

GOD'S PURPOSE: WORSHIP

Many people use the Book of Revelation to try and know when Jesus will come again. They want to figure out dates and times of His return so they will be ready. They don't want to be caught by surprise.

They certainly don't want to be caught doing something sinful or un-Christ-like. So they want to know when they will need to change how they live.

That is the only reason I can think of for this obsession.

How long can I live the way I want to and still get to heaven?

But that is not why God directed John to write Revelation.

I reject any attempt to put Revelation's revelations into a calendar.

That is an act of futility by people who want to live futile lives.

That may sound blunt and harsh.

But it's time to wake up my friends.

We are not waiting for Jesus' presence to arrive.

Jesus is here.

He has always been here.

Do you forget His words to His disciples?

"Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Those are labeled as Jesus' farewell message to His disciples.

How can that be a farewell message if Jesus is always with us?

John's opening inspiring words annihilate that erroneous thinking.

"Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

(Rev. 1:4-5)

Jesus who *is* Jesus who *was* and Jesus who *is to come*.

It is not even possible for Jesus to be absent.

Dan Boone talks about the order of Jesus' presence.

He is, He was, He is to come.

Jesus reveals Himself to John as present.

He was with John right there on the Isle of Patmos.

Jesus does not put us into a waiting game or a game of hide and seek.

Jesus is with us now and He goes backward and forward from where we are.

"The Christ who stands with us now is the Christ who interprets where we've been and where we're going." (Answers for Chicken Little, p. 15)

Jesus is!

And that is the reality John writes about in Revelation.

So if Jesus is, everything we do should be in response to His presence.

And response to Jesus' presence is what we call worship.

That was at the heart of every letter Jesus inspired John to write.

Jesus reminded these churches that worship was essential to life.

In worship God gathers His people to Himself as centre.

Eugene Peterson who wrote *The Message* discovered in Revelation why we worship.

Worship enables us to live in response to the living God.

Failure to worship consigns us to a life of spasms and jerks.

Without worship we are at the mercy of every advertisement, every seduction, and every siren.

Without worship we live manipulated and manipulating lives.

We are either plagued with panic or live lethargic lives.

"People who do not worship ... live with no steady direction and no sustaining

purpose." (Reversed Thunder, Eugene Peterson, p. 60)

There is no such thing as casual or half-hearted worship.

There is no such thing as take it or leave it worship.

There is a horrible void created in your life when you miss worship.

When we allow anything to replace or displace worship we belittle life.

Jesus was reminding the churches of John's day that worship was the core of everything they do because Jesus was that centre.

That is where most of the churches in Revelation failed.

They failed in how they worshipped.

Jesus was forced out of the centre.

Where is Jesus in your life right now?

As we read these letters we need to notice two things.

We need to notice the lost priorities that Jesus puts His finger on.

Many of these churches were slipping.

And the slippage began first in their times of worship.

We also need to notice what it was that Jesus praised.

Only two of the churches were not called to repentance.

Jesus saw their faithfulness.

He saw how they held fast.

We know it is Jesus speaking because each letter begins with a different description of Him.

That is why it is important to read Revelation 1 before the letters.

Jesus holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the lampstands (vs. 16, 13) - read the letter to Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7).

Jesus is the first and the last, who died and came to life (vs. 17, 18) - read the letter to Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11).

Jesus has the sharp two-edged sword (vs. 16) - read the letter to Pergamum (Rev. 2:12-17).

Jesus has eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like burnished bronze (vs. 14, 15) - read the letter to Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29).

Jesus has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars (vs. 4, 20) - read the letter to Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6).

Jesus is holy and true, and holds the keys (vs. 18) - read the letter to Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13).

Jesus is the faithful witness, (vs. 5) - read the letter to Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22).

Notice the other sentence every letter has in common.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

So now it is our turn.

Jesus is not finished speaking to His Church.

What is He saying to us today?

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Don't be concerned about what Jesus is saying to your neighbor.

What is He saying to you right now?

What is He saying about your life?

Is He revealing to you a place where you need to repent?

Is He addressing something He has against you?

Is He praising your worship, your faithfulness, your service?

I want you to take out your cross.

The cross represents God's covenant of love with you.

Write truthfully what Jesus is saying to you right now on your Cross.

This is part of His covenant with you personally.

No one else is listening in.

Nor is anyone going to ask what you wrote.

You are going to keep your cross.

I would suggest you keep it in your Bible.

We should all be writing something that Jesus is saying.

Jesus says **"My sheep listen to My voice; I know them and they follow Me"** (Jn. 10:27)

If you can't hear His voice this morning, why don't you let go of your fears?

You can hear His voice if you will simply trust Him with your life and future.