

Preacher's Pen points

State of the Union



Wednesday night President Bush delivered before Congress and the nation his State of the Union address. Presumably its goal was to review the accomplishments of the nation and to offer a vision for the future. Every church would do well to think about its “state of the union” spiritually. Like our United States, all of us are joined together to further the cause of the kingdom of God. We could well ask ourselves, “What have we accomplished in the past year; and what is our vision for the future?”

Jesus’ “State of the Union”

In Revelation 2-3 Jesus gave His state of the union address to the seven churches of Asia. Following a predictable pattern, He spoke with each of them about how they were doing, commending them for their accomplishments and admonishing them to correct their faults. We all could profit by being reminded of what Jesus said in this address to the churches.

What Jesus Found Praiseworthy in the Churches

Jesus praised the church at Ephesus for their perseverance in working for Him and for their opposition to evil men who pretended to be apostles. He acknowledged the steadfastness of the church at Smyrna in the face of persecution and the faithfulness of the church at Pergamum in a threatening spiritual environment. He noted that the church at Thyatira had increased its efforts for His name and that the church in Philadelphia had kept His word. How these congregations must have been thrilled to know that the Lord was pleased with them in these areas!

What Jesus Found Not Commendable in the Churches

However, Jesus made it clear that all was not well with the state of the union. The church at Ephesus had left its “first love”. Both the church at Pergamum and Thyatira had allowed false teachers to go unchallenged. Sadly, the church at Sardis had gained a reputation for spiritual life, only to be informed by the Lord that they were spiritually dead, except for a few faithful members. The church at Laodicea had become so lukewarm in their attitude of self-sufficiency that Jesus could not find a good word to say about them, only that they were like tepid water, undesirable for consumption.

What Would Jesus Say to Us?

Perhaps at times we might wish that the Lord would give a current State of the Union, telling us what we are doing well and where we might improve; but has chosen not to do so. Instead He expects us to “hear what the Spirit says to the churches” and learn from it. Let’s ask ourselves, “What would the Lord say about Perry Heights? Are we increasing in our work for the Lord? Dependent upon Him? Willing to suffer for His name? Vocal against error? Willing to stand firm for truth when times are difficult?

Taking a Person Survey

However we answer those questions about the congregation, they finally must be answered personally. Each of us either helps the church become what pleases the Lord or we weaken it by a lack of commitment and faithfulness. So, how would you describe your part in “the state of the union”?—Johnny Felker (www.truthchasers.com)