

CAN WE HEAR FROM GOD?

C. Objectives (Value, a.k.a. Blessings) of this Study

C6. Blessing: Instruction

There are many practical reasons for our study of Revelation. As we read through chapters 2 and 3 in particular, we should be sensitive to the issues that we can apply to our everyday lives. We might also keep in mind the intended audience for whom Revelation was written. Since, it is addressed to us, His servantsⁱ, the Church. For, Jesus blesses us through his instruction, which he gives to all the churches by his repeated statement, “He who has an ear, *let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*”ⁱⁱ.

Several passages in Scripture tell us to be sober-mindedⁱⁱⁱ, to think clearly^{iv} on the instruction we receive from His word. God appeals to our ear to hear Him. We should listen carefully and use our faculty of reason^v to heed His voice^{vi}, to wisely consider His word^{vii}. In this same way, Solomon shares with us the wisdom that God had imparted to him^{viii} that our path may be lit by the light of God. Solomon highlights the benefits of God’s word, in Proverbs 1:2-6 [KJV],

“To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;
³To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; ⁴To

ⁱ REV 1:1, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him *to show His servants*-things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.

ⁱⁱ REV 2:7 & REV 2:11 & REV 2:17 & REV 2:29 & REV 3:6 & REV 3:13 & REV 3:22

ⁱⁱⁱ ROM 12:3, For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but *to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*

^{iv} 1PET 1:13, Therefore *gird up the loins of your mind, be sober,* and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

^v ISA 1:18, “Come now, and *let us reason together,*” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.

^{vi} EXO 15:26, “If you *diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God* and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you.”

^{vii} JOSH 1:8, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but *you shall meditate in it day and night,* that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

^{viii} 1KING 4:29-30, *God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding,* and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.

³⁰Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.

give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. ⁵*A wise man will hear*, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: ⁶*To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.*”

Likewise, Jesus imparts to us wisdom through His Spirit^{ix}. If we learn the lessons specific to each of the seven churches, we can benefit from both from their good and bad reports.

In all the churches to which Jesus wrote, it is possible for us to see elements of ourselves reflected in them. So then, we have in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, a glimpse of how Jesus sees us, collectively and individually as the church. Each church is given a report by Jesus as to their current state. He commends those who are remaining faithful to His word, and admonishes those who are failing. Since each reflects us as the current church, this should serve as a considerable warning to us. For, we are to remember how we received and heard the Gospel^x; we should recognize false teachers^{xi} and false doctrine^{xii}; we must hate the works of evil^{xiii}; and, we can never forget our first love^{xiv}. In all these things, we know that we need Jesus, and that we as the church can do nothing^{xv} of any value without him. Though we have little strength^{xvi}, we can still keep His word by taking captive every thought^{xvii}, and bring it in line with Christ’s instruction.

We may like to think that we are one of the churches to whom nothing bad is said. Only, remember that all of the letters are to be read by all of the churches;

^{ix} JOHN 14:26, the Helper, *the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

^x REV 3:3, *Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.*

^{xi} REV 2:20, *Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.*

^{xii} REV 2:24, *Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.*

^{xiii} REV 2:6, *But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

^{xiv} REV 2:4, *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

^{xv} JOHN 15:5, *I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

^{xvi} REV 3:8, *I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.*

^{xvii} 2COR 10:4-5, *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*

and, though these churches reside in different places, there is only one church^{xviii}. As Paul reveals to us in Ephesians 5:30-32,

“we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³²This is a great mystery, but *I speak concerning Christ and the church.*”

Even as we, the church today, are separated by time and place from these churches to which Jesus wrote, we are still the recipients of His letters. We may think that some of the letters do not apply to our circumstances today; but, remember that we the church, brothers and sisters in Christ, are worldwide. The persecuted church is often forgotten, and yet still suffers. The worldly church still caters to its people, and has shut Jesus out. The doctrines of the Nicolaitans, and Balaam, and Jezebel are still here among us. The church which reveres its name above the name of Jesus is but a place for the dead^{xix}, whose very works are dying!

The church is susceptible to fail in each way that Jesus reprimanded it. Thankfully for us however, we also possess the capability to accomplish the deeds that he acclaimed. The behavior that Jesus approves also requires an attitude, or frame of mind, which lends itself to following His instruction. For, God holds a surrendered, contrite heart in higher regard than mere following of routines, or even giving of sacrifices^{xx}. Mercifully, we are neither left on our own to accomplish these deeds, nor are we expected to have the right attitude without His help. For, God has graciously poured out His Spirit^{xxi} upon us as our guide and our helper. Surrendered to His will^{xxii}, we are able to accomplish far more than if we were to try

^{xviii} MATH 16:18, I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock *I will build My church*, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

^{xix} REV 3:1-2, to the angel of the church in Sardis write, "These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that *you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.*"²⁰Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.

^{xx} PSM 51:15-17, O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. ¹⁶For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. ¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, *A broken and a contrite heart-These, O God, You will not despise.*

^{xxi} ACTS 2:16-17, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷"And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That *I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh*; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.

^{xxii} ISA 57:15, thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, *With him who has a contrite and humble spirit*, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

alone. In addition, the fruits of the Spirit^{xxiii} are given that we may more perfectly accomplish His purposes in us and through us.

Several passages in Scripture tell us to be humble, to think not of ourselves any higher or any lower than we ought^{xxiv}. For, we are no better than any other, and we are called to serve all others^{xxv}. God appeals to our heart, which He exchanges from stone to flesh^{xxvi}. Upon which, He then writes His law^{xxvii} that we may know His way and follow in it. Through perseverance, with patience, love, and faithfulness, we may hold fast to all we have^{xxviii} in Christ. Enduring suffering, imprisonment, even death we can hold fast to His name^{xxix}. For, He showed us the greatest display of love^{xxx} in giving his life for us. Therefore, knowing this we should be zealous^{xxxi}, even 'on fire' for the Lord!

Jesus is our first love, and all of our works should flow out of our love for Him. Just as a bride gets to know her betrothed, we must spend time with him. We should find out what he likes, that we may learn to do those things. Likewise, the things Jesus dislikes, we need to spend the effort to realize what they are in order to avoid doing such things. For example, we can make a pre-determined decision to avoid committing sexual immorality^{xxxii}. Whether we are newly-born Christians or mature in our faith, we can increase^{xxxiii} in good works to the end^{xxxiv}. Returning to

^{xxiii} GAL 5:22-23, *the fruit of the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

^{xxiv} ROM 12:3, For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, *not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think*, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

^{xxv} MATH 20:26-27, Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷"And *whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave*.

^{xxvi} EZE 36:26, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; *I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh*.

^{xxvii} JER 31:33, But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: *I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

^{xxviii} REV 3:11, Behold, I am coming quickly! *Hold fast what you have*, that no one may take your crown.

^{xxix} REV 2:13, "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And *you hold fast to My name*, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

^{xxx} JOHN 15:13, *Greater love has no one than this*, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

^{xxxi} REV 3:19, As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. *Therefore be zealous* and repent.

^{xxxii} REV 2:14, But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and *to commit sexual immorality*.

^{xxxiii} REV 2:19, "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and *as for your works, the last are more than the first*.

^{xxxiv} REV 2:26, And he who overcomes, and *keeps My works until the end*, to him I will give power over the nations

the things we did^{xxxv} when we first fell in love with the Lord will help us rekindle the fire for him within us. For, He is why we do good works, for his glory, to show our love for him.

Several passages in Scripture tell us to be working, to apply the instruction we have from God^{xxxvi} to our everyday lives. We should be busy^{xxxvii} in the service of our Father in heaven. We are blessed to have Christ's direct instructions to us that we may put them into practice. If we have a teachable attitude, and are willing to be rebuked, even chastened^{xxxviii} by the Lord, he will lead us to repent of our false ways. If we do not deny Christ's Name^{xxxix}, he will teach us to become His ambassadors in serving others. If we open the door of our heart to Jesus^{xl}, he will give us His righteousness that we should not be ashamed^{xli}. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we are able to persevere to the end, following Jesus' instruction^{xlii} to hold fast to what we have: the eternal Word of God, the assurance of the His faithfulness, and our fervent hope in the Lord.

^{xxxv} REV 2:5, Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and *do the first works*, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-unless you repent.

^{xxxvi} PRO 4:1, Hear, my children, *the instruction of a father*, And give attention to know understanding.

^{xxxvii} LUKE 2:49-50, He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? *Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?*"⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

^{xxxviii} REV 3:19, As many as I love, *I rebuke and chasten*. Therefore be zealous and repent.

^{xxxix} REV 3:8, "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and *have not denied My name*.

^{xl} REV 3:20, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. *If anyone hears My voice and opens the door*, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

^{xli} REV 3:18, "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and *white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed*; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

^{xlii} COL 3:16-17, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly* in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.