

## Message Two

### **The Local Churches as the Testimony of Jesus**

Scripture Reading: Rev. 1:1-2, 9, 11-13, 20; 22:16a

#### **I. The book of Revelation is not only a revelation of Christ Himself but also a revelation concerning Christ in His church and in oneness with His church—1:1-2, 11; 22:16a; Eph. 5:25, 32:**

- A. In Revelation we see Christ with His church and in the church—1:11-13.
- B. As the revelation concerning Christ, the book of Revelation presents the testimony of Jesus—the church—vv. 1, 9, 11; 22:16a:
  - 1. Jesus is the testimony of God, expressing God; God needs an enlargement of His testimony, which is the church—1 Cor. 12:12:
    - a. The apostle John saw Jesus in the midst of the churches—Rev. 1:11-13.
    - b. Christ is the testimony of God, and the church is the testimony of Jesus—John 1:18; 5:31-37; 8:14; Rev. 1:2, 5, 9.
    - c. What God is, is fully expressed in Jesus, and what Christ is must be fully expressed in the church—Eph. 3:21.
  - 2. Today God has a corporate expression—the church—which is the testimony of Jesus, who is the expression of God—Col. 1:15, 18; 2:2; Eph. 3:4, 6:
    - a. God's expression cannot be divided; God is uniquely one, so His expression must also be uniquely one—John 17:22; Eph. 4:3-6.
    - b. Wherever God's expression is—in each locality—it must be uniquely one—1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27; Rev. 1:11.

#### **II. The book of Revelation is a book concerning the churches as the testimony of Jesus—vv. 1-2, 9, 11; 22:16a:**

- A. The testimony of Jesus is not individual Christians—it is the local churches, the church in a practical way—1:2, 9, 11:
  - 1. To show Jesus to those in our locality, there is the need of a local church that testifies who Jesus is; thus, the church in our locality should bear the image, expression, appearance, and virtues of Christ—Col. 1:15; 3:10.
  - 2. Because the local churches are the expression of the all-inclusive Christ, they are the testimony of Jesus—v. 11; Rev. 1:2, 9, 11.
  - 3. As the testimony of Jesus, the church is the testimony that the Lord Jesus lived as a human being not by Himself but by His Father and that in Him Satan had nothing—John 5:17, 19, 30; 6:57a; 14:30.
- B. The Son is glorified in the proper church life so that the Father may be glorified—Eph. 3:21; John 12:23; 13:31-32; 17:1, 22:
  - 1. The church life is the glorification of the Son; for the Son to be glorified there is the need of a practical church life—Eph. 3:21; 1 Tim. 3:15-16.
  - 2. As we practice the genuine oneness, the Son is glorified, and the Father is glorified in the glorification of the Son—John 17:1, 5, 22.
  - 3. We all need to see that, practically speaking, the Lord's prayer to the Father in John 17 is a prayer for the church life.

4. For the Son's glorification in the church life, there is a crucial need of the genuine oneness of all the Son's believers; if there is no oneness among the believers, there is no church life, and if there is no church life, there is no practical way for the Son to be glorified—vv. 1, 21-23; Rom. 15:5-6; 1 Cor. 1:2, 10.

### **III. The central concept of the first three chapters of Revelation is the seven lampstands as the seven local churches to be God's expression—1:11, 20:**

- A. The churches as golden lampstands bear the testimony of Jesus—vv. 2, 9; 20:4:
  1. The testimony of Jesus is the testimony of the Son coming with the Father by the Spirit to live on earth, to die on the cross to clear up the universe, to release the divine life, and to resurrect from the dead to become the life-giving Spirit, who then comes as the Son with the Father compounded with divinity, humanity, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection, including all the divine attributes and human virtues—John 10:38; 1 Cor. 15:45.
  2. Such a compound testimony is the testimony of Jesus, and this testimony has a symbol—the golden lampstand—Rev. 1:12, 20.
- B. As golden lampstands, the local churches are a duplication of Christ as the unique lampstand—vv. 11-12, 20:
  1. In Exodus 25 Christ, the embodiment and expression of God, is typified by the unique lampstand, but in Revelation this lampstand has been duplicated; each lampstand is a reproduction of the lampstand revealed in Exodus 25.
  2. When all the lampstands, or local churches, are added together, they are the multiplication of Christ, the multiplied embodiment and expression of the Triune God to be the testimony of Jesus—Rev. 1:2, 9, 11-12, 20.
- C. The golden lampstands signify the churches as the embodiment and expression of the Triune God shining forth, with the sevenfold intensified Spirit of God as the lamps, to be the testimony of Jesus—v. 20; 4:5:
  1. The local churches as lampstands bear the testimony of Jesus Christ in separate cities, shining locally yet collectively—1:2, 9, 20; 20:4.
  2. Every local church is a golden lampstand, having the sevenfold intensified Spirit of God as the lamps and shining the testimony of Jesus from its locality in this dark age—2:1, 5.
- D. The sign of the lampstands in Revelation 1 indicates that the churches should be identical in essence, appearance, and expression—1:20:
  1. The substance of every local church should be God the Father, and the form, the appearance, of every church should be Christ, the embodiment and expression of the Triune God—2 Pet. 1:4; John 1:1, 14; Col. 2:9.
  2. The churches should not have an appearance other than that of the all-inclusive Christ; if in our church there is a difference that makes us distinct from the other churches, we are wrong—3:10-11.
  3. All the local churches should be the same and bear the same testimony—the testimony of the Son with the Father by the Spirit—John 14:10-11, 17.
  4. "I do expect that the day will come when all the local churches look alike, and I believe that when that day comes, the Lord will return" (*The Church—the Reprint of the Spirit*, p. 30).