

# *REVELATION: Hear & Take Heed*

## **Week #4**

### **“The Loveless & The Loyal”**

*This past weekend we dove into the first two churches mentioned in Revelation. The stark difference between these two churches outlines the difference between hearts and minds devoted to the Lord, and those that are going through the motions. Both of these churches become an easy litmus test for the church today to gage our hearts. Nonetheless, these churches were real places with specific messages to specific circumstances.*

*In most evangelical churches today, there is a battle that often happens on the fronts of either extreme “grace” (liberalism) or legalism. Put in an image for us, we could say that there are two ditches to the one true road outlined in Scripture.*

*The first of the churches we looked at was the local church in Ephesus. Historically, they had all of the components to be a thriving church. They had the right industry to finance church items. They had some of the best teachers. Acts 18 tells us that Priscilla and Aquila went there to help see the start-up of the church. Apollos was there, and he was known as a very polished and eloquent speaker. Eventually Paul came onto the stage and stayed for long periods of time. And lastly, we know that the apostle John spent time teaching there. The disciple whom Jesus loved was a teacher of the church that eventually became loveless.*

*On the other hand, we looked at the church in Smyrna. A heavily persecuted church in that era, they had several early church martyrs. One of which was Polycarp, who was burned at the stake for professing a risen Lord and Savior. This church, unlike Ephesus, was filled with joy to share the gospel, no matter the cost.*

*While these churches were incredibly different, they had the same gospel to take hold of. So, Jesus addresses each church personally based on the situation. But in both cases, He ended with a promise for faithful pursuit of Him. The Ephesians were reminded that Jesus holds each church in His hand, and that He saw their loveless heart. This is so undesirable to God that He called for them to repent or He would snuff them out. For those that would listen, repent, and return to a heart of love for their Savior, they were promised the Paradise of God. Very fitting promise for a church that had lost their first love for God.*

*The church in Smyrna, though going through much difficulty, was reminded by Jesus that death had no hold on Him. He also reminds them that He sees all that was happening. He also reminded them that they had eternal riches to remember. The Lord was reminding this church through His promise to those that remained faithful, that there was a crown in store, and it was a crown of life. Part of this reward is that death would have no hold on them, as it had no hold on Him.*

*Often, we need the reminder that God sees each of our situations, and they all come with a promise of hope to those that are faithful. But if there is a need to repent, then today’s the day...*

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## *Going Further*

*In this Sunday's message we discussed the apathy of people inside the church walls, and how we ought not look far to consider why we live in certain situations around us today.*

*Read Matthew 23:13-36...*

*We all know that truth is required by God, as He is a God of truth and cannot utter a lie (Titus 1:2). The Pharisees were good at repeating truth and quoting truth. What connections are there to the lives of the Ephesian church and the lives of these Pharisees? Why would the Lord use such harsh words in these situations?*

*Read 1 Peter 1:3-16 & James 1:2-4...*

*The church in Smyrna experienced severe persecution over the course of the early church era. Emperor worship was at a climax, and there was no room for the unapproved religion called "The Way"(Acts 9:2), or Christianity. Connections to this region were Irenaeus, Polycarp, and Justin the Martyr. Two of which did pay the high price of life on earth to declare a risen savior. What reminders come from the texts above that might tell us why these people were willing to die for their faith?*

*In what ways do you see these two churches represented across the globe? How about America? What can we consider about these in regard to our own church?*