard for Me. I honor you for that. However, you have lost your first love."*

*So I asked, "They worked hard for the Lord, but they did not keep that fresh love, so they go to hell? They lose their salvation?" and they said, "Well, yeah, I guess so," and I said "No, He is not talking about everybody losing their salvation if they do not renew their first love. He is talking about them losing their rewards, not their salvation."*

- C. **The "eternal reward" view:** This view rightly teaches that the rewards in Revelation 2-3 are given in different degrees according to one's faithfulness in loving and obeying Jesus. Rewards are given *in addition* to the free gift of eternal life. I assume that most of these 22 rewards will be received by most believers—at least in an introductory way. Revelation 2-3 pertains to the *measure* of these rewards that a believer will receive. These rewards are not of secondary importance to our destiny.

*I believe the biblical view is the "eternal reward" view, and we will look at each one of these churches to look at the one, two, or three rewards associated with their particular temptations and challenges. This eternal reward view I believe rightly teaches that these rewards are given in different degrees according to one's faithfulness to love and obey Jesus.*

**<sup>41</sup>There is one glory of the sun...and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. <sup>42</sup>So also is the resurrection of the dead. (1 Cor. 15:41-42)**

*Most of you are familiar with this passage. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:41, "There is one glory of the sun, there is one glory of the moon and every star in the universe has a different glory," meaning a different brightness, a different size, a different mass about it, with different properties. Every one of the trillions and trillions of stars, there is not one of them the same. They are different in their make-up, size, weight, and all of these things. He says, in effect, "As one star differs from another, trillions and trillions of them, so also everyone in the resurrection will be different." We are loved by God the same, but there will be a different measure of the glory of God in garments, thrones, authority, and all of these twenty-two areas. And not that*

*these twenty-two rewards are comprehensive, as I am sure there are more besides. However, there are different degrees and measures for every one of these.*

*So I believe and am guessing that most believers get some measure of most of these rewards. That is just a guess, and I do not have anything to back that up in the Bible. However, Jesus is so generous. That is what I would use to back it up, I guess. It is just His character. He is so generous, and He is just so kind in His evaluation. So I am assuming that a lot of people will get a measure of a lot of these rewards, but I say, "Lord, I want the full measure of what could be mine if I gave myself wholly to You." And that is what I am looking at in these seven letters.*

1. Since only overcomers receive the *fullest measure* of these eternal rewards, it is important that we interpret what Jesus intends when calling His people to be overcomers in Revelation 2-3.

*Only overcomers receive the full measure. I believe that there will be many believers, like Paul said, who find their life decisions, as born-again believers, were not redemptive, many were not in obedience to the Lord, and so they will be saved "as though by fire." They will not have any rewards, but they will still be saved.*

*However, I have said to the Lord, "Lord, by Your grace in my weakness..." because we are all weak. Paul the apostle was weak like us, so do not imagine there are some super-Christians somewhere who do not have the same problems. Everybody has a tendency to quit, a tendency to feel rejected, a tendency to get disappointed, a tendency to lose energy, a tendency to get confused about what is going on. That is just the race and what we are all facing, but the Lord is very kind and very generous in His evaluation.*

2. An overcomer in this context is one who matures in the specific areas of faithfulness that Jesus emphasized in their life.
3. Overcoming does not mean attaining perfection in one's character but rather constantly reach for victory with all our strength. He is kind in His evaluation of our lives.

*Overcoming does not mean attaining perfection in that area. I believe overcoming means you stay reaching for victory in that area and you may have a lapse for a week or two or a month or two and you are saying, "No! No! No! I am going back! I know better! Lord, I am with You!" It is that reach for obedience. It is not attaining to perfection in an area because, again, He is so kind. He is so generous in how He evaluates us.*

*Well, that is a snapshot of how we are going to look at these seven letters to the Church in Asia, and, man, I am excited! I love who Jesus is and what He says about Himself! And in these little snapshots there is so much more behind every one of these phrases, and the Lord says, "Well, come after Me then! If you want more, I will give you more! Come after Me! Do not be content with just the beginnings of these!" So as a people we are saying we are going to this: as a school, as interns, as a staff, and as a community, "Yes! We are going after this! We want to go for more of this in our weakness!"*

*And the Lord says, "Good! I will give you more then. I will give you more!"*

*Amen! Let's stand before the Lord.*