

Weekend

1. Read Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, in the Good News Bible, and find out what made them 'fall in love' with Christ in the first place.
2. Work through Revelation chapters 2 and 3 with Leon Morris' *Tyndale New Testament Commentary* or Michael Wilcock's *The Message of Revelation* in 'The Bible Speaks Today' series (both IVP).

Notes



www.elimcarlisle.org

Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

"This extract from Meeting With God published by Inter-Varsity Press, is used with permission"

17th March 2014

Week 29: Revelation 2 (A meditation)

John the apostle was banished to the island of Patmos, which now belongs to Greece, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian. He wrote the book around AD 95 or 96, following a vision of Jesus Christ and the events which will occur when he comes again to judge the world and take Christians to live with him forever. The glorified Christ is portrayed in 1:12-16, together with the effect of this meeting upon John. Christ gives John a message for each of seven churches, but all are to take notice of the contents.

Day 1. Your first love

Revelation 2:1-7

The church at Ephesus, a major Roman city but now a ruin on the west coast of Turkey, was established by Paul (Acts 19). There was a great temple to the goddess Diana where people were expected to join in the rites of worship which involved immorality and magic. Within the church were problems due to false teachers (Nicolaitans).

1. Think about the type of church described in verses 2-4, correct in its beliefs, hard-working and yet without the vital spark of love for Jesus with which it started. Use your imagination to build up a picture of this church, its people, its worship, its outreach.
2. Note down what Jesus says to this church (verse 5). Following from point 1, imagine the various reactions this could have provoked among the members.
3. What things can cause a church to lose its love for Jesus?

Pray for yourself and your own church, that your love for Jesus will go on growing.

Day 2. Be faithful

Revelation 2:8-11

Smyrna was a beautiful city, north of Ephesus, loyal to Rome. Today it is the modern Turkish city of Izmir. Bishop Polycarp died there for his faith, in his eighties, around AD 156-160. When asked to swear 'Caesar is Lord' to save himself from burning, he replied, 'Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never did me an injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?'

1. Think about the riches which this church had, not silver and gold, but much more precious things.
2. Consider the comfort which Jesus' words would have given to these people.

The 'first' death is physical; the 'second' is eternal. Thank God for his faithfulness to his church and pray that you may be a faithful member of your local church - that you may be loyal to the leadership, pray for its members and activities...

Day 3. Keep the true faith

Revelation 2:12-17

At Pergamum there was a temple to Zeus, Satan's throne (verse 13). Within the church were those who held views inconsistent with the teaching of Christ and who compromised, becoming involved with the sexual evils of the temple and buying meat which had been offered to idols. The church neglected to discipline these people.

1. Jesus both commended and condemned this church, which must have presented a very mixed witness. How may outsiders have viewed this group of Christians?
2. Those who were faithful were promised spiritual refreshment from Christ (hidden manna) and a transformed character (a person's name implies their character to the eastern mind) - verse 17. Consider the generosity of Jesus Christ!

Pray for yourself and your church that you may be faithful witnesses to the truth of the Christian gospel. Pray for wisdom and strength to resist Satan's attacks - he tries to divide and weaken the church.

Day 4. Steadfast love

Revelation 2:18-29

At Thyatira, a trading city, most church members loved the Lord whole-heartedly. Nonetheless an evil woman in a place of leadership (a prophetess) led some into great immorality, mixing pagan activities with Christian worship.

1. Try to imagine the tensions which must have built up in this church, due to the powerful influence of one person. Consider the reactions of those who held fast to Christ in this situation. Remember - many of the cults started when people followed apparently quite orthodox individuals.
2. Jesus promises the 'morning star', that is himself, to those who persevere to the end. He also promises authority over the nations. Let your thoughts dwell upon the power which lies in the hands of Jesus Christ and which he will delegate to his people! Pray for yourself and your church that each member may have the grace to bring harmony and forgiveness in times of tension. Pray that the leaders may show a godly wisdom in discerning the cause of problems and in dealing with them in love.

Day 5. 'I fell at his feet as though dead'

Revelation 2

Each letter gives a credential of Jesus Christ. The language is symbolic and follows that of 1:12-20. The stars or angels (verse 1) are the pastors or ministers of the churches (the golden lampstands). The first and last (verse 8) refers to the all-embracing nature of Christ (Isaiah 44:6). The two-edged sword (verse 12) indicates the manner in which Christ will cut out evil.

1. List the characteristics of Jesus and the evidences of his love, as you re-read the chapter.
2. 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild' says the children's hymn - meditate on this contrasting vision of the righteous, conquering Christ.

Pray that in corporate and private worship there may be always a remembrance of Jesus' position as King of kings.