

# The Churches of Revelation

by Scott Hynds

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance, teaching and preaching Christ, and interceding for those in error, warning against the enemy's ploy to remove Christ from the center of the church.*

**Duration:** 39:59

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 5:42, Revelation 2:5-7, Revelation 2:15

**Topics:** "Christ Centered"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses the analogy of a soldier in full battle gear to illustrate the power and strength that the presence of God brings to the Israelites. The Ark of God symbolizes this power, glory, and the Word of God. However, when the Ark is taken away by the enemy, the Israelites are left naked and weak. The speaker emphasizes the importance of Christ's presence in the assembly and the preaching of the cross, warning against the enemy's scheme to remove Christ from the midst. The sermon references 1 Samuel 4:11, where the capture of the Ark leads to the cry of 'Ichabod,' meaning the glory of God has departed.

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## Transcript

Turn with me to Revelation chapter 2, Revelation chapter 2, and we are going to read from 5 to 7. This is our third week on the church at Ephesus, our third and our last week on this church. We have been looking at the churches of Revelation as a series. Trusting God to speak to us, and I do believe that this message this morning is indeed a prophetic message from a prophetic book.

And the scripture reads, Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen, repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your candlestick from its place unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To him who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. The Lord conveys here to the church at Ephesus in verse 5, that if there is no repentance in the midst of the church, in the midst of the assembly, then the candlestick will be removed. This is a serious warning.

Before I was saved, I loved to play cards. I would gamble. And when I would play cards a lot, I would often bluff.

And a lot of the times I would be caught out. When we look at this warning from the Lord, there is no bluff. Jesus never bluffs.

God never bluffs when He warns His people. Firstly, we must know that this morning, deep in our hearts, that when the Lord issues any type of warning, He will follow it through if God's people do not adhere to what He says. And so the testimony, as it were, of that fellowship will be terminated, will be snuffed out if they do not obey the Lord's command.

Some would say that that would also mean the removal of the minister in the house, or it would speak of a famine when it comes to the Word of God. And certainly I could say today that there are assemblies in the world that have a famine of the Word. There is no doubt about that.

When I think of what the Lord is speaking about here, my mind is drawn to 1 Samuel. 1 Samuel chapter 4, when the ark of God is removed, when the ark of God is taken from the Israelites. And in 1 Samuel 4, 21 and 22, we read about a woman who in fact was the daughter-in-law of the chief priest, the high priest.

And the scripture reads, and she named the child Ichabod. She was pregnant, she gave birth, she called her child Ichabod, saying, the glory is departed from Israel, because the ark of God was taken. And because of her father-in-law and her husband, and she said, the glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken.

Her husband was slain in battle, and her father-in-law died. And she says here, the glory of God has left. The glory of God has departed, because the ark was captured, taken by the Philistines.

The glory of God is departed. That word departed contains the principle idea of stark exposure, or to make naked. Once the ark was removed, once the ark was taken, Israel was naked.

Naked. I think of a soldier. A soldier who is wearing his uniform.

His uniform causes him to blend in with the environment. He wears a helmet, a helmet to protect himself, obviously, protect his head. He wears a bulletproof jacket.

He has webbing around his waist that contains, let's say, a water bottle, or rations, or some ammo. Then he has some hand grenades, some weapons, some heavy weapons, a machine gun. And when you look at this soldier, you could say that he is a formidable foe.

He is armed to the teeth. But let's say that you were to take everything from that soldier. Let's say you were to take away his helmet, his bulletproof jacket, his webbing, his water, his rations.

Let's say you were to take away his ammunition. You were to take away his hand grenades. You were to take away his machine gun.

You were to take away his uniform. And there, that soldier is naked. There, that soldier is stripped down and stripped bare.

A wimp. A wimp. You can imagine the shock, the horror, the dread.

When he had all the kit, when he had all the things that he needed, he was a formidable foe. But once that was gone, once that was stripped away, naked, bare, weak. And that is a picture of what happened.

The ark of God spoke of power. The ark of God spoke of glory. The ark of God spoke of presence.

The ark of God spoke of the Word of God. And it was in the midst of the people. They were a formidable foe, the Israelites.

They had reputation. But it was taken and they were stripped bare. They were naked.

They were exposed. You see, when the glory of God departs, it's time to vacate the premises. It really is.

And like the ark, His glory, God's glory, God's presence, God's Word are intertwined. Because as we know this morning, the ark is a type of Christ. A type of Christ contained even inside me.

We have the commandments contained inside that ark. And God would come down. His presence would come down.

He would speak to His servant, Moses, above the ark. The presence, the glory of God. It was amazing.

His presence, His Word intertwined. And can I say this morning, church, if there is no Word, there is no presence. If there is no preaching of God's holy Word, there cannot be any presence.

And could it be that even assemblies today in this world have distorted the Scriptures or placed the Bible to the side for something else? At the end of the meeting, they come together and say, wasn't it a wonderful presence in the house? But it's not God's presence. Because if God's Word is not in the midst, there cannot be any presence. There cannot be any glory.

Christ is the heart of the church this morning. And if Christ is not the center, if Christ is not the middle, then we will resemble, could I say this morning, the ten man from the Wizard of Oz. Do you remember the ten man? Do you remember as we saw him? If I only had a heart.

The ten man didn't have any heart. The ten man moved. The ten man functioned.

The ten man sang. The ten man walked the yellow brick road, but he had no heart. And alas, today there are assemblies in churches that have no heart, and they function, and they move, and they sing.

But there is no Bible in the midst. There is no Christ-centered preaching in the midst. The glory of God has departed.

The candlestick has been removed. The testimony has been terminated. There is a famine of the Word in the midst.

You see, in Acts 5 and verse 42, it tells us something about the apostles and their ministry. And the Scripture reads, And daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. They were driven, they were compelled to teach and preach Christ.

That's what it was about for them. Whether that was in the temple, whether that was in the religious institution, or whether that was in a house, a wee house, small house, big house, in-between house, all that they ever did was teach and preach Christ. Because Christ is the heart of the church.

He is the heart of the church. They ceased not. They never stopped teaching and preaching Christ.

You see, teaching and preaching Christ is paramount in maintaining light. It's paramount in maintaining a burning fire. It truly is.

And we're on to this church, and we're on to any church that stops teaching and preaching Christ. You see, once you will cease, you will de-cease. These apostles never ceased.

They never stopped teaching and preaching Christ. And once you cease, you de-cease. Once you cease, once you stop, you become dead.

In assembly, a fellowship becomes dead. You see, once you stop, you no longer are part of the living body of Christ, but a detached corpse. And that's the truth.

That's all that you are. If the candlestick is removed, then you are dead. If the candlestick is removed, then the glory of God has departed.

Then the light has been snuffed out. Useless. Useless.

Oh, friends, this morning we need His Word. Friends, this morning we need His glory. We need His glory in the midst.

We need the gospel in the midst of this church. Christ always has to be in the midst of this fellowship. And if we can leave any sort of legacy, let it be a legacy, like that scripture I just read out, that we teach and that we preach Christ, whether here or the next building that we find ourselves in, or the next field that we find ourselves in, or the next tree that we find ourselves under, that we will maintain a testimony that we teach and preach the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's it. You see, can I say this this morning? In 1 Samuel chapter 4 again, the Israelites bring out the ark. There's commotion.

And the Philistines, the enemy, hears and ascertains what's taking place. And in 1 Samuel 4 and verse 7, the scripture reads, And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God has come into the camp. You see, they were afraid because the Word of God was in the midst.

They were afraid because the power of God, the glory of God, the presence of God was in the midst of the camp. And can I say categorically this morning that hell fears a Christ-centered church. And it doesn't matter if that church is 10 or 10,000.

If it's Christ-centered, hell trembles. And that's the truth this morning. When the Word of God is in the midst, we are at our strongest church.

The strength of Israel was never in the size of its army, but in the size of Jehovah, in the size of the God that they worshipped and that they adored. Their strength was in the Lord. Their strength was in the Lord this morning.

I think of archaeologists, or I think of scientists that cut open fossils. And they say that these fossils are 10 billion or whatever number, crazy number, years old. And they cut open and there's something in the midst.

There's some sort of life form in the midst. Some sort of plant or whatever. You know, church, it's my passion.

I don't know where God will take this church. I really don't know. And if God carries for another 100 years, this church could be going, established for 100 years.

But it's my prayer that in years to come, that if anyone was to cut into the center, that all that they would see is Christ. Christ, Christ, Christ in the midst of this fellowship. You see, a church is strong not because of how many persons are in the midst, but rather the person who's in the midst, the Lord Jesus.

You see, here's the thing. In 1 Samuel 4 and 11, the reason why the daughter-in-law of the priest cried out Ichabod was because the ark was captured. And in 1 Samuel 4 and 11 it says, and the ark of God was taken.

The ark of God was taken. That which was most priceless was taken, was captured, was removed from Israel. And friends, this morning, the greatest ploy, the greatest scheme of the enemy is to remove Christ.

Is to remove Christ from the assembly. Is to remove the preaching of the cross. Is to remove him from the midst.

That's the greatest ploy and scheme of the devil. I think of great companies, mega companies who have great budgets to spend on PR or technology, different departments. Depending on what that company is, they will pour millions into this department.

Everyone else gets a meager pouring into, could I say. But there's one department that gets a lot. And could I say this morning, if Satan was disreputing this over here and this over there, most of his concentration and his forces are towards removing the Word of God, removing Christ from the center of the church.

If he can do that, he will hinder what's in the midst. I think of the capturing of colors, colors that army regiments have. And sometimes those colors which are symbolic of victory and courage and battles that the regiment has fought.

And if those colors are captured by the enemy, there is great disgrace, great reproach upon that regiment because they've lost the colors. And the Israelites lost the ark and brought a reproach upon themselves. And anyone that loses the witness, any fellowship, any assembly including this, that loses the light, there is nothing but disgrace in our midst church.

There truly is nothing but disgrace. And Satan has always been scheming to remove Christ. If Christ is not the center, if Christ is not the heart of the church, then indeed, he is well, extremely pleased.

The Israelites were naked. The glory of God had departed. They were naked.

As I was putting this message together, I believe the Holy Ghost put this impression in my mind. Some might think that wasn't God, but I tell you, it was. And it was this.

You might smile or laugh at this. It was a nudist camp or a nudist beach. And here's the truth.

If you find your way, which I hope not, to a nudist camp or a nudist beach, for the most part, let's say, everybody is naked. And here's the thing. They couldn't care less if they're naked or not.

In fact, they revel in being naked. And they will embarrass anybody that's wearing clothes. And that is the truth.

And the thing about those individuals being naked, they can still do what fully clothed people can do, even though they're naked. And here's the truth in this. There are many assemblies that are naked before God, and they enjoy and revel in their nakedness.

And they're still doing what they've always done, but the glory of God has departed. The witness is out, and Christ's heart is stirred because of that. Once they've been brightly, once the glory of God was in the midst, but along the way, the enemy stole the Word.

Along the way, the fowls of the air came along and stole the seed. Along the way, the cross was removed, and they're naked, and they're going about in their nakedness, in their droves, in their content, and they're happy. And those that stand for the Word of God in these days, those that stand for the Word of God in tomorrow's days, will be lambasted.

Why can't you be naked like us? Why can't you do as we do? But brothers and sisters, this morning, in this hour, in this age of apostasy, we must do all to stand upon Christ and preach the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus. Hallelujah! Glory to God, I feel that there's an authority in this message this morning from heaven. I truly do praise God.

In verse 6 in Revelation chapter 2, the Scripture says the Ephesians hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, and the Lord hated their deeds as well. But here's a wonderful thing, an interesting thing here. The church, the Ephesians, and the Lord hated the deeds of the people and not the people themselves.

Amen? And the thing is this, many have erred, even today. Many even teach and preach erroneous doctrines. And we ought to abhor, abhor those doctrines, and despise those doctrines.

But brothers and sisters, we need to intercede for those people. We need to pray for those, those preachers or those teachers that their hearts would waken up, that their hearts would be turned from error to truth. Despise their deeds, but not the people, friends.

But as Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost, and some of them are lost, my heart thinks of not to state that he was lost, but the Holy Ghost, I believe, pressing upon my heart now was Apollos. I'm not saying that the man was lost serving Satan, but I do know this, he had to be pulled to the side and shown the truth. He had to be pulled to the side, and he was instructed about the Lord Jesus.

And could it be this morning that you or I might find ourselves in somebody's life that has prominence, I don't know. And God will use us to show them the truth. And that indeed, that they might be elevated and raised up to be great orators, as Apollos was in the church.

We abhor, we detest the deeds. You see, the Nicolaitans, I'm not going to go into this too much, but they were a cult or a sect. And above all things, they taught impure practices and impure doctrines.

They were professors of Christianity. They were in the church. And friends, as I said just a minute ago, even those that are in the church that we might know and might even point the finger, I believe this morning that we should rise up and pray and intercede for those individuals that the very minds that they have will become illuminated by the Holy Scripture.

You see, in 2 Corinthians 4, 5, Paul says, For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. You see, at that particular time, as it is today, there were individuals preaching their own brand of Christianity. They were preaching themselves.

And Paul never did that. Paul preached Christ. They preached themselves, but Paul preached Christ.

And these individuals, as is today, they decide to go out for themselves. They make a name for themselves. I think of, let's say, an individual that works for a big company and there's the name over the door and they make money for the name over the door.

They make money for the boss. They work long hours. They have a particular skill set and great wisdom and knowledge to accumulate money for the name over the door.

And one day, they think to themselves, why should I be making money for him when I can branch out on my own? And they do. They give in their notice and they leave that company and they branch out on their own and they put their own name across the door. Now, in many ways, you know, you will admire an individual for doing that in the business world.

No doubt about that. But when it comes to the spiritual context of what I am saying here, that there are individuals that are not content with serving Him. They are not content with following the Master.

They leave to make a name for themselves. They leave to put their own name across, as it were, the door. And they want to be the spectacle.

And they want to be the focal point. And I think of Paul and Barnabas in Acts chapter 14, in the midst of the heathen. And they believe that these two are Mercury and Jupiter.

And the priest decides he is going to make sacrifices. And these two men of God, these two apostles, because the Scripture says they are apostles, even Barnabas, they rent their clothes. They rent their clothes and they convey it to the people.

We are just men like you. Don't you dare attribute that to us. Because our hearts are weak.

Our hearts are like mere dust. Don't you dare. And so many are elevated today.

So many are exalted. So many are worshipped and adored by the masses. Their names are written across the door of the church.

And friends, that's a dangerous place. A truly dangerous place to be in. And it's a place that God's people, that God's prophets, that God's preachers can easily find themselves in at times.

And there needs to be a constant spirit of contrition and humility in the midst. It's all about Christ. Hallelujah.

It's all about Him. He is the One that gives the power. He is the One that delegates the power.

He is the One that gives the anointing. The anointing of God comes from on high. It doesn't come from the heart of man.

It comes from God Almighty who gives gifts to men. Amen. Hallelujah.

It's Christ's name that's written across this church. It's Christ that's in the midst of this church and below this church and around this church. Hallelujah.

It has to be Christ. Always. Always.

Truly. Can I say to sort of get in with what I'm saying? Let's picture in our mind's eye Golgotha, Calvary. And on Calvary's hill we have three crosses.

Jesus Christ, Son of God, Messiah is in the midst. He is in the middle. He is the center.

He is the heart of Golgotha. And to the left of the Lord Jesus there's another cross with a man on it. And to the right of the Lord Jesus there's a cross with another man on it.

And here's the fear, church, this morning. And here's where many have departed. I can stand in the midst, could I say, of Golgotha and my vision is centered upon the Lord.

But let's say for whatever reason I decide to remove my vision. I might sidestep to the left or I might sidestep to the right and yes, I'm getting a vision. Something similar to the other vision.

There's still a cross there. And there's still a man upon the cross. But it's not the Son of God.

And alas, assemblies have departed to the left and departed to the right. And they have lost the vision. And they still see a cross.

And they still see a man upon the cross. But they do not teach and preach Christ. It's another gospel that they convey.

And it's God's heart that they would return to the focal point. That they would return to the center. That they would return to the middle.

And that Jesus Christ, Lord of Lords and King of Kings, the Savior and the Redeemer would be in the midst. And that's the truth. Scripture says in verse 7, He that has an ear, let him hear.

And I believe that this is the Spirit certainly speaking this morning, speaking through this message that this is the voice of the Spirit to us as a church and to those that would listen. He that has an ear, let him hear. And we don't want to emulate the life of Vincent Van Gogh who mutilated his ear.

And in a spiritual way, fellowships have mutilated their ear. They've cut it off and they can't hear the Spirit. They are disabled because they've cut off their ear.

And we can never in any which way emulate the life of Vincent Van Gogh or the life of a deeply troubled man. In fact, on the contrary, we should be like Spock at a Star Trek. These big ears to hear what the Spirit has to say.

Hallelujah. Ears like bats that it's easy for us to hear the Spirit. To hear the voice of the Spirit.

Every single one of us, including me. Hallelujah. You know, my ear, as I've shared with a few of you this morning, is deaf.

And all I can hear constantly, which I do have, is a ringing in my ear, the tinnitus. But because, I believe, wax has clogged itself around my ear, my left ear is deafened. I can't really hear.

And you know something, that's probably due to negligence. My own fault, really, that I can't hear out of my left ear. Firstly, when I was serving in the army, I didn't use, probably, when I should have, the ear protection.

And I've neglected my ear. I have to take responsibility, accept responsibility for that. And unfortunately, at times, churches neglect their hearing.

They become negligent when it comes to hearing and hearing the Spirit of God. You see, the Scripture says, He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches. The Spirit of God is not some power this morning, or some mere energy, or some thing, if you know where I'm going.

The Scripture says, He speaks, and only persons speak. He's a person, the person of the Holy Ghost this morning. And His voice, and His speech, is needed in any assembly and must resonate through this assembly this morning.

His voice, and His voice alone. Now, I want to go somewhere here. Peter Dixon.

Put your hand up if you know who Peter Dixon is. Now, that's good. Because no one knows that name.

But I'll tell you something, you'll know his voice. Because, you see, Peter Dixon is a voice over actor. And he's a very distinct, recognizable voice, especially when it comes to TV programs, and maybe advertisements.

I think of the X Factor. That's the guy's voice in the X Factor. Now, here's the thing.

You never see him, you only hear his voice. You never see Peter Dixon. He's somewhere else, hidden from the camera, but you can hear his voice.

And any time that man's voice is used on a TV program or an advert, you immediately recognize that voice and think to yourself, that's your man. That's your man. That's a wee bit like the Holy Ghost.

We may not see him, friends, this morning, but he has a distinctive, unique, dynamic voice. Glory to God. And it's of the utmost importance that we always recognize that wonderful, powerful voice of the Spirit.

We may not see him, but we want his voice. Glory to God in the highest. It's his voice that churches need.

It's his voice that we need as Christians that follow the Lord Jesus Christ, that we can perceive and understand straight away. That's the voice of God. That's the voice of the Holy Ghost.

Hallelujah. In Revelation, in our reading, the Lord goes on to say, to him or she that overcomes, to him or she that conquers. There is much for the Christian to truly overcome this morning.

There is much for the Christian to conquer in this life, in this walk. Certainly, we battle with temptation and trial. And it's almost, for some, maybe even a daily occurrence in their lives.

Above all, false doctrine, the deeds of the Nicolaitans, and moral practices and doctrines that are in the church and we must overcome, we must conquer. And true saving faith is resolute. True saving faith is tenacious.

When it comes to any obstacle, it will finish. And praise God this morning to the conqueror. There is a generous gift.

And the Lord says that that person that conquers, that man, that woman, that young person, will get the eight of the tree of life. Hallelujah. The tree of life.

You see, the rabbis believed, metaphorically, that the tree of life was the immortality of the soul. It's the final state of blessedness. That's what it speaks of.

And the tree itself is in the midst of the paradise of God. The tree is in the midst of heaven. Hallelujah.

Last week, I talked about the fire in the midst of the enemy's house. Peter found himself in Caiaphas' palace and there was a fire in the midst of it. A fire in the midst of the enemy's house.

But I thank God this morning that there's a tree in the midst of God's house. Amen. There's a tree of life for us, glory to God, in the highest.

And some would even say this morning that the tree of life alludes to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, I want to tell you something. There is no doubt in my mind that He is in the midst of heaven.

Hallelujah. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is the Lamb of God.

He is the Ancient of Days. And He is the One that brings light in heaven and light to the earth and light in the men's hearts. Glory to God in the highest.

He is the Son of God and He that has the Son has life this morning. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Glory to God. Glory to God. There is no doubt He is in the midst of heaven.

And He is the Giver of life. The Giver of life. When I think of trees this morning, we have enjoyed the fruit of trees.

And we will enjoy, friends, this morning the fruit of trees. But I tell you something for the overcomer. I tell you something for the blood-brought child of God.

There is someone in the midst of heaven and we will taste and we will see for all eternity that He is bliss and He is pleasure and He is joy and speakable. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah to God. Praise His name this morning. Hallelujah.

Isn't He good? Glory to God. Praise His name. Praise His name.

Friends, we want to be clothed only in Him. Glory to God that that will be our legacy. That we teach and that we preach Christ.

Hallelujah. That is our heart to be faithful to the doctrines of Christ. To adhere to all the commands that we have in Holy Scripture pertaining to doctrine and instruction.

Praise the Lord. We want fostered and cultivated in the midst just the glory, the presence of God, the Word of God always in the midst. And if we do, if we retain truly this morning these thoughts and these desires, then if God be for us who can be against us.

Hallelujah. If God be for us this morning. Hallelujah.

Praise God. We bless the Lord. Father, we thank You this morning for this message.

God, it is a prophetic message. It is a stirring message. And Lord, God, Lord, You are dismayed, could I say, because, God, of different assemblies that have departed.

God, of different assemblies, God, that have deviated from the Word of God. And, God, accumulated gimmicks and accumulated, God, programs and ways of men. And, Lord, You are dismayed, God.

And, Father, God, could I say this morning, God, that Lord, that we are not prone to anything. We are not prone to departing. We are not prone to falling away.

But, Lord, God, we pray that You would keep us in this hour. That You would keep us in this dark hour. And that, God, as we continue to retain and stand upon the principles and doctrines of Christ and preach Christ and Christ crucified, for I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

And, God, I pray that You would keep us from the hour of temptation. Keep us from the hour, O God, of apostasy and deception. Lord, keep this little band of people.

Keep us together. Keep us of one accord and sound mind. Keep us, Lord God, hungry for the Word of God.

Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Lord, keep us and keep us from falling, we pray. Seal everything to our hearts in Jesus' mighty name.

Amen. And amen.

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