

Revelation 2:1-7

A Church that Worships the Preeminent Christ

The greatest privilege that you and I can have is to know God. Did you catch that? The greatest privilege that you and I have is to *know God*, not to know about God, but to know God. One of the ways that you and I get to express that we know God is by our coming together each week as the church to worship.

This privilege of worship is a right that has been given to us by God almighty in the sending of the Son who came for our sake and our salvation; this one who became flesh of the Virgin Mary. This great privilege is met with huge responsibility. Most of us, a majority of us it seems, enjoy the rights much more than the responsibilities - we enjoy a fresh cut lawn but don't enjoy the yard work, enjoy bridges and roadways but don't like the taxes, we enjoy sitting in a pew and listening but don't enjoy telling others ourselves, like coming to church don't like going out as the church.

Today from Revelation 2 we have a stern warning from the throne room of heaven, from King Jesus Himself to ensure that Christ is preeminent. This is a message we will do well to understand, do well to heed, less we fall under the judgment of God.

READ TEXT

This AM, I want to show you 4 truths to see if Christ is preeminent in this church.

But before we get started too far we need to ask ourselves what is the church? Notice that I said what is the church, not what is a church. I don't mean to be confusing but there is a difference that we need to get straight. Oxford Baptist Church is a local expression of THE Church. The Church is the community of faith all through the ages that have been born again. The church consists of all people from all times. Some of the Church is in what we would call heaven now. Local expressions of this reality are those who are born again who gather themselves each week for worship. This is why Jesus can come on so strong to one local congregation so harshly and threaten to judge them. The reason He can is because they, locally, are not expressing the reality of Christ's church. So, he can speak of removing their lamp stand but does not say that he removes the light. Lamp stands are not the light, lamp stands receive the light. Does this makes sense?

So how can we tell if Christ is preeminent in this church?

1. Believe that Christ is the Preeminent One (1)

- Look at the way that this point is raised. Sounds redundant doesn't it? If something is preeminent, why should we have to prioritize it? Something that is preeminent is above all others, in other words it stands to be recognized just for what it is. Though it sounds silly, you and I know that the preeminent one, ruler of all the earth, is often times ignored. The shame of it is that he is not only ignored in the world that he created and is sustaining, he is ignored or thought less of in some local expressions of the community he is forming.
- Look at the way that Revelation describes Jesus
- 1:1, 4-8, 12 - 2:1
- After such a description how could you and I not pay close attention to Him.
- Remember, the Church exists because God willed it to exist. We exist for Him, he does not exist for us.
- Oxford Baptist Church belongs to Jesus. Oxford Baptist Church is not my church to experiment on, is not your church to hold onto, Oxford has a preeminent Lord and we will do well to remember this, to prioritize this in our thinking, otherwise He will come with a sharp word for us.
- How do we do this? We begin with a posture of recognition in humility and with bold assurance that we are not in charge, he is in charge. We are constantly praying as we gather, as we strategize and organize, as we discuss plans of implementation of evangelism and outreach, as we seek renewal, our first line of

defense will not be our thinking outside or without submission to Him. We seek to say in all matters, not as I will but as you will!

- Look at the text
- This is the words of the one whose mouth is sharper than any two edged sword. This is the words of the one who spoke and the seas listened to his voice, the one who spoke and the dead were raised back to life. This is the one who is speaking now to his church, walking amongst his church - how could we not listen to him?
- And how can we prove that we are listening to Him?

Number 2 this AM. If Christ's preeminence is celebrated and recognized, we will:

2. Thirst to Know God (2-3, 6)

- Can we definitively know God this side of heaven? By definitively I mean not that we know all things about Him, but can we know Him? Yes! How do you know?
- The Holy Spirit
- And how do you know that the Spirit is leading?
- The Bible tells me so!
- The Church is at its best when its doctrine is deepest.
- The Church deals in not only the temporal realm, the here and now, but unlike any other group in the world, we deal with eternity. Some here today are on the edge of eternity and you don't even know it. There are thousands in our community that are on the edge of eternity - we better get it right. We better take the posture of Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15, to *study to show ourselves approved unto God, as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*
- We deal with truth and our responsibility is to crave doctrine like a wound craves a stitch, like a dying tree needs the scent of water, like an icy road needs salt - we need to be deep in our doctrine so that we will grow in our knowledge of God
- Look at what Jesus says to this church:
- He commends their doctrinal stability
- verse 2 and 3
- Look at verse 6
- They are so doctrinal stable that they are able to see the difference between hating heresy and hating heretics - between hating the sin and hating the sinner.
- *You hate the works of the Nicolaitans*
- Do you have a thirst to know God? How do you express that? The way is by savoring what He says in His word.
- Is the Word of God most formative in your life? That is, of all the shaping instruments in your life - worldview, philosophy, entertainment, does Scripture stand as the way in which you interpret the world?
- Do you seek him by the study of his word? By seeking to apply what you know from his word to your life?

The Word of God is the foundation for our lives. By it we know the savior - the gospel is the power of God unto salvation and how do we know the gospel? Through the Word.

Number 3 This AM. For our church to be a church that Worships the Preeminent Christ, we will:

3. Remember Our Mission (4-5)

- Here is the beautiful thing about doctrine, doctrine is not something cold and cornered.
- There are some that think that the study of God is a boring academic endeavor. Mention theology to them and you would think that they were back in 7th grade right before a language arts test!

- But, what is the purpose of doctrine? The purpose of doctrine is so that your life will be fashioned by the truth, and we all want our lives to be fashioned by the truth • Have you ever heard the phrase cutting teeth? Do you know where it came from?
- In the 16th Century, French Dr. Ambrose Pare began to cut the gums of teething babies because he examined a baby that died and concluded that the reason the child died was due to teething. His practice quickly spread through Europe and the United States and was practiced up until the 20th Century. Today oral surgeons and medical doctors look upon such practices with disdain and thankfulness that we have advanced in modern medicine.
- But in the Church, how far have we advanced if we have all the right beliefs and no practices?
- The problem worthy of severe judgment for the Ephesian Church is that they had lost their first love.
- What does this mean?
- I think that putting it in terms of the text will help us.
- Jesus says in Matthew, *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16)* and Luke adds that Jesus said, *"No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light. Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."* (Luke 8:16-18)
- In other words, we have a responsibility to testify to the world the darkness penetrating light of Jesus!
- When our community looks at Oxford Baptist Church do they see a lighthouse for Jesus? Do they see a people who have been forever changed by amazing grace? Do they see a church that is on fire for Jesus and ready to reach our community for Christ? Does the community see that we care for them, or do we care more about our own comforts than the eternal destiny of souls? Do we care more about what they think of us or what they think of Jesus?
- The only way that we can remember our mission is to remember our Lord, to know Scripture, to let Him be preeminent in our church
- Here is the truth. If we cared more about Jesus than our traditions, Jesus than our comfort, then we will reach people. If we remember our first love, then the love of Christ will control us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. We will serve as Christ ambassadors, as if God making his appeal through us. We will implore them on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 20)
- But the truth is that most churches care more about maintaining than being on mission. It seemed to be true for the Ephesians. I pray it will not be true of Oxford.

But, that is the King's business to decide. And if he decides that we have lost our love for Him and expressing that love by fulfilling his command to love God and love neighbor, then he has a stern warning - I will remove your lamp stand. He says in effect, I will remove your status as a church.

If God writes the glory has departed on a people of His then we might as well close shop anyway. What did Paul say, if I have not love I am a noisy going and a clanging symbol.

A church may go through this period of redirection, of decline before life. I look at what God is doing in our church and I am not discouraged, I am encouraged because of a text like this, because I am confident that He is positioning us for utmost effectiveness to Him. But we have to respond to Him.

Fourthly and Finally this AM:

4. Cling Tightly to Jesus (7)

- This whole text shows the way that God works - with patience and with kindness.

- Instead of coming to the church and demanding the lampstand he gives them space to repent.
- He tells them to repent and peruse. Repent and let go. If we are to cling to Jesus there are some things that we will have to let go.
- What are the sacred cows at Oxford?
- A particular class? A program? Worship time? Worship style? What are the nonessentials that we are clinging so tightly to that we have confused with clinging tightly to Jesus?
- Listen, paradise awaits those that don't confuse the two.
- How do we know? The answer is in the text:
- Is this behavior motivated by a selfless love for Jesus and others, or am I more motivated by a love of self?
- It may be hard, but not if you turn your eyes upon Jesus and look full in his wonderful face. Eternity with him awaits us. I don't want to see him when he gives an assessment of my ministry with you and hear him say, Andy you didn't lead those people to love me, you didn't lead them to love others.

If we are going to be a church that worships Jesus the preeminent one then we will be on mission for God. The question is not what we can't do, the question is what will we do to tell the world that Jesus saves?

If you are here today and don't know Jesus. I want to tell you that he will judge you on the side eternity and will say to you depart from me I never knew you. But today is the day of salvation, don't delay, trust Him today.