



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

1, 2 Peter, Jude Sermon Series

Supports Session 12: Be Alert

Sermon Title: “An Alert Church” (Revelation 2:1-7)

Connection to Session 12

Peter and Jude warned their audiences of the importance of being alert to false teachers. Jesus, in the book of Revelation, encouraged the church at Ephesus in their ministry as well as warned them of false teachings.

Introduction/Opening

It may be wise for some of us to confess that we are weather watchers. Yes, we tend to look at the app on our phone to see if the chance of rain has gone up or down. We are truly in trouble when we know storms are coming or we are officially under a weather alert. The alert can put us on edge, and we want to make sure everyone else in the house is fully aware and ready to respond in a moment. Then, reality arrives. The storm of the century yields a half inch of needed rain. Where we may not need to be so alert to pending so-called storms, we do need to be alert as a church. Jesus clearly articulated things we need to be on the alert about to the church at Ephesus.

Outline

1. Be alert to Christ’s presence (vv. 1-2)

- a. It is always amazing how we respond when we know that someone is observing us. We sit a little taller in our chair when the boss is around. We try a little harder when we know the band director or coach is watching. We as the church need to understand that Jesus is watching and fully aware of our actions.
- b. We can learn at least two truths from this passage in which Jesus stated, “I know your works, your labor, and your endurance” (Rev. 2:2).
 - i. The first thing to focus on is the word “know.” This word does not mean a working knowledge of something or someone. For example, many of us know our times tables and have a working knowledge of multiplication. Instead, this word means to be fully aware of something or someone. For example, we know our spouse or children extremely well. Based on this truth, we can learn that Jesus is fully aware of what His church is doing or not doing.
 - ii. Second, Jesus is also aware of the struggle the church faced. The word “endure” means to stand up under extreme pressure. The church at Ephesus was facing persecution, but they were not alone. Jesus was fully aware and sought to minister to them. This was true of Jesus two thousand years ago and it is true of Him today.

2. Be alert to false teachers (v. 2)

- a. The church at Ephesus was aware of the presence of Jesus, and they were also aware of false teaching among those who called themselves apostles. We once again need to look at several things to understand the actions of the church.
 - i. First, we see that some called themselves apostles. Jesus, however, classified them as liars. Just because someone gives themselves a title does not mean that they are called by God or set apart for His service. If someone is using the name of Jesus but not the words of Jesus, He is not a fan.
 - ii. Second, we see that the church “tested” (v. 2) these teachers. The word “tested” is a verb, so it shows action being taken on the part of the church. The word itself means to prove authenticity. How do we know if an orange is truly an orange? We look under the peel to see what is on the inside. How do we know if a self-appointed teacher of God’s word is a false teacher or not? We begin to look inside the character of this person and not just the words of the person. The church of Ephesus was alert to the fact that not everyone with a title is truly a follower of Jesus.

3. Be alert to needed changes (vv. 4-6)

- a. If we start out on a journey only to discover that we have gone in the wrong direction, wisdom will say we should turn around. The word “repent” means to turn around, to go a different direction, and to have a change of mind and heart. Yes, the church at Ephesus was standing on the truth of God’s Word, and they were not tolerating those who did not stand on said truth. But they had “abandoned the love” (v. 4) they had at first. The word “abandoned” shows a willful act. They had no one to blame but themselves.
- b. Therefore, Jesus called them to repentance. He called them to stop going in the wrong direction, turn around, and do the works they did at first. When a church is first formed, the people are typically excited to share the gospel and invite others to be a part of the family. As the church matures, it becomes easy to become complacent and not be about the Great Commission. Yet, Jesus in His gracious nature, invited the church at Ephesus to return, and He invites churches today to return to Him as well.

4. Be alert to Christ’s return (v. 7)

- a. When God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden after their sin, He placed an angel to guard the tree of life so they would not eat of it and live forever in their sinful state (Gen. 3:22-24). Part of the dynamic of being created in the image of God is that we are created to live forever. Everyone is going to live forever. The question is, where are we going to live?
- b. God did not want Adam and Eve to live apart from Him, thus He guarded the tree of life. God wants us to live with Him throughout eternity. Therefore, He provided the way for us and that is found only through a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- c. If we were to study all seven letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation (Rev. 2–3), we would see over and over that Jesus warned the churches to be alert to His return. We do not know the time, but we do know that He is coming back. Thus, we are to be on alert at all times.

Conclusion

It would be wise for us to ask ourselves what we should do with a message like this. We can find at least two points of application. For those who are learning about Jesus, but have not started a relationship with Him yet, can we as a church encourage you that He is coming back? The call is to start a relationship with Him today so that you too can experience the tree of life in glory. For the church, our call is to reflect upon our actions. Let us stand strong in our convictions and repent where needed.

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