

Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, October 18, 2026

“¶ Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write”. (Revelation 2:1a)

Having captured a bit of the excellence of Christ as presented in the vision closing chapter one¹, it is time to enter into a consideration of the writings that take up the next two chapters of this Revelation. In a previous sermon on the structure of this patently unique record related to Christ’s return, I emphasized a very simple framework to help guide the order in your thinking: “Seven seals are removed, then seven trumpets sound, then Jesus Christ returns, then seven vials are poured out, then the battle at Armageddon, then Christ takes His throne”. I saw it printed and posted in the house of my dear friend who recently went to be with the King, as we were singing praises to the glories of that King. I see plainly now that the first three chapters of the book are not simply preparation ... they present to the thinking another critical seven-point component. So I now recommend the saying should go: *“Seven letters come from Christ, then Seven seals are removed, then seven trumpets sound, then Jesus Christ returns, then seven vials are poured out, then the battle at Armageddon, then Christ takes His throne”*.

Christ previously said to John ***‘What thou seest, write in a book’ (Revelation 1:11)***, *“which properly means a ‘writing,’ and then a ‘volume’ [Exodus 17:14, Deuteronomy 28:58 and 29:20, Job 19:23] or ‘roll of a book’ [Jeremiah 36:2,4.] Books were originally written on skins, on linen or cotton cloth, and on Egyptian papyrus, whence our word ‘paper.’ The leaves of the book were generally written in columns, designated by a Hebrew word properly meaning ‘doors’ and ‘valves’ [Jeremiah 36:23 or] ‘columns’”* (Easton Bible Dictionary). Some things so perfectly capture the essence of a matter, they simply need to be written down. The reference to Job in this quote points us to his profession of faith where he says passionately: ***“Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book!” (Job 19:23)*** When humans determine a thing is of great importance – though it is mostly vain or blasphemous nonsense – they want it recorded; not reliant upon anyone’s weak memory. Put those words down, so there is no mistaking what I intend to say on that matter. So Christ here requires His words to His beloved to be recorded. That means that they are of critical relevance to our doctrinal and practical divinity – and that they are critical to Christ’s Revelation.

As with the work done in examination of the other collections of sevens within this grand book of Christ’s Day – seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials – we need to do a bit of work to prepare our minds to receive what is taught in the collective, before we dive into the matters and items specific to the enumerated writings. That is, let us see what the words speak in the whole of the seven letters, then we may begin parsing the specifics of each. This arrangement of letters can be discussed collectively under at least these four categories:

1. It is a purging work

¹ Sermons on Revelation 1:12-16, preached on September 8, 2024 (Part 1) and November 11, 2024 (Part 2), then sermon on Revelation 1:17-20 on August 23, 2026, all of which can be located at this link: <https://www.godhatesfags.com/audio/sermonseries/revelation.html>.

2. It is a spiritual work
3. It is an affectionate work
4. It is an overcoming work

It is a purging work.

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. ... Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:2)

In the midst of this passage of Christ speaking of the doctrine of justification is a great deal of edification regarding the work of that Christ. Work with each individual human being for whom He suffered and died ... and work with the body of the Bride of Christ. There are matters exclusive to each soul in this house that address the purging of that soul in the daily walk with and toward God and Christ Jesus. There are also matters that must be addressed with every one of us here as it pertains to the Church and how she fulfills her duty to man and God as a reflection of her Husband and in preparation to go and meet Him, ***“a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that [she] should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:27)***. Both are wrapped up in this discussion regarding purging. The use of the word itself might be a wonderful way to see the facets of this diamond. In 28 passages within the old and new testament books there are 12 words translated with a form of the English “purge”. Beginning with the Hebrew words we have:

- Hebrew “*kaphar*” (“*kaw-far*”), referencing the act of atonement or covering over the offense ... rendering it purged from the subject. So in the vision to Samuel regarding the behavior of Eli’s two sons, God declared ***“the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged [“*kaphar*”] with sacrifice nor offering for ever.” (1 Samuel 3:14)*** There was not going to be any atonement or covering provided in that severe matter of those two vile and blasphemous young men using the office they held to do so wickedly ... but rather grave consequences enforced.
- Hebrew word “*taher*” (“*taw-hare*”), indicating to be purified or pronounced clean – either physically or morally. So, young king Josiah did this work in the kingdom of Judah after he ***“began to seek after the God of David his father” (2 Chronicles 34:3)***. He ***“began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.”***
- Hebrew word “*chata*” (“*khaw-taw*”), which is similar to “*kaphar*”, but references the doing of the act that makes atonement for sin. That is, incurring the guilt that has the effect of purifying or cleansing another. So king David, upon being shown his great sin in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite, he prays to God for the blood of Christ to be his only hope: ***“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean”.* (Psalm 51:7)**

- Hebrew word “*tsaraph*” (“*tsaw-raf*”), referring to the more focused form of purging that we refer to as refining or smelting ... putting a person through intense pressure or testing to remove impurities. So, Christ is referred to by Malachi as ***“a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.”*** (Malachi 3:3)
- Hebrew word “*zaqaq*” (“*zaw-kak*”), which describes the resulting purged condition from the refining process. So, in the passage just quoted from Malachi, the word translated ***“purge them”*** is this “*zaqaq*”.
- Hebrew word “*barar*” (“*baw-rar*”) refers to the careful selection of things or persons to be removed to make a thing bright and pure. So, when Ezekiel is prophesying of the coming work of purging the wicked of Israel from the redeemed, he uses this form of purge, to wit:

“And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.” (Ezekiel 20:34-38)

Then in the New Testament, we have these Greek words that express similar concepts:

- Greek word “*diakatharizo*” (“*dee-ak-ath-ar-id’-zo*”), meaning to clean thoroughly. So, it is said of Christ at His return ... ***“he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner”*** (Matthew 3:12).
- Greek word “*kathairo*” (“*kath-ah’-ee-ro*”), referring to the process of pruning a tree or vine from useless shoots that harm or corrupt or drain precious resources needed for good fruit to grow.
- Three variations of this Greek word are used: “*ekkathairo*” (“*ek-kath-ah’-ee-ro*”), “*katharizo*” (“*kath-ar-id’-zo*”), and “*katharismos*” (“*kath-ar-is-mos*”), all pointing to the same process of cleaning or purifying.
- Greek word “*poieo*” (“*poy-eh’-o*”), referring to the act of bringing purity or righteousness forth. This word was used in describing how our Christ ***“when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;”*** (Hebrews 1:3), that is He brought forth righteousness from Himself to remove the sins from His people’s account.

So turning this examination back to our text, what we see in all seven of these letters is this work of Christ purging His Bride, the Church. In Ephesus, He is addressing the need of practical purification for that doctrinally sound body. In Smyrna the focus is on the intensity of the oppression by raging apostate Jewry seeking to finally destroy the fledgling little flock, and reminding them: ***“A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till***

he send forth judgment unto victory.” (Matthew 12:20) In Pergamos, the doctrinal error being brought in by some members needs direct attention, so those faithful in the body will overcome. In Thyatira the presence of blatant sexually impure walking – a direct assault on the purity of the marriage covenant – requires the decisive removal of those who are not given repentance. The ministry of Sardis has slipped into a spiritual malaise and require some pruning of the vine to let good blood flow through the body again. The loving body of the Bride in Philadelphia receives encouragement to prepare her for the intensity of the final assault and the calling again of Israel. And in Laodicea the church is in great straits on both doctrinal and practical fronts, and in need of both the fires of purification and the pruning blade. The details of those conditions will be examined in order, but the pattern is unmistakable. The work of these seven letters is purging ... purification ... cleansing.

It is a spiritual work.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)

Seven times repeated. Seven different expressions of the body of Christ ... same Spirit speaking to each. While the echo of these strong words still resonate in John’s ears ... ***“after this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven” (Revelation 4:1)*** ... he is given to see this same expression of this same Spirit alongside the eternal God at the throne in heaven: ***“seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (Revelation 4:5)***. Or, to be more precise, the perfect expression of that Spirit in the presentation of it in the number of completion; seven.

It is an unassailable truth that the work of these letters is a singularly spiritual work. We are not to look upon the instructions contained here as ***“the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” (1 Corinthians 2:13)*** Christ spoke to His disciples in parables for the same purpose that He grounds us in the way these critically important words are presented for our consideration:

“Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” (Mark 4:11-12)

The words of these letters are not for every son and daughter of Adam to receive and to handle with their unredeemed and hateful hands. They are for His Bride! Watching the dark hearts of our generation speak of this blessed book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ – with their clever numerology and “prophecy club” crap – it reminds me of Jephthah dealing with the Ephraimites. Inexplicably, those lying frauds were incapable of pronouncing the word ***“Shibboleth”***, but rather could only say ***“Sibboleth”*** at which point they were slain at the passages of Jordan (Judges 12:1-7). It is a glorious curse on this generation that they refer to this blessed book as ***“the Revelations”***

... instantly revealing that they are dreadfully ignorant of the coming Christ. They need to keep their filthy, human-focused mitts off of our love notes. These letters are a spiritual work for those who dwell in the Spirit. The very second that you inject your human impressions into what Christ is telling us in these powerful and (sometimes) terrifying words, you will retard your understanding of them.

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14)

What does it mean *spiritually* that ***“thou has left thy first love”*** (Revelation 2:4)? What does it mean *spiritually* when He soberly declares ***“be thou faithful unto death”*** (Revelation 2:10)? What does it mean *spiritually* that ***“thou hast there them [right there in the New Testament Church] that hold the doctrine of Balaam”*** (Revelation 2:14) and that by some distressing and horrible twist of providence that body ***“sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants”*** (Revelation 2:20)? What does it mean *spiritually* that His Bride ***“hast a name that thou livest, and art dead”*** (Revelation 3:1)? What does it mean *spiritually* that Christ promises ***“I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world”*** (Revelation 3:10) but that He will ***“spue thee out of [His] mouth”*** (Revelation 3:16)? These are all things that He spake to John and directed him to write – with the sober instruction that only he ***“that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches [i.e., His Bride]”***.

My friends, we have a heavy lift here. Going through every one of these letters – with the lens of our human interests taken off and leaning completely on the wisdom of God and the dwelling of Christ and guidance of the Holy Ghost in us – will produce good results. A good deal of material has been preached and written in this church about these seven letters; all of which is edifying and valuable. To place them into the grand work of the Revelation of Jesus Christ will require us to press into this pronouncement from Christ that we must put on the spiritual ear of our eternal election while we take in the instruction ... because it is chiefly a spiritual work.

It is an affectionate work. So, what am I talking about here? There was a sense about these writings, the significance of which took some bit of time to crystalize in my heart. Look at what is found in every one of these letters:

“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.” (Revelation 2:2-3)

“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.” (Revelation 2:9)

"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth." (Revelation 2:13)

"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." (Revelation 2:19)

"I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. ... Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white:" (Revelation 3:1, 4)

"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."
(Revelation 3:8)

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot:" (Revelation 3:15)

After introducing Himself in each letter, with the relevant reference to the way in which He made Himself known to John in the opening of the vision, Christ reveals the perspective from which He writes to His beloved Bride. He knows her. As shepherds over Christ's inheritance we are to be **"diligent to know the state of [our] flocks"** (Proverbs 27:23), -- as it is said by and of our Antetype: **"the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."** (John 10:3). Every single thing about every single member of His Church is intimately known by our Savior and our Head. Every thought that we have toward and about every other member of this body -- He knows. Every wicked and sinful challenge that any soul in the Church has -- in the deep recesses of his or her **"desperately wicked"** (Jeremiah 17:9) heart -- toward any attribute or commandment of God ... He knows. Every tendency to **"draw back unto perdition"** (Hebrews 10:38) that abides in the cowardly hearts of the natural man, as the weight and terror of the straight pathway we walk lies heavy upon us -- He knows.

The danger we face in consuming the sober writings in these seven letters is that we run to either the arrogance that we are spiritually beyond the wrongdoing itemized in the letter ... or the despair that we are beyond recovery because we see ourselves reflected in these critical words. The truth is that as long as we dwell in this flesh and **"wrestle ... against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"** (Ephesians 6:12) we every one are at risk of every itemized doctrinal and practical error. And Christ knows exactly where every heart and spirit is regarding every matter. He knows us.

So when we consume these writings, we have to submit to the brutal truth that He is doing us a great kindness out of affection toward us. We must drill down into the frightening detail of what we are doing that needs to stop ... what we are believing that is a loud lie against His sovereignty ... what we are *not* doing that we should be doing ... and what we are brutishly resisting the knowledge of because of our pride and endemic self-promotion.

“¶ Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue: neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.” (Job 5:17-27)

This is an affectionate work of our King.

It is an overcoming work.

The last evident theme that runs through all seven of these letters has to do with the promises of Christ in the overcoming of sin and a world that hates God and His people:

“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:32-33)

As the expositor Albert Barnes notes: “[Christ] obtained a complete triumph over him ‘who rules the darkness of the world,’ and laid the foundation for a victory by his people over all vice, error, and sin.” This Christ, who presses upon the body of His Bride these strong words of doctrine and duty, is intimately acquainted with what is required. He took the form of man. He ***“endured such contradiction of sinners against himself” (Hebrews 12:3)***. He was directly assaulted by that great master of murder and lies (John 8:44) who deceived the first parents with the seminal doctrinal error of free will (Genesis 3:4-5) ... and overcame that assault by the Word of His power (Matthew 4:3-11)².

² ***“And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.” (Matthew 4:3-11)***

Christ is not ***“an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”*** (Hebrews 4:15) In all points. If you are presently – have at some point in your lives been – or at some point going forward in your lives fall into – a great trial or temptation, this is a necessary point. As man, Christ was likewise tempted and tried. Christ, as the author of these seven letters to the churches, knows very well what He is requiring. He knows very well what it is He levels His perfectly keen eye upon in the doctrine and practice among the souls in that body. It is not a condescending, finger-pointing complaint. It is your tender and loving friend making it perfectly clear that you must address that doctrinal or practical error.

And His saints will.

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5)

Gill: *“this points out what that faith is which obtains the victory over the world; and shows that it is not that trust and confidence which has a man’s self, or any mere creature, thing, or person, for its object, but only Jesus Christ, and that as he is the Son of God; and which is not a mere assent to such a proposition, to which devils and unregenerate persons may assent, and do; but it is a seeing of the Son in the glory, fulness, and suitableness of his person, office, and grace; a going to him, being drawn by the Father; and a living upon him as the Son of God, and trusting in him for life, righteousness, and salvation: and this shows, that the victory over the world is not owing to faith itself, but to its object Christ, who has overcome it, and makes true believers in him more than conquerors over it.”*

These seven letters contain the blueprint of a process for the preparation of this final little body of saints who will very shortly engage a fretting, dying – and very angry – world of unbelievers. Every weakness with which Christ’s Bride suffers will threaten her destruction. But there is not one of those letters that report the destruction of that body of believers. There is not one event that then unfolds between Revelation 4 and Revelation 11 (the return of Christ) where one righteous soul who is in that body fails to overcome. How could there be?

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.” (John 10:27-30)

The promises given³, regarding the certainty of the saints of God overcoming, are going to be applied to every one of those gentle souls who are calling themselves a member in that body ...

³ ***“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”*** (Revelation 2:7)

“He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” (Revelation 2:11)

at that hour. Even at so terrifying a time of transition, this promise of our Christ stands sure. This is an overcoming work done for the saints.

We have many strong indications – both as closely examined in prophecy as well as within the spiritually darkened world all around us – that the time is drawing nigh for the return of our Christ. The dictation of that Christ to John the Beloved contains words that have great moment for us. So the work needing done in exposition of these letters feels critically important to us in this body. I pray the Lord, if He is appointed to tarry for some bit of time further, give us all greater wisdom in the matter and guide our work to fully edify the body in preparation for His return.

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:1)

I love you all. Amen.

“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” (Revelation 2:17)

“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.” (Revelation 2:26-28)

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” (Revelation 3:5)

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.” (Revelation 3:12)

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Revelation 3:21)