

1. The book of Revelation divides itself into three parts: chapter 1 gives us the introduction and the revelation of Jesus Christ; chapters 2-3 give us the letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor; and chapters 4-22 tell us of the coming battle between the kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God until the end. A number of visions of heaven intersperse the fierce battles.
2. Only two of the seven churches are mentioned elsewhere in the NT: Ephesus (2:1) is mentioned in Acts and Ephesians. And Laodicea (3:14) is mentioned at Col. 2:1 and 4:13. Ancient Laodicea no longer exists but it lay about twelve miles east of Ephesus, which today is called Efes in Turkey. The churches disappeared long ago.
3. At Rom. 11:22 we read: "Consider the goodness and severity of God." God is severe with His children when they wander or fall into sin. He uses His Law and affliction to bring them back and repent. God says at Is. 54:7-8: "For a brief moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer."
4. God says to Israel at Hosea 13:9: "O Israel, you destroy yourself, but in Me is your help." Sinful mankind tends to destroy itself, his environment and other people. The only help is in the Gospel.
5. Vs. 14 describes Jesus, the Speaker. He is God's faithful and true witness. On this thought read Jn. 1:18 and II Cor. 1:20. He revealed the true God and His Word and He carried out all of God's promises. We can rely on Him and His Word. Vs. 14 can mean either: "He is the beginning of God's creation" or "He is the ruler of God's creation." The context calls for declaring Jesus as true God. Therefore the second translation is preferable. Also cf. Jn. 1:3. He made all things. He is very God of very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with God.
6. In vs. 15 Jesus says "I know" and in vs. 17 He says "You do not know." Their true condition is described in vss. 15-16. They have become indifferent to God. They have become lazy like Israel at Mt. Carmel, I Kings 18:21. And so the Lord threatens to vomit them out of His mouth. Why is this so? Vs. 17 says that they think they have no need of God. They claim that they are wealthy, especially spiritually.
7. In vs. 17 Jesus tells them the truth about themselves: "You are wretched (cf. Rom. 7:24), pitiful, poor, blind and naked." Even Christians become blind to their own sins, indifference and arrogance. God uses His Law and affliction to wake them up. Cf. Hebr. 12:5-11. Parents must spank wayward children. It hurts. But it is necessary. Likewise with Christians. Paul thanked God for his spankings. II Cor. 12:9-10. Thank you, Lord, for chastening me.
8. In vs. 18 we have most wonderful Gospel. Read Is. 55:1-3. Jesus offers us the gold of the forgiveness of sins, the white robes of His righteousness (Php. 3:8-9), and the eye-salve of His comfort which restores our spiritual vision. When we believe this, the shame of our sinful nakedness disappears. We are fearful because of our sins, our laziness, our indifference. But when He absolves us of our sins, we need fear no more. He covers our shame with His blood.
9. Vs. 19 tells us what His love causes Him to do for our good. He rebukes and disciplines us. Cf. Hebr. 12:6. What should we do? Repent zealously, meaningfully, truly.
10. Vs. 20 tells us of Jesus' wonderful invitation and hospitality. He does not force Himself on anyone. But He wants to be with us.
11. Vs. 21 gives us a wonderful promise of everlasting life. Each of the seven letters ends such a promise. He is severe but He is also very kind. He wants us with Him in heaven.
12. Therefore, listen to Him, as vs. 22 tells us.

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Theme: AN EXAMPLE OF THE SEVERITY AND THE KINDNESS OF GOD

Introduction: At Ezek. 33:11 the Lord says: "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?" And at Rom. 11:22 Paul speaks of God's severity and kindness. He speaks and acts severely with His children to win them back. But He is also very kind toward them when they repent.

I-He severely rebukes and disciplines His children. Vs. 19

A-He rebukes them for their ignorance. In vs. 17 the Lord says: "You say 'I am wealthy and have grown rich and need nothing' but you do not know that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked." The guilt of unforgiven sin is very bad. But even worse than that is the resultant self-deception which says "I don't need God." That sounds like the self-righteous Pharisee in the temple who said: "God I thank you that I am not like other people." And when a Christian falls into this error it becomes even worse.

B-He rebukes them for their deeds. Vs. 15. The Lord says that He is about to vomit them out of His mouth. That is very strong language. What was their problem? Evidently they were ashamed to stand up for their Christian faith but, on the other hand, did not want to be identified with the world. They wanted to be neither Christian nor pagan. Evidently their deeds showed it. It is time well spent to listen to what the world says about Christians. Sometimes there is truth to what the world says, especially when Christians are half-hearted about their faith and life. Sometimes Christians become mechanical about their Christianity. They act like machines and merely go through motions. Jesus says to such: "Because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of My mouth."

II-He lovingly calls these Christians back. Vss. 18, 19, 20.

A-He tells them to repent zealously. Both Jesus and John, the Baptist, said: "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is here." The first of Luther's ninety-five theses reads: "When our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, said 'Repent ye' He meant that the whole life of the Christian should be one of repentance." Repentance must be like breathing. It never ceases. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I Jn. 1:9.

B-He counsels them. Vs. 18. He gives them very good advice. He tells them to buy from Him gold tried in the fire so that they might be wealthy, white clothing so that they might dress themselves to cause the shame of their nakedness to disappear and eye-salve to anoint their eyes so that they can see. This is figurative language for the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation which Jesus offers to the person who repents of his sin. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. We are unworthy sinners who deserve nothing but punishment now and forever but the Lord takes no pleasure seeing us die in our sins and guilt.

C-He invites Himself to live with us. Vs. 20. We like to have good friends come to our house and eat with us. Jesus wants to come to us and live with us. He forces Himself on no one. In Lk. 24 when the two were on their way to Emmaus Jesus acted as if He was going to go on when they reached their house. That was not insincerity on His part. The point is that He forces Himself on no one. But He does want to come to us and eat with us. He would never say that if He did not mean it. In vs. 14 He called Himself the faithful and true witness of God. He is genuine, the best friend we have.

Conclusion: Christians are always in danger of falling back into sin.

They are like little children who need to be reminded all the time. They are like household pets which need attention all the time. Let us take our text seriously.