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Pinecrest Baptist Church
a.m.

Sermon Series: What the Spirit Says to the Churches
Sermon #1 Title: The Call to Attention
Sermon #1 Text: (Revelation 1:9-11)

Here is the single most important question I think, I could ask anyone, especially anyone who says He knows the Lord . . . and that is this . . . “Are you willing to hear what the Lord has to say to you?”

- Now that’s not a trite question – it’s not a rhetoric question . . .
- You’d better be careful about how quick you answer that . . .
- But – You’d better know whether you are willing to hear what the Lord has to say or not, He is still saying it.
- And that fact stands tall and strong in this last book of the Bible, written by the Last Living Apostle of Jesus, written in the Last days of the first century churches, about the Last days of the Last Century churches.

As we open the book of Revelation we know that it is a unique book in the Bible.

- It is the Book that tells us about the time when Jesus in His glory will be unveiled for the world to see.
- it is a favorite book of prophecy buffs
- it is an exciting book for those ready to see the Lord put an end to the sin and evil in this world.
- BUT – in the first part at least – it is a church book, written to His churches, as churches, with His full

expectation not that His church has a role in your life, but that your life’s role is tied directly to His church.

In fact this is the only text in all of scripture that is dictated word for word from the Risen Jesus, to His earthly churches.

Over the next 7 weeks, we are going to open this part of the book, and open our ears and hearts so that we may “hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

To our text: 1:9-11

#1 – The Context of the Lord’s Attention

*Note – In order for anyone to ever hone in on how to understand anything, they have to hone in on *who* the Lord is speaking to. Because when you understand who the Lord is speaking to, by default you understand who he is *not* speaking to.

The very first section of the book of Revelation is bookended by the present object of the Lord’s affection – His “churches.”

- Just like the books of Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and Thessalonians – the intended audience of letter is to the Lord’s churches.

A. His Sanctified Churches Institutionally

- 1.) - He opens the section by saying – “to the seven churches which are in Asia” in verse 4
- 2.) - He closes the section by saying “he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” in 3:22

*Note – Now what does all of that mean? – That means that what He is addressing is not Christians individually – He is addressing Christians in assembly!

- Look in verse 1 – “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to show unto his servants . . . vs 11 – “write in a book and send it to the churches.”

*Note – What the Lord wanted to show His servants, He wrote in a book and sent it to His churches . . .”

- All throughout the New Testament, there is an inseparable link between the servants of the Lord, and the assemblies of the Lord.

*Note – Now here is what is imperative to take note of when we study the Lord’s word here. He is going to be speaking to His people, in their condition as members of His church, not just individuals with saving faith.

*Note – Now this is not going to be an exhaustive lesson on the doctrine of the church, but you have to have a working knowledge not of your relationship to the Lord’s church.

*Note – What is this thing called church, and what does it have to do with you?

- When Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 – “I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”

- What was He speaking of?

- Even if you haven’t got a grip on what it specifically is, you can see very plainly that 1.) It is Built by Jesus, 2.) It is Blessed by Jesus, and 3.) it is a central Business of Jesus.

- It is the word “ecclesia.” Sometimes you may hear me, or other preachers use the term, “ecclesiology” – which the study of the nature of the “church.”

- What then is the “ecclesia”? What are the “ecclesias – plural”?

- You don’t even have to go past the Encyclopedia Britannica to understand this ancient word –

The Ecclesia was “The gathering of those summonsed”

The Athenian Ecclesia, for which exists the most detailed record, was already functioning in Draco’s day (c. 621 bc). In the course of Solon’s codification of the law (c. 594 bc), the Ecclesia became coterminous with the body of male citizens 18 years of age or over and had final control over policy, including the right to hear appeals in the *hēliaia* (public court), take part in the election of archons (chief magistrates), and confer special privileges on individuals. In the Athens of the 5th and 4th centuries bc, the *prytaneis*, a committee of the *Boule* (council), summoned the Ecclesia both for regular meetings, held four times in each 10th of the year, and for special sessions. . . Assemblies of this sort existed in most Greek city-states, continuing to function throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods, though under the Roman Empire their powers gradually atrophied.”

From another secular dictionary pertaining to definitions of ancient words, - “Ecclesia (Ekklesia) is the term used for the assembly in Greek city-states.”

All of that being said, - This is the word that Jesus used when He said in Matthew 16:18 – “I will build my ecclesia – and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”

- It is this term that Jesus applied to His Body

- It is this term that the scriptures attach to His Bride

*Note – Now that being said, some people have the idea that all saved people of all ages at all times constitute the Lord’s church . . . but Biblically, that is not the case.

- In other words, once you are saved, you are part of a global spiritual body which is the audience of all church instructions – all church blessings – and all church privileges – which means the local assembly is nice, but not necessary.

- The primary problem with that, is everything.

- All of the New Testament Church instructions, blessings, privileges and commands, are directed to the material, manifested assembling of the Lord's saved.

- It is the assembly of the summonsed –
(now all of the saved have been summonsed)
(but not all of the summonsed join in the assembly.)

- Just as in Ancient Greece – the ecclesia was where governmental affairs were decided and governed and managed.

- every citizen, "could participate" and was called to "participate" in the assembly – but not every citizen did.

- Just as in the Lord's Assembly – He said in Matthew 16:19 – "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

- The ancient assembly was the headquarters of civil business . . .

- complete with officers, protocols, principles and expectations.

- The Lord's assembly is the headquarters for the Lord's business on earth.

- complete with offices – Pastor and deacons

- complete with protocols – membership requires salvation, baptism

- complete with principles and expectations

- Learning the Great Commandments

- Living the Great Commission

- Loving the Great Ordinances –

Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

*Note – Listen to what the Apostle Paul said to Timothy – 1 Timothy 3:15 – "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how

thou oughtest to behave thyself in the *house of God*, which is the church – the ecclesia – the assembly - of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

*Note – Now here is the practical lesson for you and me . . .
We have no standing to say, "I accept being saved"
"but I'm not sure about the summons"

The standard Biblical dictionary for the word Ecclesia is the "Called Out Ones" – which are the people called to the assembly.

*Note – They are called out from damnation to be saved, and gathered together in a body to serve.

- The Body therefore, is not those who are called to the assembly – but those that assemble who are called!

- This is why everywhere in the New Testament, you can see that the "Church letters" are written to the "Churches" as the pillars and grounds of Truth. Then there are general letters that are written with the individual Christian in mind.

*Note – Now all of that being said, these letters that constitute the beginning of the book Revelation are not written to these people in their individual lives – they are written to them in their summonsed capacity as an assembly of the Lord Jesus.

- Now all of that being said, His context is His Sacred churches institutionally – But now textually, He writes to These seven Churches individually.

B. The Seven Churches Individually

1.) vs 11 – He names them –

a.) Ephesus

b.) Smyrna

- c.) Pergamos
- d.) Thyatira
- e.) Sardis
- f.) Philadelphia
- g.) Laodicea

*Note – Now just by the fact that Jesus Himself lists these churches individually, there is a certainty that ought to bring great comfort to some, and great consternation to others . . .

~ He knows the assemblies that are His.

*Note – One of the most fascinating things to read among scholars is to read their attempts to explain why Jesus called these “The Seven Churches which are in Asia” when it appears there were others.

- At that time, the term Asia was a smaller province than the continent and boundaries we now refer to as Asia.

- In 95 AD – there were cities with previously mentioned assemblies in the scriptures.

- Colossae – is in this area, but not mentioned

- Miletus – is in this area, but not mentioned (though we’re never told there was an assembly there.)

- Hierapolis – is in this area but not mentioned by the Lord, also of which was associated and mentioned with Colossae.

- 30 years prior to this letter, there were at least 3 more cities indicating there were churches, and one of those for sure had a church in Colossae.

- All of the explanations are generally the same – “the Lord selected these as representative churches of Asia.” “The Lord wrote to these as depicting the different problems and praises every church would face.”

- It could be that these were the only churches left the Lord still identified as His.

- Here is the temptation of the historian to say, “We have records of those churches existing long past AD 95.”

- If John quoted Jesus correctly, the Lord God doesn’t have record of more than 7 of His churches existing in this province at this time, even though there may have been more assemblies.

- May I remind us, that one of the warnings the Lord would give to some of these churches were that He would put their light out . . . He would vomit them out of His mouth . . .

- that didn’t mean they wouldn’t stop having church, it would just mean that He would no longer claim them as His.

*Note – Now I said all of that to echo what Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:19 – “. . . this foundation standeth sure having this seal; the Lord know them that are His . . .”

*Note – Now the churches of the Lord are the context of the Attention of the Lord in the first few chapters of this book, and the audience for the rest of it.

- The assembly is the Building of Jesus, the Blessing of Jesus, and it is the Business of Jesus.

#2 – The Process of the Lord’s Agenda – “what thou seest write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia.”

*Note – This is the only written letter from the Head of the Church, Jesus Himself, to the churches that were His in a particular place, at a particular time. – Here is how the Lord did Business with His churches.

A. He Directed John to Write a Book

1.) “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle of

Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

*Note – We could spend a month unpacking the testimony of the power of Jesus in the life of John, in that one verse.

- a.) He is the last living Apostle
- b.) He had the longest living experience as disciple of Jesus Christ on earth. He had known the man Jesus Christ for over 65 years, longer than anyone alive at that time.
- c.) He was the epitome of a faithful saint.

*Note – I say this not as a snide remark, but as a powerful comparison – John was willing to go live in Prison for Jesus, when some aren’t willing to come serve in Church.

- John was willing to go to the prison man built against Jesus, while some aren’t willing to go to the Church Jesus built for man.

*Note – Note why John was in prison – “For the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

- Now by the way, before John went to Patmos, he was boiled in oil, just to make sure life wasn’t too comfortable for him.

*Note – When Jesus had business to do with His church, He commissioned, His longest lasting Apostle, and His seasoned saint, and faithful friend – to write down what I am going to show you, and send it to these churches.

Do you realize that all business that God does with us, begins and ends with His Word to us. – Jesus is that Living Word, and the Bible is that Written Word, and that is the lifeline between heaven and earth.

- Jesus said, “The words that I speak to you they are spirit and they are life.” – John 6:63

B. He Expected His Churches to Read the Book

1.) 1:3 – “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein:”

*Note – Now just know this . . . the very fact that the Lord writes the book to His assemblies, implies He expects His book to be read by His assemblies.

- He doesn’t just send messengers . . . He has sent His written message!

- The very messengers that were to receive these letters, were to proclaim and explain the letters . .

2.) In verse 20, Jesus explained to John the meaning of the vision that John saw of Jesus in the middle of seven lampstands, and seven stars. And in so doing He tells him that “the seven stars are the angles of the seven churches”

- literally the messengers to those churches – who are by Biblical standards the pastors of those churches.

- Each time the Lord addressed a church He said, - “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write: 2:1

- “unto the angel of the church of Smyrna, write:” 2:8

- “unto the angel of the church of Pergamos, write:” 2:12

- “unto the angel of the church of Thyatira, write: 2:18

- and so on, each time, the Lord directed the letter to the church to be addressed to the pastor of that church, to proclaim and explain the message to that church.

- Now here is a Biblical pattern for every church and every pastor – The Lord has written the book for the pastor to communicate to the churches.

*Note – Now here is how the Lord does business with His people, and how His people first do business with their Lord.
– By receiving and learning what the Lord has to say in His book.

James 1:18-21 – “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and **receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.**”

- Now mind you, James wrote this instruction to Christians! He instructed people who were saved, on how to save their souls . . . !?

- That word soul, is not our Spirit, it is the word Psyche
- where our mind, and our emotions, and our thought processes come from.

*Note – When you trusted Christ to save you, His blood paid the Penalty of your sin, and you and I were saved from the Punishment of Sin.

- What James is speaking of, is receiving the engrafted Word to be saved from the Power and effects of sin.

- the Word of God steadies the mind
- the Word of God can calm the emotions
- the Word of God can break the strongholds of temptation

*Note – Now I said all of that to say this . . . When the Head of the Church, openly did Business with His Church, He directed a book to be written, and expected His book to be read.

C. He Selected the Willing to Hear the Book

*Note – But it will not be enough just to “read” the book. The Lord Jesus has said a watch on His truth, and has only made

the power of it available to select people – those who are willing to hear, not just content to read it.

- Friend you can read the Bible and get the facts, or you can hear the Bible and get the truth.

3:19-22 – “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 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.
He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

- He that is willing to hear, gets to hear.
 - He said, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to Him, and sup with Him, and He with me.”
- Now there is the great invitation that Jesus makes, and take note – He is making this statement about everyone, “to the church.”
 - there have always been people “in the assembly of God” – who are not in the family of God.

*Note – I am often reminded of the people who reject the Bible, reject the message of a good God, and reject the people of God because all they hear is “judgment, judgment, judgment.”

- “All I see is a God of judgment in the Old Testament”
- “All I hear is don’t do this, don’t do that.”
- “All I hear is this is sin, that’s a sin – Your God’s against everything, and everything I hear from you, is how wrong we are, how evil we are, how sinful we are. . . .”

*Note – Do you know what it means when someone has that attitude? – They’ve got the facts – but they are not willing to hear the Truth.

- What did Jesus say – “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.”

- Today, People have the idea that “If you love someone, you’ll comfort, and encourage, and enable them to be all they were born to be.”

- Jesus said, “I love” and because I love, I don’t comfort you in sin, and encourage you in your ways, and enable to you to be all you want to be – I will rebuke you, and chasten you, and tell you to repent.”

Conclusion: - There are entire church assemblies today built upon, Not rebuking, Not chastening, Not Judging, Not condemning, and you can rest assured, Those are not assemblies of the Lord Jesus.

- Jesus loves His churches enough, to Confront and Condemn their Wrong Doctrines, Directions, Attitudes and Feelings; and Correct and Commend them when they repent and conform to Him.