

The Church In Revelation

Rev. 1:4-7

Introduction:

1. Throughout our recent studies of the church we have gained valuable insights into the nature, development, function, organization, and work of the church.
2. We have seen a consistent picture of the church as we have moved from the gospel accounts into Acts, the writings of Paul, Peter, John and James.
3. This lesson will be devoted to the church as it is revealed in Revelation.

Discussion:

- I. The entire epistle is addressed to the seven churches of Asia (1:1-7).
 - A. Note that local churches are being addressed.
 1. No denominational entity is in evidence. No hierarchal structure is evidenced.
 2. In other words there is no diocese, presbytery, synod, etc. addressed, only local churches.
 3. If some hierarchal structure were present we would expect perhaps a single letter addressed to that structure (headquarters, mother church, etc.) and then the message sent out to the local churches from there. But such a structure is absent.
 - B. That these churches have a common faith based upon a common relationship with Jesus Christ, “who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood” is clear (1:4-5).
 - C. That Christ has authority in these churches is clear (1:5-6, 8; 5:13; et. al.).
 1. John claims authority from heaven for his message (1:1-4).
 2. Jesus Christ is placed on the same level as the ultimate authority (5).
 3. The foundation of Jesus’ authority is defined in verse 5.
 - a. He is the faithful witness.
 - b. The firstborn of the dead.
 - c. Ruler of the kings of the earth.
 - d. He loved us and released us from our sins by His blood.
 4. Additionally, He made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.
 5. He has glory and dominion forever and ever.
 6. He is coming (cf. Dan. 7:13; Rev. 1:13: “son of man”) and will be recognized.
 7. His authority is further evidenced in 1:18 where He says, “I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.” Recall Matt. 16:18: “I will build My church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” He has authoritative power over death and Hades.
- II. Valuable insight is gained into these churches and their attitude toward false teaching (2:2, 13ff, 20; 3:8f). This is testimony to their intense reliance on what has been communicated from heaven.

- A. False teaching cannot be tolerated.
- B. It must be identified and rebuked.
- C. Churches must be pure and their commitment to Christ total, exclusive and until death, but it is not a group loyalty but individual loyalty that is under consideration.
 - 1. "Some of you" (2:10); "Antipas" is mentioned as a faithful individual (2:13).
 - 2. He uses the word "church" in a distributive fashion referring to the individuals who compose it.

III. The church is the only true Israel in Revelation.

- A. 2:9 and 3:9 identifies those who "say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan."
- B. 3:12 refers to those who overcome as "made into pillars in the temple" and have the name of the city of God, the new Jerusalem written on them. Compare this with the old Jerusalem of the Jews.
- C. This teaching is in harmony with Rom. 9:6.

IV. Revelation uses the metaphor of the church as "the bride."

- A. 19:7ff uses the image the first time. It is used again in 21:9.
- B. This bride stands in contrast to Babylon as the representative of that which is false (18:9ff).
- C. The bridal imagery is linked with the heavenly Jerusalem in 21:2, 9-10.
 - 1. There is a contrast between Babylon and Jerusalem.
 - 2. The people of God are the heavenly city.
- D. Of course, Paul uses this bridal imagery in Eph. 5:22ff.

V. Other things we learn from Revelation about the church.

- A. Prophets and apostles are mentioned in Revelation as functionaries in the church (22:9; 21:14).
- B. Evidences of worship are found in 1:17; 4:8-11; 5:9-10.
- C. The blessing on the person who reads aloud the words of the prophecy (1:3) may give evidence of the practice of public reading of Scripture which parallels 1 Tim. 4:13.

Conclusion:

1. The Book of Revelation reveals that the churches addressed relied exclusively on the authority of the message come from heaven, through Jesus Christ, communicated by His angel, to John. The message is considered as "the words of the prophecy."
2. Any other source is considered false. No mere claim of apostleship is recognized. While true apostles speak from heaven churches must put claims to the test.
3. The bridal imagery of the church is like that used elsewhere in the N.T.
4. In Revelation the church is the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem.

5. The church is those individuals released from their sins by the blood of Christ. He is the one who has dominion and has made us to be a kingdom.