Christ's Commitment to His Church
Scripture: Revelation 1
Code: 1251

Tonight I want you to take your Bible if you will and look with me at the first chapter of Revelation. Revelation Chapter 1. And again I really want to share from my heart tonight. This morning in our study together we talked about what God has in mind for the church He builds. We talked about God's blueprint, God's plan, God's pattern. Building the church of Jesus the way Jesus wants it built. And it really came down ultimately to the simple fact that in order for Jesus to build His church His way we must be committed to be what He wants us to be. It's basic to the proper construction of the spiritual body of Christ, the church, that we make certain commitments. You saw what they were in Acts, Chapter 2. We must allow Christ to build His church His way. That's our part. As a congregation.

Now tonight we want to reverse that and I want to share with you Christ's commitment to His church. This morning we talk about what our commitment to the church is to be. Tonight what is Christ's commitment to His church? And then next Lord's Day morning I'm going to talk about what is the commitment of the leadership of the church to Christ and the church. So that we cover the congregation this morning, the Lord tonight and those people in responsible ministry next Lord's Day.

And tonight we want to look at Revelation as we see the Lord Jesus Christ revealed as the one who ministers to His Church. And we want to find out just exactly what Christ does in behalf of His church. My intention tonight is to light up the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord of the church. To see Him in relationship to His church. To see Him as head of His church. To see Him as the Lord of glory that we might truly focus on the one who is the source of all of our life.

And in order to do that, we go to the book that I think more than any other book exalts Jesus Christ. I am convinced that the book that exalts Christ to the greatest extent is the Book of Revelation. And in the Revelation we see a beautiful picture of Christ in His commitment to His church. What He is doing for His church. What He has promised to His church. In fact the entire Book of Revelation is a vision of Jesus Christ sent to the persecuted, discouraged Christians in Asia minor that they might know who the Lord of the church really was and what the Lord of the church had planned for His church.

So the Book of Revelation gives us that information. It presents the Lord of the church and presents His commitment to the church. I don't want it to be academic. I want it to be very personal, very vital, very thrilling as we look at these things. And they are very simple. We'll just again be covering ground we covered before but reaffirming our commitments to these truths at this point.

First of all, and I'll give you several points here as we look at Chapter 1 that discuss Christ's commitment to His church. First of all, He loves His church. Chapter 1 beginning at Verse4. And here we are being introduced basically to the Book of Revelation and its purpose. "John, to the seven churches which are in Asia. Grace be unto 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." Seven spirits having to do with the sevenfold ministry of the Holy Spirit as outlined in Isaiah, Chapter 11. So, greetings to the church from Him who is, who was, who is to come and from the Holy Spirit, that's God and the Holy Spirit. And from Jesus Christ. There's the whole Trinity greeting the church who is the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, the prince of the kings of the earth.

So we are introduced then to the Trinity as the Trinity greets the church. The one person in the Trinity that's set apart is Christ. And we find that there are several things said about Him in relation to the church.

First of all, in Verse 5, it says, "Unto Him that loves us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." Now that statement tells us that Christ is committed to loving the church. If the Bible only contained that verse it would be sufficient for a knowledge of Jesus Christ. That He loves us. That He washed us from our sins in His own blood.

Now, you'll notice that it says in Verse 5 that He loves us. It is a present tense in the Greek. It's not past but present. We often think - and I guess we all fall into this sometimes because we look back at the cross as a focal point - but we fall into the problem of thinking of the love of God as a past revelation. We read Romans 5 and it says, "But God proved His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." So we look in the past. We see a dying Christ and we say that's God's love and that's when God loved us. And it might be easy for us to assume that the love of God spent its full force and reached its culmination at the cross. But that's wrong in many ways.

God's love today is equal to what it was on the cross. It is no way diminished. His present love is at full force right now just as the moment when Jesus was enduring the horrors of Calvary. God eternally expresses His love toward us in Jesus Christ. And so the verse says, "Jesus loves us." The first message to the churches, Verse 4, "John to the churches." The first message is "Jesus loves us." That's His primary commitment. To love us. And it isn't something that's just past history. It's something that's present reality.

In Romans, Chapter 5 and Verse 8 it points us to that verse which I just quoted to you and to a past act. God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Yes, there is a past element to God's love. It was revealed at the cross. But Verse 10, "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His son," now watch this, "Much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life." He says two things here. If Christ's death could do so much

for us, what must His life be able to do for us? If Christ dead on the cross could redeem us from sin, what must the living Christ be able to do for us?

And further, if He loved us enough to die for us when we were his enemies, how much does He love us now that we are His friends? See? And what Paul is saying there is don't look for love in the past. Look for it in the present. Don't look for the expression of God's power in the past. Look for it in the present. If His death could mean so much in the past, what must His life now mean? And if He loved us enough to do that when we were enemies, how much does He love us now that we're His friends?

So, you see Jesus has made a commitment to loving His church. I don't know about you, but it means very much to me to know that Jesus loves me. Carl Bartlett, German theologian, after all had been said and done, he had written all of his theology, someone asked him what was the most wonderful thing he had ever learned and he said, "The greatest truth I ever learned is Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so." He's right. It's the greatest truth I ever learned. He loves me. And it means that He will sacrifice Himself continuously on my behalf for my sin and for my welfare and that all things in my life work together for what? Good. Because His purpose for me is good. He loves me.

In Ephesians, Chapter 5 we have a familiar text that all of us have studied at Grace here. It says that we are likened as a church to a husband and a wife. And in Verse 25 it says, "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ" also what? "Loved the church." And gave Himself for it. And that's past tense. Yes, He did love us at Calvary. And He did express His love in the past. But there's a present tense. "He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word that He might present it to Himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself." Now watch this. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh." And here comes the present tense. "But nourishes and cherishes it even as the Lord does the church." That's present tense.

Yes, He loved us in the past. Yes, He loves us in the present. Yes, He proved it at the cross. Yes, He is proving it by cherishing us and nourishing us. Christ is the one who feeds our souls. Christ is the bread of life who continues to feed the hungry heart of his child. Christ is the water of life who continues to quench the thirst. He continues to nourish. He continues to cherish. He surrounds us with his love.

The simplest way to translate those two verbs is this way. He feeds us and He warms us. The word cherish is used of a mother bird who gets in the nest and gets all the little birds around and snuggles them. Recently at our house we got a chicken. We were not really very farm oriented. But we got a chicken. Mark came home with a chicken. A little, tiny chicken. And you know what we had to do for that chicken? We had to get a light bulb and stick it in the chicken box and the whole time that chicken was there in that box it stayed next to that light. Now, I don't know whether that chicken is gonna grow up and spend it's entire life thinking mother chickens are light bulbs, thinking it's mother

is General Electric 30 watts or whatever, but I do know that the chicken needed to be warmed. And the other thing we had to do with the chicken we had to but some chicken feed. And feed the chicken.

And so it is with the little birds in the nest of the Lord. There are two things they need. One is food and the other is warmth. And He feeds us from His word and He warms us with his living presence. And that tells us He loves us. How much does He love us? Further, "loved us enough," and I love this, "to loose us," the Greek is not washed really but loosed. "He loosed us from our sins in his own blood." That's how much He loves us. Enough to die for us. Enough to free us from sin. Enough to loose us from its bonds.

I remember something I've told you in years past that when Matt was a little boy I used to say to him, "Do you love your dad?" And he'd say, "Yep." And I'd say, "Well, how much do you love me?" And he'd say, "I love you big much." And I'd say to him, "Well, how much is big much, Matt?" And he'd jump up in my lap and he'd just take his arms and straighten them out and squeeze my neck as tight as he could and he'd say, "That's big much, dad."

And if you could jump up on God's lap and say, "Do you love me?" He'd say, "Yes." And if you said, "How much?" He'd say, "Do you see the hillside out there? The cross in the middle? That's my son. That's how much. And what's He's doing there is loosing you from your sins in His own blood that you might spend eternity in My presence. That's how much I love you."

I'll never forget entering into a hippie camp some years ago and there were a pile of hippies there who were tripped out on drugs. I mean they were really zonked. They were on LSD and heroine and every conceivable thing and I noticed that all over this hippie camp they had crosses in the ground. I don't know that they knew the significance of them so I just noticed these crosses. I spent a whole day there just kind of talking to people. I just was interested in that kind of lifestyle. Some of them were living in old pup tents and refrigerator crates and all kinds of stuff.

And at the end of the day I said to one of them who was sitting around a campfire, I said, "What are all these crosses here?" They were all over the place. And he said, "Well, like, man, this is the sign of love." And I said, "It is? Why?" I said it seems to me like it's the worst torture instrument invented in history. "Oh, no," one guy says. "I know why it's the sign of love. The cross is the sign of love because Jesus died on a cross and said, like Father forgive them and wow, man. That's love."

And I said, "You mean that these represent the cross of Jesus Christ?" And nobody wanted to admit that. So you see the world even stupidly, blindingly going on in the lostness of their sin has to see something in the cross of love. There's more than that. It isn't just that He died. It's that He loosed us from sin in order to enjoy our fellowship forever. He loves us.

And further, Verse 6 takes us into that area of the forever family. "And He made us a kingdom of priests unto God and His father to whom be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Listen. He didn't just save us but He elevated us. We were washed out, useless sinners. And he made us into a kingdom of priests. Present tense. He has given us royalty. He has given us priesthood. We have become the true sons of God. And if the sons of the king then we are heirs to the kingdom. And Paul says we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

You can't love anybody more than that. You can't love anybody more than to say come on up where I am and be a king with me. At the end of Revelation, Chapter 3 Jesus says to the over comer, "I promise that I will give to him to sit with Me in My throne." And that's as high as you could ever get. When we go to Heaven, we'll sit with Jesus in His throne. You say where's His throne? It's right there where the Father's throne is. And we'll reign with Him. Co-regents of eternity.

He loosed us. That's the negative. He made us kinds and priests. We have royalty. We have priestly access to God. That's how much He loves us. It's exciting for me to think about the fact that that love is unending, unalterable, unchanging, unconditional. In Romans, Chapter 8 and Verse 35, "What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long. We are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Beloved, Jesus commits Himself to love His church. Now, that's an exciting reality. That's His part. Second, He not only loves the church, he intercedes for the church. Look at Verse 12 of Revelation 1. He intercedes for the church. This is beautiful. Now John is on the Island of Patmos when he gets the visions that make up the Book of Revelation and here he has this marvelous vision to begin with. And it is a vision of Christ. Verse 12. "And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned I saw seven golden lamp stands and in the midst of the seven lamp stands one like the Son of Man clothed with a garment down to the foot and girded about the breasts with a golden girdle." Now, John hears this voice. And the voice says, "I am Alpha and Omega." Verse 11. "The first and the last." And then John turns and he sees seven golden lamp stands. They represent the church. That's clear from Verse 20. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand and the seven golden lamp stands. The seven stars are the ministers of the seven churches and the seven lamp stands which you saw are the seven churches. The seven churches of Asia minor historically but the sum of it all is a picture of the whole church. Seven being a number representative of total.

So here he looks and he sees what in his vision is a symbol of the church. The church of Jesus Christ. And moving among those lamp stands and they're really oil lamps. Each church having a light in the world. And moving among them and trimming each lamp and making sure each one glows and

making sure each one burns brightly and making sure each one has the proper supply and moving in and out and ministering is one like the Son of Man clothed with a garment down to the foot. And around his middle, around his waist, a very wide golden belt.

Now, first of all I want you to notice that the belt is golden. The costliest, most precious, most glorious metal. And that's because the church is the most precious thing on the earth, the lamp stands are golden. Did you notice that? They are connected to the purity and the beauty and the costliness of Christ himself whose belt is golden. The church is precious. Christ is precious. And of course the reason the church is so precious is because it possesses the very life of Christ and because it was purchased Acts 20:28 with His own blood.

So the church, beloved, is the most precious thing on earth to Jesus Christ. And here we see the church. And moving is this one, the Son of Man, none other than Christ, clothed with a garment. The garment, the word is potarace. It literally means a robe. It was a robe all the way down to the ground. Full length. And around it a belt.

You say, well what is the picture here? Who is this? Well, in the Old Testament sometimes a king would wear a potarace. That's used in the Septuagint in reference to Saul's robes. Saul the king. And sometimes a prophet would wear a long robe. The messenger to David in the Old Testament is - the word potarace appears in the Septuagint in reference to him. But primarily here we don't really see a king. We don't really see a prophet. What we see is what? Priest.

And it is because of the fact in the Old Testament the one who moved among the candlesticks in the temple in the tabernacle was the priest. It was his job to trim the lamps and put the oil in and keep the wick there. The wick literally floated in the oil. And they would just light the wick and the oil would burn through. It was his job to trim the lamp and care for the lamp and move among those lamps in the temple and the tabernacle and so we see Jesus Christ pictured moving in His church. Caring for His church. Ministering to His church in His high priestly ministry.

Christ ministers as our great high priest. What does that mean? All we need to do very briefly is look at the Book of Hebrews to find out. In Hebrews 2:17 listen to this. You don't need to look them up. Just jot them down if you want and listen. In Hebrews 2:17 it says, "Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest." In other words, when Jesus came into the world, He endured everything humanly speaking. He went through all the human things that a man goes through. In all things He was made like his brothers that He might be a faithful and merciful high priest. That he might understand. He is called in Chapter 3 of Hebrews and Verse 1 "the apostle and high priest of our profession whose name is Jesus." In Hebrews 4:14 it says, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession for we do not have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. But He was in all points tempted like as we are yet without

sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Listen. Jesus came into this world, turned His back on the glories of heaven and stepped into the earth with all of the persecution and everything that he endured. And He did it in order that He might understand human kind. He could have come in one day, died, rose again and left. But He didn't. He came and He stated for 33 years. In order that He might experience that which man experiences in order that we might go to Him who is now ascended and find in Him a faithful and understanding, a merciful high priest. He intercedes for His people, for His church.

I'm so glad to know that Christ is right now in heaven interceding for me. Aren't you glad to know that? And when something comes on the record of John MacArthur, Christ's intercession takes care of it. And I'm so glad to know that as the great priest of His church He moves keeping the church trimmed. Keeping the lamp lit. That's His commitment to His church. He will do the divine part of taking care of us.

He did in the promise of the church at Philadelphia, Chapter 3, Verse 10, "Because you kept the word of My patience, I will keep you from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth." In other words He says to the Philadelphia Christians, He says because you followed the blueprint, because you kept the divine plan, I am committed to take care of you and make sure no thing comes upon you as it will upon the world in the time of judgment.

A great promise. So we have this great high priest. Sitting at the right hand of the Father. Interceding for us. And He is unequal in his capacity for sympathy. He understands the dangers and the sorrows and the trials that are a part of human life. He was exposed to all of them.

You know something people? I think we tend to underplay the priestly ministry of Christ. I think we underplay the truth of the Book of Hebrews that says, "He is able to succor those that are tempted, those that are His." We underplay that. And you know in recent years in the church because since Freud came along the world has gone psychologically mad as it were and thought that the only answer to anything is counseling and psychological testing and all of that. We have begun to gradually undermine the priestly work of Jesus Christ in the life of an individual. We undersell it.

No, I'm not against counsel. The Old Testament says there's wisdom in much counsel. But I'll tell you one thing. Jesus Christ the high priest is a sufficient counselor for your problem. Isaiah called Him the wonderful counselor. Don't undersell. Instead of running to this person and that person and this person and that person, run to Him and you'll find sympathy like you never found with anybody else.

Do you realize that Jesus understands the absolute limits of temptation like you can never understand it? Do you know why? Because He never gave in. We are tempted and after a certain point of

temptation we give in. So maybe we never know every temptation run out as far as satan can run it. For some of us it doesn't take much temptation to fall into sin does it? Just sort of a little one. For others of us who have grown in the Lord it takes a little more tough kind of hitting and hitting and hitting at us by satan and then we fall. But Jesus Christ because He never fell, He ran the temptation right out to the gambit and He understands every possible exigency of temptation.

When you're looking for some sympathy, go to Christ. You know He promised to be your sympathetic high priest. You say like in Chapter 12 of Hebrews, well maybe you can't understand my problem. And the writer of Hebrews in Chapter 12, Verse 3 says well, you haven't suffered unto death yet have you? He did. He understands your problem. The Bible says He is touched with the feeling of your infirmity. And that literally says soon path ao. What do you think that is in English? Sympathy. Jesus deliberately exposed Himself to every human experience in order to be sympathetic. To our infirmity. To our weakness. To our proneness to sin. He's not sympathetic with our sin. He is sympathetic with the humanness that makes us fall into sin. See?

We have a sympathetic high priest who understands our weakness to sin and always, always, always, is there to provide a way of what? Escape. _____ Tucker years ago preached in Chicago and a man came forward and said to him, "You can talk like that about how Christ is so dear to you and Christ is so comforting to you and Christ helps you but if your wife was dead as mine is and your little babies were crying for their mother who would never come back, you wouldn't be saying what you're saying."

A few days later _____ Tucker lost his wife in a train wreck. Her body was brought to Chicago to the Salvation Army barracks for her funeral. _____ Tucker stood up after the service, looked down on the casket and said, "The other day when I was here preaching a man came and said that Christ was not sufficient if my wife were dead and my babies were crying for their mother. If that man is here, I tell him that Christ is sufficient. My heart is bleeding. It is crushed. It is broken. But it has a song and Christ put it there. And if that man is here, I say again to him Christ speaks comfort to me today through my tears." And the biographer said the man was there, came down the aisle, knelt beside the casket and surrendered his life to Jesus Christ.

He is sufficient. The sympathetic high priest. Jesus has committed himself to us to love us and to intercede for us.

Thirdly, He is committed to discipline His church. To discipline us. Look at Verse 14. Revelation 1. "His head and His hair were white as wool. As white as snow. And His eyes were like a flame of fire. And his feet like fine bronze as if they burned in a furnace and His voice like the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven ministers or seven stars. And out of His mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword and His face was as the sun shining at noonday." Stop there. What a picture.

His head and His hair were white like wool. As white as snow. That speaks of purity. Purity. Untarnished. Absolutely spotless. Not a thread of impurity on His garment. Not a stain of impurity in His hair. Purity. Eternal purity. And consequently when you have a pure God you have God's desire and God's will that all those who come into contact with him be equally pure.

And so what happens in Verse 14 his eyes are like a flame of fire. That is they are searching; they are penetrating; they do not have anything that is hidden from them. And this is a picture of a pure Christ searching out in His church any impurity that might be there. Penetrating the lives of those people. Seeing every sin as it is and then responding to that in Verse 15 by judgment. His feet are like bronze, red hot in a furnace. And the idea there is that stamping out with the fire of wrath. With feet of judgment.

You say what in the world kind of picture of Jesus is this? Are you sure this is for the church? Listen. God hates the sins of the saints as much as He hates the sins of the unregenerate. Maybe more. Right? Because to whom much is given what? Much is required. And so first you see His pure person. Then you see His searching eye looking for impurity. When He finds that impurity, you see the bronze glowing judgment.

You say that's very scary. No it isn't. To an unbeliever that would be fearful. And to a sinning Christian that would be fearful. But to a Christian walking with the Lord it isn't fearful at all. You know why? Because a Christian who walks with the Lord is just as desirous of purity in the church as Jesus is. Right? Do you want a corrupt church? Would you like to see Grace Church infiltrated with ungodly people who could destroy our testimony?

Listen to the apostle Paul. The apostle Paul says, "This is my great hope. I want to espouse you to Christ as a" what? "Chaste virgin." See? I want to present you to Christ without spot. And Jesus said I want to present you to God without blemish and without spot. Harmless. Blameless. And anyone who loves Christ loves the purity of His church.

You see also in the vision that His voice is like the sound of many waters. I don't know if you ever stood by Niagara Falls or someplace like that and listened but it's thunderous. And this is the idea of authority. When God speaks He speaks with authority. And so the voice of God carries out the judgment of God against the sin that He sees in His church. Out of his mouth a sharp, two-edged sword. This is the Greek word for a huge, broad sword. And it is His word that comes out of His mouth and acts like judgment. The thundering of His word is like a sword of judgment and His face is shining like the noonday sun. He is in judgment glory moving in His church.

Listen. He loves His church. And He intercedes for His church. But He also disciplines His church. For its own good. Just like you discipline your children for their good. And sometimes that sword

comes down heavy. Acts, Chapter 5. Ananias and Saphira fell dead. 1 Corinthians, Chapter 11 some of the Corinthians had died. Jesus moves through His church disciplining. In Matthew, Chapter 18 we have the standard for discipline. If a brother trespasses, tell him his fault. If he doesn't listen, take two or three witnesses. Do it again. If he doesn't listen, tell it to the whole church. And then in Verse20 Jesus says, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I." What? "In the midst of them." And this is in a text about judgment. When two or three of you set about to discipline one of the family who is out of line, be sure of this. I'm there in the midst of you doing it with you.

See, Jesus is a part of that. Purifying His church. He wants His church pure. It was His Holy Spirit who said through Peter judgment must begin where? At the house of God. It was His Holy Spirit that said that. It was Jesus Himself in John 15 who simply said that I am the vine and ye are the branches and that the Father is busy purging the branches. He takes the knife of the word and cuts off the sucker branches in the life of His people. It may be a little painful but, oh, you bear much fruit.

Jesus made a commitment to discipline His church. And sometimes that discipline is ultimate. Like in Ephesus in Chapter2 of Revelation, Verse 5, He says if you don't change I will come and remove your lamp stand. What He meant was I'll come and blow out your light. That will be it for you.

And in Chapter 2, Verse 16 to Pergamos, "Repent or I'll come and fight against them with the sword of My mouth."

Chapter 3, Verse 3, "I will come on thee as a thief and thou shalt not know what hour I will come."

Verse 19 sums it up. 3:19 of Revelation. "As many as I love I rebuke and," what? "chasten."

Hebrews, Chapter 12 says that every son the Lord loves He chastens. And scourges. Why? That we might become righteous, He says in Hebrews 12.

The Lord loves His church and He's committed to love us forever. And the Lord intercedes for His church. As the great high priest sympathetically understanding. The Lord also disciplines His church. And when the church sets about to purify itself, it is doing the thing that Jesus is doing.

Fourth, in this wonderful vision of the Lord Jesus, we see that He comforts His church. You know you could get a little afraid after Verse 14 to 16 there. And John did. Verse 17 he said, "And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead." John just goes _____. Keeled over. Just completely fainted when he saw the majesty of the great high priest. "I fell at His feet as dead."

And then I just love this. Listen to this. "And He touched me with His right hand saying to me, 'Don't be afraid.'" Isn't that good? You needed that after 16. Didn't you? John's laying flat out on the Isle of Patmos shaking in his sandals. He's seeing the Lord of the church and discipline roll. And the

unveiled majesty of the Morning Star. The brilliance of the Son of Righteousness. He collapses like a dead man and then Jesus reaches out and with His right hand He touches him.

We have not a God who is afar off. We have a God who is near. John speaks of himself this way. He says, "I am the one who leaned on His breast at supper." Jesus was touchable. He was accessible. He reached out and He touched John. And it was the touch of comfort. And He said, "Don't be afraid," John. You see I am the first and the last. I am He that lives and was dead and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And have the keys of hell and death. You say well, what does He mean? He means this.

Listen. You're My child. I may discipline you. That discipline may be severe but don't you worry about it. I'm in control of who ultimately lives and ultimately dies. And nobody can ever take that away from Me. I am the sovereign over death. I am the sovereign over hell. And I tell you, John, get up fella. Nothing to worry about. I feel a lot better, Lord. That's good news.

Do you really understand what that means? The Lord may discipline but it's only for a time. Though the Lord disciplines His church, that discipline is only for time. Isn't it? To make His church holy that it might enjoy His blessing.

So the blessed Christ is committed to His church. To love His church. To intercede for His church. To discipline His church. To comfort His church. I am so glad for the parts of the Scripture that are comforting. Aren't you? Oh, death where is thy sting? He comforts His church. When He went away He said, "I will send another Comforter." Just like Me. He's a Comforter, too. _____ And we'll just cover this one and one other.

He rewards His church. He rewards His church. The second and third chapters of Revelation discuss the fact that He rewards His church. For example in Chapter 2, Verse 7, look at it. And the church is characterized here, the true church, by the phrase, "To him that overcomes." That's a phrase John also used in his first epistle, Chapter 5 and Verse 4. The overcomer is the one who believes in Christ. And so he says here, "To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." The first thing is that he says I promise you paradise. I promise you the tree of life. When Adam sinned and God drove man out of the garden, the paradise of God was transplanted to heaven and God says I'm gonna bring you all back to that wonderful place. If you read Revelation 22, you'll read the entire description of that place.

Chapter 2, Verse 11. "He that overcomes shall not be hurt the second death." The second death has reference to spiritual death, Chapter 20 says, so He rewards His church with the tree of life. He rewards His church with eternal life rather than death. Chapter 2, Verse 17. "I will give to eat of the hidden manna," 2:17 says. And He says will give him a white stone and in the stone a new name written which no man knows except he that receives it. And here He says I'll reward the church with

hidden manna.

You say what's that? Well, there was a pot of manna kept in the ark of the covenant as a memorial to the fact that God had fed His people in the wilderness. A Hebrew legend said that when the temple was destroyed Jeremiah or an angel buried the ark in the earth and that when the Messiah came he would dig up the ark and again feed His people. Well, the legend was close when it says I will give him the hidden manna, it means that God has promised to feed His church forever with the presence of Jesus Christ.

And then He says I'll give them a white stone. It really refers to the diamond. And on that diamond carve the name of the individual who receives it. Say what's that? Well, it's just a special little indication that each of us is unique to God. A diamond, like Malachi said, "They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels." And here the Spirit adds, "And they'll each be a diamond and on each will be carved his own name." Rewards for His church.

He'll give us, 2:26 says, "The Morning Star." Verse 28, "I'll give Him the Morning Star." And that's Christ. If you check 22:16 it's Christ himself.

Chapter 3, Verse 5, "I'll give him white raiment." The idea of victory and purity and righteousness and glory all wrapped up in that white raiment.

Chapter 3, Verse 12 says, "I'll make him a pillar in the temple." In those days when somebody was famous and they wanted to honor him they made him a pillar in the temple and named them in honor of that pillar. They put their name right on it. And God says, "In the pillars that hold up eternity, I'll write the name of my people."

And then Verse 21 of Chapter 3, "He will sit with Me in My throne." So, you see God is busy rewarding the church. In the future the Lord Jesus has marvelous rewards for us. In 22:12 He says, "Behold I come quickly and My reward is with Me to give to every man according as his work shall be." So the Lord has promised to reward us. And I've just gone by those so fast.

What a tremendous thing it is to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Christ will reward His people. We praise Him for that. No matter what we do in this world. Even though we fail Him. It says in 1 Corinthians 4, "Every Christian shall have praise from God." Everyone.

Lastly, not only does He love and intercede and discipline and comfort and reward His church, but ultimately He will glorify His church. Chapter 19, Chapter 20, Chapter 21. We're not even gonna look at it. Those final chapters tell us that Christ has planned to glorify the bride and we are His bride. He has a celestial city waiting for us. He has an eternal home waiting for us. Which He has prepared for us. And all of that will become ours when we go to be with Him.

Listen. Jesus is building His church. His way. And this is His commitment to that church. When we as a church are willing to make our commitment to Him to be what He wants us to be, then He will fulfill His commitment to us.

Let us pray together. Our Father thank you tonight for our fellowship. We thank you that we've been able to meet together in this place. We know there will be many things that the adversary would want to use to distract our thoughts from Jesus Christ. But we know You would want us to continue to focus upon Him. And so, Father, out of all that has been said today and all of our thoughts and impressions and emotions and excitement, may we most of all see Jesus Christ. Even as we see the cross in the front of our worship center, may we see Christ high and lifted up. May we see Him as the one who has made a commitment to His church and He will keep that commitment until He comes to take us and reward us and glorify us with Himself. Help us to be faithful. To let Jesus build His church His way. To know that the gates of hell will not be able to stop it and that we will have the promise that His commitment to us will never change. And we'll give You the praise in His wonderful name. Amen.

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