

DEAR CHURCH

MESSAGES FROM THE BOOK OF REVELATION



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Letter from Mark Roberts

Dear Church,

Each term as I write this short letter I ponder the question of what I want to say to you. There are always so many things I want to encourage you with, and so many things I want to call you to commit to and pray for. This term however we are studying the letters to the seven churches written by Jesus himself, and so it is only fitting that my short letter directs you towards the same subject that letters of Revelation direct you towards: Jesus Christ himself.

The book of Revelation was written to people who were facing challenges and threats, both internal and external. Persevering as followers of Jesus was no easy task in a hostile first-century world. The first recipients of these letters, like us today, needed to be reminded of Jesus, “the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth” (1:5).

Sadly, many people read Revelation and they see everything *but* Jesus. It’s our hope and prayer as we study Jesus’ words to the church this term that we would be captivated and comforted by the glory of Jesus, so that we would have hearts that are drawn to worship, lips that are moved to witness, and hands that are stirred to serve our Lord.

Your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus,

Mark Roberts

“Blessed is the one who
reads aloud the words of
this prophecy, and blessed
are those who hear it and
take to heart what is
written in it, because the
time is near.”

Revelation 1:3

Introduction to the series



For many Christians the book of Revelation is just too difficult to study and too weird to take seriously. Jesus, however, tells us otherwise:

'Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near' (Rev 1:3).

As we'll see this term, Revelation has a magnificent and relevant message that is not beyond our ability to understand. As we study chapters 1-3 and focus on Jesus' words to the churches of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) we will get a window into the heart of Jesus for his people. Whilst these seven churches are separated from us by time and geography, their challenges and triumphs are not dissimilar from our own.

Before we look at Jesus' longings for his church it's a good time to take stock of our own. No doubt we all love our church and long for the best for it. In the table below write down your own reflections about what is commendable and what needs improving (or maybe stopping) at our church. This list won't be shared with others, so just fill it out honestly on your own account.

What is commendable	What needs improving

Over the course of the series we'll see whether our assessment of, and longings for, our church match up with Jesus' own. To help you keep track there is a table on the following pages which we encourage you to fill out week by week.

What Jesus commends	What Jesus challenges	What to do	Jesus' promise
Ephesus			
Smyrna			
Pergamum			
Thyatira			

What Jesus commends	What Jesus challenges	What to do	Jesus' promise
Sardis			
Philadelphia			
Laodicea			
Summary			

Sermon Notes - Revelation 1:1-20

20th October

Home Group Study – Revelation 1:1–20

Introduction

1. Who is the origin of this revelation and how has it come to us? How reliable is it? (v1-2)

> > > > Us

2. Who is it written *to*? (v4, 11) Who is it written *for*? (v1, 3 c.f. 2:7, 11, 17, 29, etc.)

List what you learn about the main characters in this passage

God	Jesus	John

3. How would these things help the people John is writing this for? (They are facing severe persecution). What do you find most encouraging here as you persevere in following Jesus?

4. Who do you think is the main character? What does this tell you about who or what is being revealed here?

5. What do we learn about Jesus' relationship to his church? (v5-6) What are the practical implications of being a kingdom and priests to serve God? (see also 1 Peter 2:9)

6. What are we being called on to do in v3? How have you been blessed by studying this chapter?

7. What are you taking to heart from here, and what does God want you to do as a result?

Praise

- For Jesus' mighty power and his great love for his people
- That Jesus reveals himself and his plans for his church to us

Pray

- For us to be blessed as we read and take to heart what Jesus reveals here
 - For God's people facing adversity to be encouraged as they follow Jesus.
- Pray for specific people you know in this situation.

Sermon Notes - Revelation 2:1-7

27th October

Home Group Study – Revelation 2:1-7

To the Church in Ephesus

If you're a believer, share how you came to trust Jesus and what your love for him was like in the early days of your faith.

1. How does Jesus introduce himself to the church in Ephesus? (v1, c.f. 1:20). How would this encourage them (and us) to persevere?

2. How does Jesus' love for his church come through in this passage?

- What does he commend?

- What does he challenge?

3. Forsaking our love for Jesus and each other is a very serious thing (v4-5). How can we guard against this?

4. *Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches* (v7a). How have you been blessed by reading and hearing this part of God's revelation?

5. What does God want you to take to heart? What change will you make in your beliefs and actions as a result?

6. What promise does Jesus make in this passage, and to whom? (v7)

Praise

- For churches who stick to the truth of the gospel
- For believers who work hard and resist wicked people
- For believers who endure hardship for Jesus and don't grow weary

Pray

- For churches and believers who have wandered from the teaching of Scripture
- For us to take seriously the consequences of forsaking our love for Jesus and each other
- For us all to grow in our love for Jesus and each other

Don't forget to complete the summary for Ephesus in the table on p6

Sermon Notes - Revelation 2:8-11

3rd November

Home Group Study – Revelation 2:8-11

To the Church in Smyrna

What is really valuable to you? List your top 3 things.

1. How does Jesus introduce himself to the church in Smyrna? (v8) How would this encourage them (and us) to persevere?

2. How does Jesus' love for his church come through in this passage?

- What does he commend?

- What does he challenge?

3. In what ways are the suffering, poverty-stricken believers in Smyrna rich? (v9) How can we grow in appreciating our true riches?

4. *Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches* (v11). How have you been blessed by reading and hearing this part of God's revelation?

5. What does God want you to take to heart? What change will you make in your beliefs and actions as a result?

6. What promise does Jesus make in this passage, and to whom? (v10b, 11)

Praise

- For believers who persevere in adversity. Give thanks for someone who has been a model for you in this area
- That suffering will end
- That God uses adversity to grow us

Pray

- For believers suffering persecution
- For us to stay faithful to Jesus, no matter the cost

Don't forget to complete the summary for Smyrna in the table on p6

Sermon Notes - Revelation 2:12-17

10th November

Home Group Study – Revelation 2:12-17

To the Church in Pergamum

Have you ever been in a church where false teaching or immorality was tolerated? What happened?

1. How does Jesus introduce himself to the church in Pergamum? (v12) How would this encourage them (and us) to persevere?

2. How does Jesus' love for his church come through in this passage?

- What does he commend?

- What does he challenge?

3. How can we keep ourselves from false teaching and its consequences?

4. *Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches* (v17). How have you been blessed by reading and hearing this part of God's revelation?

5. What does God want you to take to heart? What change will you make in your beliefs and actions as a result?

6. What promise does Jesus make in this passage, and to whom? (v17)

Praise

- For believers who stand firm, even under the threat of death
- That God's word teaches and rebukes us, trains and corrects us
- For faithful teachers of God's word

Pray

- For our elders to continue to ensure the faithful teaching of God's word
- For us all to be diligent in making sure that what we believe and live lines up with God's word

Don't forget to complete the summary for Pergamum in the table on p6

Sermon Notes - Revelation 2:18-29

17th November

Home Group Study – Revelation 2:18-29

To the Church in Thyatira

Have you ever been in a church where someone claimed to be a prophet?
What happened?

1. How does Jesus introduce himself to the church in Thyatira? (v18) How would this encourage them (and us) to persevere?

2. How does Jesus' love for his church come through in this passage?

- What does he commend?

- What does he challenge?

3. Jesus takes this false prophet/prophecy really seriously. How can we stop people being misled by false teaching? (v20-23)

4. *Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches* (v29). How have you been blessed by reading and hearing this part of God's revelation?

5. What does God want you to take to heart? What change will you make in your beliefs and actions as a result?

6. What promises does Jesus make in this passage, and to whom? (v26-28)

Praise

- For believers who show love and faith and persevere in serving
- For believers who resist and expose false prophets.
- For Jesus' determination to save us from wrong belief and practice
- For the final triumph of God's truth

Pray

- For those caught up in cults and false religion
- For us all to be diligent in guarding the gospel

Don't forget to complete the summary for Thyatira in the table on p6

Sermon Notes - Revelation 3:1-6

24th November

Home Group Study – Revelation 3:1–6

To the Church in Sardis

How do you feel when someone's reputation is very different to who you know them to be?

1. How does Jesus introduce himself to the church in Sardis? (v1) How would this encourage them (and us) to persevere?

2. How does Jesus' love for his church come through in this passage?

- What does he commend?

- What does he challenge?

3. Jesus is really concerned that our public and private lives match up. How can we help each other to be like this? (v1b-2) What is Jesus' solution for this problem? (v3a)

4. *Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches* (v6). How have you been blessed by reading and hearing this part of God's revelation?

5. What does God want you to take to heart? What change will you make in your beliefs and actions as a result?

6. What promises does Jesus make in this passage, and to whom? (v4-5)

Praise

- For the believers you know whose walk and talk match up
- For Jesus' love for us and his power to change us into his image
- For the final triumph of God's truth

Pray

- For us to work with God so that our walk and talk match up
- For us to help one another become more Christ-like

Don't forget to complete the summary for Sardis in the table on p7

Sermon Notes - Revelation 3:7-13

1st December

Home Group Study – Revelation 3:7-13

To the Church in Philadelphia

Have you ever felt really tired and worn out by the difficulties of life? What helped you to keep going?

1. How does Jesus introduce himself to the church in Philadelphia? (v7) How would this encourage them (and us) to persevere?

2. How does Jesus' love for his church come through in this passage?

- What does he commend?

- What does he challenge?

3. Jesus speaks lovingly and gently to these worn-out faithful believers. How can we grow in being encouragers?

4. *Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches* (v13). How have you been blessed by reading and hearing this part of God's revelation?

5. What does God want you to take to heart? What change will you make in your beliefs and actions as a result?

6. What promises does Jesus make in this passage, and to whom? (v10-12)

Praise

- For Jesus' love and care for those who are weary from following him
- For the believers you know who are weary and worn out
- For Jesus' determination to bring his people safely home to the new creation

Pray

- For us to keep going when we feel worn out by the struggle of discipleship
- For us to help one another to keep going in following Jesus

Don't forget to complete the summary for Philadelphia in the table on p7

Sermon Notes - Revelation 3:14-22

8th December

Home Group Study – Revelation 3:14–22

To the Church in Laodicea

How do you measure your spiritual temperature?

1. How does Jesus introduce himself to the church in Laodicea? (v14) How would this encourage them (and us) to persevere?

2. How does Jesus' love for his church come through in this passage?

- What does he commend?

- What does he challenge?

3. Jesus speaks quite sternly to the believers here. What reason does he give for this? (v19) How do you respond to God's loving discipline?

4. *Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches* (v22). How have you been blessed by reading and hearing this part of God's revelation?

5. What does God want you to take to heart? What change will you make in your beliefs and actions as a result?

6. What promise does Jesus make in this passage, and to whom? (v21)

To conclude this series, complete the summary for Laodicea in the table on p7, and then summarise each of the four columns in a sentence or two in the space at the bottom.

What strikes you about Jesus' longings for his church? How does it compare with your longings for WBC?

Praise

- For who God is and his precious promises to those who follow him to the end

Pray

- For our hearts to align with his, as we seek to live like Him

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