

Christ's Last Words to His Church Series:

Why Jesus Chastens His Church:

He wants us Fruitful & Pleasing God
Revelation 2-3

Most of us here today hold the most powerful device in the world; it is more jam packed with unbelievable features than the one-day-coming iPhone 5. It has the most ultimate guidance, communication, and efficiency apps ever possible to obtain, and it is called God's Word. God speaks through His Word, and we have His Voice on paper before each of us today.

As we open to Revelation we open to **the longest book** written specifically for Christ's Church, containing 22 chapters, and 404 verses: all with the unique target of being given by God to show Jesus Christ to the Church.

As we open to Revelation it is **the only book** personally addressed by Christ to His Church, all the Old Testamenters were written by Apostles, though inspired, not personally addressed by Christ.

As we open to Revelation it is **the only book with a description** of what Jesus Christ looks like right now (Isaiah 52:10-53:6 is at the Cross) in all of God's Word, that is surrounded by the largest concentration of titles, attributes, and the current activities that make up what Christ is living for (Hebrews 7:24-25) at this very moment.

As we open to Revelation it is **the book that mentions the Church more** than 63 of the 66 books of the Bible. In fact only 1st Corinthians (23x) and Acts (22x) mention the Church more than the 20x this book does. However, this book does hold the record for the most times that the Church is mentioned: this book that has Christ's Church mentioned 15x in just 2 of the 22 chapters.

The Final Word To Christ's Church

As we open to Revelation it is **the only book that captures** Christ's final message to His Church, last words are always to be help onto, treasured, and remembered.

As we open to Revelation it is **the only book that comes with** God's special promised blessing to everyone who read or listens to the message and then "keep" that message.

The first word, of the last book in our Bible, is the word Revelation, which means to uncover and display, and, to reveal and show.

The next two words of the book are Jesus Christ. So this entire 22 chapter book is to display for us who are the servants of God, the Real Jesus Christ, as He is this moment is His Risen and Glorified state.

The target of the message of the first three chapters is in the word that is used more than any other major word in these chapters. It is the word: **church**.

Seven Lessons from Chapter One

A quick overview of Revelation 1 gives us some truths that we need to be reminded of. That is why God sent this picture of Christ to His Church. We so soon forget, so we need reminders like the ones that come in this book.

- **Christ is Revealed for His Church:** v. 1 The whole book of Revelation was sent to remind us about a way we need to understand Christ's present work, since He is risen and glorified. So this is how we are to understand Christ, understand His desires for us, and relate to what our Lord Jesus Christ desires to do in and through us today.
- **We are the bond-slaves of God:** v. 1 The whole book was written for God's servants [Greek *douloi*] and that word translated "servants" is the most enduring description of believers (the word "slave" is used to describe God's children from the Old Testament to the New Testament; 127 x in all, and 15x just in Revelation). So that is how we are to see ourselves today, as slaves of God: no identity outside of our Master, no plans other than His, no possessions of our own—everything we have, including ourself, belongs to our Master.

Believers in the Church are God's slaves: v. 4 God tells John that the way to reach His servants is to send this written letter to Christ's Church so that His servants who are in the Church will get the message. So servants are believers and believers are in the church so the Church is made up of God's servants.

- **Responding to God brings blessing:** v. 3 There is an unusual blessing attached to those who read/listen to this message and DO or keep what God's Word says to His servants. So that is what we want to do each time we hear God's Voice through His Word—listen and carefully guard what He asks us to do. The word **tereo** (Strong's # 5083) translated as "keep" is most often used for guarding, keeping safely, watching out for. This is the word used for putting Paul (Acts 24-25) and the Apostles (Acts 4) into jail by the authorities to hold on to them and not let them slip away.

This word is a huge word in the NT to describe how believers watch over their choices to be sure they are focused upon what pleases God in their lives. This word was chosen by the Holy Spirit :

- For the Great Commission of Matthew 28:20 “teaching them **to observe** all things which I have commanded you”
 - For Christ to describe how we are to keep His commands John 15:10 If you **keep** My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.
 - For Paul to describe how we are all to guard the unity of the Spirit in Ephesians 4:3 **endeavoring to keep** the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
 - For Paul to describe how he kept the Faith II Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have **kept** the faith.
 - For Peter to assure us that our reservations in Heaven are sure I Peter 1:4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, **reserved** in heaven for you,
 - For Jude to remind us of our responsibility to keep ourselves in the Love of God Jude 1:21 (also v. 4) **keep** yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.
 - For Christ to tell His Church they are to keep His words and repent of not keeping them in Revelation 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.
- **Sunday is the Lord’s Day:** v. 10 The servants of God who gather in His Church gather on the Lord’s Day, or Sunday, when Christ rose from the dead: to remember His resurrection. Every day was the Lord’s but Sundays were especially His, so they called it the Lord’s DAY. So that is what should mark this day no matter what else we do: we worship the One who arose on the 1st day of the week because He died to purchase me out of the slave market of sin. Every Sunday I renew His ownership of my body and soul as I gather with all the others that He also purchased. Do I seek to magnify Him as His temple that when gather, we collectively become (I Peter 2)?
 - **Revelation was for the Local Church:** v. 11 By using specific, local, geographic descriptions the emphasis is upon identifiable groups of believers that would actually receive and hear this letter read. This message is for the local, visible church specifically. God wanted all of the members then and now in Christ's church, to hear this message. So I always want to be identified with a visible, local group of believers that are attentive and obedient to the Word from God in the Bible. Do I hear and respond to Christ’s desires for me as a member of His Body?
 - **Christ's attention is upon His Church:** v. 12 Jesus is shown to be at the center of the church. Jesus is seen completely focused upon His church, He is in the midst looking over His body of believers upon Earth. So I measure my life by how much of my life is tied to what is Christ’s priority. Do I share His focus upon believers being encouraged, trained, strengthened and challenged?
 - **Christ’s priority is maintaining the health of His Church:** v. 13 The description of Christ emphasizes His work within His Church as He identifies and deals with anything that would hinder the message, fruitfulness, or effectiveness

of His Church. Do I seek to get rid of anything in my life that displeases Him, and give up anything that hinders me from even more responding to His desires?

The Lord goes to each church with words of comfort and hope (to him that overcomes...) John has already described what that is. Overcomers are resisting the world, denying the flesh, and responding to the desires of the Lord for their lives.

True Believers Are Overcomers

To each church of the seven in chapters 2 and 3 Jesus says the ones who hear, who are really His are "overcomers". This expression comes from one of John's earlier books, the Epistle of First John. The summary of both places teaches us that genuine believers never stop believing, and have the power and grace of God in their lives.

Look at those overcomer passages:

1. AS TRUE BELIEVERS WE HAVE ABUNDANT LIFE Revelation 2:7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." (NKJV)
2. AS TRUE BELIEVERS WE HAVE AN INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE Revelation 2:11 "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.*" (NKJV)
3. AS TRUE BELIEVERS WE HAVE AN INEXHAUSTIBLE SUPPLY Revelation 2:17 "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.*" (NKJV)
4. AS TRUE BELIEVERS WE HAVE AN INEXPRESSIBLE FUTURE Revelation 2:26-29 *And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—27 ' He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'—as I also have received from My Father; 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."* (NKJV)
5. AS TRUE BELIEVERS WE HAVE INCREDIBLE COVERAGE Revelation 3:5-6 *5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 6 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."* (NKJV) WE have Christ as our garment, Advocate and our relative:
6. AS TRUE BELIEVERS WE HAVE AN INESCAPABLE DESTINATION Revelation 3:12-13 *He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he*

shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. 13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (NKJV)

7. AS TRUE BELIEVERS WE HAVE INTIMACY WITH GOD Revelation 3:21 21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (NKJV)

Chastening Keeps Overcomers Spiritually Healthy

The Lord also goes to each church with words of challenge and chastening (repent or else). There is a focused desire the Lord has for us that we stay on track and live out what He designed us to do and to be.

This final word for Christ to His Church is so consistent with the constant message His apostles had already taught and written about in all the others books on the New Testament.

1. **As Overcomers we are: CONSECRATED**—ALL NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS ARE CONSECRATED TO THE LORD LIKE SAMSON WAS.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that **your body is the temple** (the Spirit is so specific, we are not the *hieron* 'the whole temple building' but *naos* the Holy of Holies) **of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

2. **As Overcomers we are: ANSWERABLE**—WE WILL ANSWER TO GOD FOR WHAT WE DID WITH OUR BODY.

1 Corinthians 9:27 But **I discipline my body and bring it into subjection**, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should **become disqualified**.

3. **As Overcomers we are: WARNED** about maintaining Holiness—GOD WILL NOT STAND BY AS WE PERSIST IN UNREPENTANT SIN.

1 Corinthians 11:30-31 For this reason **many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep**. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

4. **As Overcomers we are: LOVED**—CHASTENING PROVES GOD'S LOVE.

Hebrews 12:5-8 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 **For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.**" 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, **then you are illegitimate and not sons.**

5. **As Overcomers we are:** CONFRONTED—GOING TOO FAR TOO OFTEN WITH SIN WILL BE DEADLY FOR BELIEVERS.

1 John 5:16-17 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. **There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.** 17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.

6. **As Overcomers we are:** JUDGED—GOD KILLS BELIEVERS WHO WON'T REPENT IN THE SPACE HE GIVES THEM.

Revelation 2:22-23 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, **unless they repent of their deeds. 23 I will kill her children with death,** and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

That is why this entire opening to Revelation is all about Christ desiring His Church to pay attention to our relationship with Him. We are to always be responding to His plans that we be walking in the Spirit and staying close to Him. Which is why He reveals to us:

God Only Chastens His Own Children

Hebrews 12 has one of the clearest explanations of the methodology God uses in chastening. Note with me His three levels of dealing with us to encourage and produce repentance in us.

Open there with me to just introduce the theology of chastening that God's Word teaches us.

Hebrews 12:1-11 (NKJV) Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, **let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us,** and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.³ For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, **lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.**⁴ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.⁵ And you

have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

*" My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;
⁶ For whom the LORD loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives."*

⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸ **But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.** ⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. **Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?** ¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

This passage reveals that:

God's Chastening Has Three Levels

What exactly does the surgery and radiation treatments on the cells that make up the Body of Christ actually look like from a Biblical perspective? Does God ever give us an insight into how He does this type of work?

1. **Stage 1: Rebuke – "My son, do not...be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him"** (v.5). We hear God's rebuke, even though we don't always choose to respond.

God can make Himself heard in many ways: a prick of our conscience, a timely word from another person, a Scripture, the preaching of God's Word, or conviction by the Holy Spirit. (Do you see how wonderful and kind it is of God to use so many methods to get our attention and steer us away from peril?)

What do His rebukes for? To remind us we are slaves of God: no identity outside of our Master, no plans other than His, no possessions of our own—everything we have, including ourself, belongs to our Master.

To remind us we are to read/listen to God and keep what His Word says to His servants.

2. **Stage 2: Chasten – "For whom the Lord loves He chastens"** (v. 5). In other places in the Bible, the word **chastening** is used interchangeably with discipline. But in our text we find a specific use that shows a more serious degree of discipline.

Chastening is something you feel as emotional anxiety, frustration, or distress. What used to bring you joy now doesn't. Pressures increase at work, at home, in your health or finance. Many Christians bump along in this level of discipline, yet fail to read the signs. They feel unfulfilled at church, critical of their Christian friends, and "on the outs" with God. When they pick up their Bible, it feels like a lead weight instead of a welcome relief. Their relationship with the Lord seems blighted by a sadness or lethargy they can't quite trace.

If any of these symptoms sound familiar, you don't need to go to church more or try to read your Bible with a better attitude. You need to look for ongoing sin in your life, the dirt crusting over your leaves and cutting you off from God's best. If you don't respond, love will compel your Father to take more drastic measures.

3. **Stage 3: Scourge- "And scourges every son whom He receives"** (v. 6). To scourge is to whip, to inflict punishment. It's the same word the Gospels use to describe what the Romans did to Jesus just before they crucified Him. Not a pretty picture!

In fact, for the word **scourge** you could substitute **cause-excruciating pain**. What percentage of Christians do you think have experienced scourging? It may shock you to read that God scourges "every son." That means you have most likely already been scourge in your life.

- Today, are you seeking to magnify Him as His temple that when gather, we collectively become (I Peter 2)?
- Today, are you measuring how much of my life is tied to what is Christ's priority. Do I share His focus upon believers being encouraged, trained, strengthened and challenged?
- Today, are you getting rid of anything in your life that displeases Him, and giving up anything that hinders you from even more responding to His desires?

Jesus desires us to please Him today!