

Reading Schedule for August 6-12, 2018

As we begin the readings this week, we will look at three more churches who have lost their way. Then we will visit two chapters on the significance of heartfelt worship. As you know, the Book of Revelation speaks to life as we approach the final judgment. This can challenge us to live meaningful lives, with a sense of urgency as we approach the Day.

August 6 – Revelation 3:1-13: “To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.” (v.1) It seems that the church was more concerned about what people thought than the genuine reality of Christ in their lives. Jesus can see beyond the veneer of pretense and confront them about their selfish motivation. They need to wake up and be strengthened. Sardis had been captured twice in its history while the watchman neglected their duty. In a similar way, the congregation was becoming lax in their pursuit of God. However, there are a few people who are affirmed, and they could help the church get back on track. If the core group of people truly love God and serve him wholeheartedly, it can affect the whole body. Your influence in our church can make a big difference. How do you respond to this church in Sardis that was going through the motions?

August 7 – Revelation 3:14-22: “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” (v.20) This is the most well-known church of the seven because it talks about being lukewarm, with a clear word of rebuke from Jesus. However, the Lord wants to have a renewed relationship with them, even as we read in verse 20. Verse 19 tells us that Christ can be like a loving father who will reprove those whom he loves, just as we read in Hebrews 12:7-11. The knock on the door is not from a wandering transient seeking shelter, but the master of the house. The servants would hear the knock and would quickly move to open the door. This is an invitation for personal fellowship with Christ himself. How do you respond to the message to the church in Laodicea?

August 8 – Revelation 4:1-11: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.” (v.11) This chapter leads up to a very magnificent picture of worship. You can see that the worship offered is one of submission to God’s authority. What do the words glory, honor and power mean to you? This gives us a clear sense that heaven is a place of submissive worship to our God. This helps me to see the significance of personal worship, even as I intentionally meet with God day after day for 30 minutes. As I taught about personal worship on July 22nd, I remind you that these words can be very helpful in lifting up your praise to God. What stands out to you in this chapter about God on the throne?

August 9 - Revelation 5:1-14: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” (v.12) We continue with this theme of worship. The tribute expands to power, wealth, wisdom, might, honor and glory, as well as blessing. Chapter 4 highlights the Lord Almighty, but this chapter points to the significance of the Lamb of God, who was slain. These words highlight the significance of Christ and how he is worthy of worship. I am drawn to verse 5 as well because this is another description of Jesus

as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. If you read Genesis 49:8-12, you will see that the blessing Judah received from his father Jacob points to the significance of his descendants. The Old Testament affirms this picture of the Messiah as the Lion and transitions into the New Testament with our understanding of Jesus being the Lamb who was sacrificed for our sins and now is seated at the right hand of God Almighty. How does this chapter inspire you?

August 10 - Revelation 6:1-17: “I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, ‘Come!’” (v.1) I think of this as an introduction to a new section where we learn about the scroll given to the Lamb of God being broken and the seals revealed. Many have interpreted this section as the beginning of the great tribulation with the opening of the first seal. But others have suggested that the great tribulation really begins in chapter 11. These seals represent an intensified season on the earth with war, inflation, famine and devastation. You can sense how these seven seals would point to the culmination of the age. As we will learn in the Book of Revelation, it is hard to specifically identify each one of these seals with precise futuristic events. However, you can sense the intensity in almost every realm of life. How do you respond to this futuristic chapter?

August 11 - Revelation 7:1-17: “Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.” (v.4) Obviously the idea of 144,000 gets our attention. 144,000 seems like a large number, but in other ways it seems like a small number. It can be taken literally or be viewed more symbolically. Some have suggested that it refers to Jewish believers who are brought to faith immediately after Jesus returns and the church is already removed from the earth. Others refer to this as symbolic of the church in that all God’s followers will be brought safely to him. There is a sense of completeness. No matter what this represents, they are promised the reward of eternal life; their destiny is secure. These believers would not fall away from God, even though they would undergo intense persecution. I am more inclined to see this number as symbolic as God’s protection and assurance to those sealed in Christ. How do you respond to this interesting and hopeful chapter concerning the future of God’s servants?

August 12 - Revelation 8:1-13: “The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God’s people, went up before God from the angel’s hand.” (v.4) I’ve always enjoyed this verse in the midst of all the statements that I don’t understand. I see the specialness of prayer. Our God of justice will answer the prayers of the saints who have been oppressed and persecuted. Some scholars suggest that our prayers even now ascend to heaven like incense and are a sweet aroma to God. I like that idea, but here it is connected to the intensity of life as these events unfold. In Revelation 12 it says that the servants of God did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. The courage of the believers to intercede to God and to stand firm is the backdrop of this verse. I think it is appropriate to consider your prayers even now rising to the Lord as he is faithful to answer our prayers. How do you respond to this chapter as we get a vision of God’s heavenly temple?

PRAYER: Pray for our middle schoolers as they are on a campout with their friends. May the Lord touch their lives in a special way.