

What Jesus Might Hold Against You

Jesus said, "I have this against you, you have left your first love ... I have a few things against you, because you have there (in your church) some people who hold the teaching of Balaam who taught Balak to throw a stumbling block before the Children of Israel, to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality ... I have this against you, you tolerate your woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. She teaches and seduces My servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols ... I know your works, you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot but because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Revelation 2:4, 14 & 20; 3:15).

There are some Christians who believe all our sins are under the blood of Jesus, therefore He only sees the covering of His blood and cannot see the sin. That belief is wrong. These above verses prove Jesus can and does see ongoing sin in our lives and calls us to repent or we will suffer the consequences. The sins mentioned in the above verses are; regarding God with a blasé attitude by leaving their first love of Him and taking their salvation for granted instead of regarding it as a high privilege; teaching and holding on to erroneous, false doctrine causing people to stumble in their faith; accepting idolatry; engaging in sexual sin; tolerating people who practice and encourage sexual sin; listening to false prophecies; a lukewarm attitude towards their relationship with God, which seems to sicken our Lord.

All repented sin along with a clean heart is under the blood of Jesus but ongoing unrepented sin is not covered with His blood. For example, if a person lived a life of wantonness and repented, they are forgiven. If that same person returns to their path of sin, the sins committed after repentance are not forgiven because their life is again unclean. They will have to turn from their sin and repent over again. If they keep on with their sin, God will eventually give up on them (Romans 1:26). See what the Scriptures say concerning repeated sin. 'Concerning those who were once enlightened, tasted of the heavenly gift (of salvation) and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, tasted the good Word of God and the (holy) powers of the (wonderful) age to come and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance because they crucify the Son of God for themselves again and put Him to open shame' (Hebrews 6:4 to 6). So we can see, people who turn to God then turn away from Him again, bring shame to Jesus and they might not ever be forgiven for a second time. One known example of the type of sin that cannot be forgiven is continual paedophilia committed by church leaders who refuse to stop their wickedness and repent. They destroy young lives over and over again without any consideration for the young child victims they prey on. The paedophiles bring terrible shame to the name of Jesus, they bring shame to the church as a whole and cause unsaved people to mock the precious salvation message, causing a stumbling block to salvation and turning many away from God. Any church leader who covers up for paedophiles will also reap severe judgement from God.

Although the comments in the Book of Revelation were made to seven early churches then called assemblies, the sins Jesus mentioned to these assemblies are still sins in our day. God does not change (Malachi 3:6). Modern churches can appraise themselves by those letters in Revelation to the ancient assemblies. In those early days of Christianity, great multitudes of heathen and pagan Gentiles had become Christians due to the outstanding toil of the Jewish apostles through much persecution and trials like shipwrecks or ill health and some of the new converts carried their pagan practices into their newfound religion. Many of the heathen and pagan beliefs were adopted into the new assemblies, mainly because the new converts did not know any better. All they had ever known was idolatry, which was not an easy thing for these people to give up so they tried to harmonise Christianity with the ancient evil practices. The pressure on new Christians to compromise was extremely heavy. Many church leaders who claimed to be Christian and claiming incorrectly they received inspiration from God were advocating free participation in heathen immoralities. In Ephesus the Christians excluded these teachers but in Pergamum and Thyatira their pagan practices were tolerated.

We will look at these particular sins, especially sexual sin in the hope people who may be unaware they have sin in their lives can repent and turn from their sin to live a holy life. We must make one fact very clear ... God always loves the sinner even when He hates their sin. He first loved us before we loved Him (1 John 4:19). God loved the world so much He gave Jesus to atone for our sins so anyone who accepts Jesus and believes in Him can receive eternal life (John 3:16). God does lose respect for people who continually sin but He never stops loving them. If their sin causes severe judgement from God and He sends them to eternal damnation, He still loves them but that does not lessen their eternal punishment. It is only by the grace and mercy of God any of us are saved from the second death, which is called the Lake of Fire (Revelation 21:8). We write this to warn people because of the following verses ... "When I tell the wicked, 'You will surely die (spiritually)' and you give him no warning nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life, the same wicked man will die in his iniquity but his blood will I require at your hand, but if you warn the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness nor from his wicked way, he will die in his iniquity but you have delivered your soul from judgement" (Ezekiel 3:18 & 19). All Christians need to stand up for

righteousness. We sincerely hope the warnings in this Bible study will bring many to repentance with the hope they remain clean.

When addressing the following seven assemblies, Jesus was speaking to the angels who watched over the early churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea but it was Apostle John who wrote down the comments recorded in the Book of Revelation. These seven cities were located in what is now Western Turkey. These seven assemblies were all considered to be special like golden lampstands or in Hebrew, menorahs, carefully crafted out of pure gold to give light in the darkness. 'You will make a lampstand/menorah of pure gold. Of hammered work the menorah will be made, its base, its shaft, its cups, its buds and its flowers will be of one piece of pure beaten gold ... You will make seven small individual lamps and the people will light its lamps to give light' (Exodus 25:31 & 37). Over sixty years after His resurrection, Jesus said to John, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven assemblies. To Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and to Laodicea." I (John) turned to see the voice that spoke with me. Having turned, I saw seven golden menorahs ... He had seven stars in His right hand ... The mystery of the seven stars which you (Apostle John) saw in My right hand and the seven golden menorahs. The seven stars are the angels (watching over) the seven assemblies. The seven menorahs are the seven assemblies' (Revelation 1:11, 12 & 20). These assemblies were chosen to shine God's Light into a dark world.

"To the angel of the assembly in Ephesus write, 'He (Jesus) Who holds the seven stars in His right hand, He who walks among the seven golden menorahs says these things'. "I know your works, your toil, your perseverance, I know you cannot tolerate evil men and have tested those who call themselves apostles but they are not and you found them to be false. You have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake and have not grown weary but I have this against you, you have left your first love. Remember from where you have fallen and repent and do the first works or else I am coming to you swiftly and will move your menorah out of its place unless you repent. But this you do have, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans which I also hate. Those who have a (spiritual) ear let them hear what the Holy Spirit says to the assemblies. To those who overcome (troubles) I will give (them permission) to eat from the Tree of Life which is in the Paradise of My God" (Revelation 2:1 to 7). According to the spoken words of Jesus, leaving the initial love we had for Him when we first gave our lives to Him is sin. New Christians are so excited about their salvation they want to tell everyone about Him and they serve Him with enthusiasm but over time that excitement can wane to become just a religion instead of a vibrant, loving, close walk with God through the blood of Jesus. New Christians are usually very open about sharing the Gospel to people because they want everyone to share the wonderful experience of salvation. They often give up smoking, alcohol, petty crimes, bad behaviour and become a force for good. Over time that enthusiasm often wanes into mediocrity and they leave their first burst of love for the Lord and His Kingdom. Like any relationship, our relationship with God grows and develops into a deeper and stronger bond with Him but we must never lose the excitement of salvation. We need to continue doing the 'first works', which is sharing the Gospel like we did when we were first saved. We need to take note of what Jesus said. He said He held it against them for leaving their initial love for Him. Jesus finishes this admonition by saying in His own way, listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. Listen, pay attention, obey God's commands. The blasé attitude can cause someone to become a lukewarm Christian, which is so serious they could end up as vomit. In the first century, Ephesus was a dying city, living on their reputation of old and new religions. The Book of Acts chapter 19 gives us a record of the turmoil in the city at that time. Ephesus had once been a thriving port city but the port slowly silted up. Emperor Tacitus tried to improve the seaway in 65 AD but it was impossible. At one time, there were so many Christians living in Ephesus, most of the heathen temples were either deserted or used as assemblies. Sadly, the decline of Ephesus was due to spiritual decay and the menorah light was removed, as Jesus said. Timothy was martyred in Ephesus. The pagan temples and part of the ancient city have been excavated. Roman marble baths with many rooms have been unearthed, revealing the wealth of the city 2,000 years ago. The ruins of the theatre where the great riot occurred (Acts 19:29) have been uncovered. A statue of the Emperor Domitian who had referred to himself as God has been unearthed. He was the leader who persecuted Christians and who banished Apostle John to the Isle of Patmos where he recorded the Book of Revelation while the persecuted Christians were being martyred (Revelation 1:9).

"To the angel of the assembly in Smyrna write, 'The First and the Last Who was dead and has come to life (Jesus) says these things'. "I know your works, oppression and your poverty but you are (spiritually) rich and the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of the things you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so you may be tested and you will have oppression for ten days. Be faithful to death and I will give you the Crown of Life. Those who have an ear let them hear what the Holy Spirit says to the assemblies. Those who overcome will not be harmed by the second death" (Revelation 2:8 to 11). Some modern Christians believe God will always protect us from harm but these verses say otherwise. Some Christians will be persecuted in these last days and some will be killed for their faith but we are told to endure anyway, right up until death if

necessary but we must never turn away from Jesus. Jesus did not rebuke Smyrna but comforted the assembly, reminding them He had already suffered martyrdom and death and like Him they will be alive forever. Smyrna was once famous for science, medicine and building majestic structures and was possibly the birthplace of Homer but the ancient city ceased to exist and the area is now called Izmir.

“To the angel of the assembly in Pergamum write, ‘He Who has the sharp two-edged sword (Jesus) says these things’. “I know your works and where you dwell, that is where Satan’s throne is. You hold firmly to My name and did not deny My faith in the days of Antipas My witness, My faithful one who was killed among you, where Satan dwells, but I have a few things against you. Because of you, there are some who hold the teaching of Balaam who taught Balak to throw a stumbling block before the Children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality. You also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore, or else I am coming to you quickly and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. Those who have an ear let them hear what the Holy Spirit says to the assemblies. To those who overcome, I will give of the hidden manna and I will give them a precious white stone, and on the precious stone a new name written which no one knows but those who receive it” (Revelation 2:12 to 17). Jesus made these beautiful promises to all of those Christians who overcame the temptations of deceptive teaching. The teaching of Balaam was a falsehood that led the Children of Israel to sin by worshipping idols, accepting prostitution and other atrocities. Accepting and acting upon false teaching within the church is sin, especially when the false teaching causes others to stumble and sin. The wickedness of the Nicolaitans was something the Lord utterly hated (Revelation 2:6) so for individuals within the assembly at Pergamum to teach their wickedness would eventually destroy the entire assembly so the whole church had to repent of the various sins committed by the people in the Pergamum assembly. The ‘hidden manna’ are the secrets hidden within the Scriptures that only God can reveal to us. The Scriptures are the Bread of Spiritual Life, as in, ‘Man will not live by bread alone but by every Word that comes from the mouth of God.’ To be given the ‘hidden manna’ is an enormous privilege and blessing. Pergamum was the place where parchment was invented. It is interesting to note, the devil’s throne was once on earth in the city of Pergamum. Pergamum was the seat of Emperor worship where incense was offered to the statue of Emperor Domitian who claimed to be God. When Christians refused to worship the Emperor they were usually killed. An altar to the god Jupiter and a temple to another false god of ‘healing’ was worshipped in the form of a snake, one of the manifestations of the devil and his evil deceptions (Genesis 3:1 to 4, 13 & 14). In Pergamum there was also a stronghold of Balaamite and Nicolaitan teaching, both of which are false and wicked and it was a centre of heathenism and wickedness, which earned the city the dreadful title of the devil’s throne. Numbers 25:1 to 18 records how some Israelites had sexual relations with Midianite women and they did this on the advice of Balaam (Numbers 31:16) and in Pergamum, devotees of heathen practices had infiltrated the assembly and were advising them to participate in the same sexual vices of heathen worship, and the Lord held it against them. Pergamum is now the modern city of Bergama not far from the Aegean Sea.

“To the angel of the assembly in Thyatira write, ‘The Son of God Who has eyes like a flame of fire and His feet are like burnished brass says these things’. “I know your works, your love, faith, service, patient endurance and your last works are more than the first but I have this against you. You tolerate your woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess. She teaches and seduces My servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Behold, I will throw her into a bed and those who commit adultery with her into great oppression unless they repent of her works. I will kill her children with Death and all the assemblies will know I am He Who searches the minds and hearts. I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. To you I say, to the rest who are in Thyatira, as many as do not have this teaching, who do not know what some call ‘the deep things of Satan’, to you I say, I am not putting any other burden on you. Nevertheless, hold what you have firmly until I come. Those who overcome and those who keep My works to the end, to them I will give authority over the nations. They will rule them with a rod of iron, shattering them like clay pots as I have received of My Father and I will give them the Morning Star. Those who have an ear let them hear what the Holy Spirit says to the assemblies” (Revelation 2:18 to 29). The woman Jezebel was a terrible, wicked, devilish promiscuous Sidonian woman who married King Ahab and ended up being eaten by wild dogs (1 Kings 16:31 to 2 Kings 9:37). Her wickedness was legendary. In the city of Thyatira there was a woman who behaved the same way and so was called Jezebel. She attached herself to the new assembly, feigning Christianity and claimed divine inspiration but insisted on teaching and practicing heathen abominations. She brought the ancient vile practices of the first Jezebel into the early assembly as the ‘deep things of the devil’. Some but not all of the church leaders accepted her warped teaching and the Lord held it against them. He will hold any sexual sin against anyone who practices it, even today. Thyatira was once a Greek city but is now where the Turkish city of Akhisar is and the name means ‘White Castle’.

“To the angel of the assembly in Sardis write, “He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars (Jesus) says these things’. “I know your works and you have a reputation of being (spiritually) alive but you are (spiritually) dead. Wake up and keep the things that remain, which you were about to throw away for I

have found no works of yours perfected before My God. Remember how you have received and heard (the Gospel) so now keep it and repent. If you will not watch (your behaviour), I will come as a thief and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. Nevertheless you have a few names in Sardis who did not defile their garments. They will walk with Me in white for they are worthy. Those who overcome will be arrayed in white garments and I will in no way blot their name out of the Book of Life and I will confess their name before My Father and before His angels. Those who have an ear let them hear what the Holy Spirit says to the assemblies" (Revelation 3:1 to 6). There are many Christian churches around today who are spiritually dead like the assembly in Sardis but they do have a few genuine disciples who walk faithfully with the Lord, He sees them and knows them by name. If the dead churches around today do not repent and wake up to what God expects of them, they will suffer the same penalty as the assembly in Sardis. When we look around our own neighbourhoods, we can locate many disused churches that had died spiritually and were discarded. Some church buildings have been demolished and some are used for other things. Sardis was ruined by a massive earthquake in 17 AD and the remnants are near the modern town of Sart.

"To the angel of the assembly in Philadelphia write, 'He Who is holy, He Who is true, He Who has the key of David, He Who opens and no one can shut and Who shuts and no one opens (Jesus) says these things'. 'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door which no one can shut. I know you have a little power and have kept My Word and did not deny My name. Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of those who say they are Jews and they are not but lie. Behold, I will make them to come and worship before your feet and to know I have loved you. Because you kept My command to endure I will keep you from the hour of testing which is to come on the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth. I am coming quickly! Hold firmly to what you have so no one takes your crown. Those who overcome, I will make them a pillar in the temple of My God and they will go out from there no more. I will write on them the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God and My own new name. Those who have an ear let them hear what the Holy Spirit says to the assemblies" (Revelation 3:7 to 13). Philadelphia was founded by Attalus Philadelphus (159 – 138 BC), who was devoted to his brother Eumenes. Their relationship was a genuine brotherly love. The city was given a Greek name which means the 'City of Brotherly Love' and was located east of ancient Ionia. Some assemblies in the area were undergoing persecution but this one was protected from the suffering of persecution. Like Sardis, Philadelphia was completely ruined by the earthquake in 17 AD. Christianity continued to thrive in the area even after the city was destroyed, right up to the present day.

"To the angel of the assembly in Laodicea write, 'The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Head of God's creation (Jesus) says these things'. 'I know your works. You are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot so because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich and have gotten riches and have need of nothing and do not know you are the wretched one, miserable, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire (that means to submit to chastening from God) so you may become (spiritually) rich and receive white garments (a symbol of purity) so you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed. Buy eye salve to anoint your eyes so you may see (spiritually). As many as I love I reprove and chasten. Be zealous therefore and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to them and will dine with them and they with Me. Those who overcome, I will give them permission to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. Those who have an ear let them hear what the Holy Spirit says to the assemblies" (Revelation 3:14 to 22). It is quite shocking to realise Jesus was on the outside of His own assembly, knocking on the door and asking to be let in! We must never be blasé about our relationship with Jesus. If people are indifferent and do not repent, they might end up as vomit. The ruins of the pagan temples in Laodicea can still be seen near the modern city of Denizli.

These seven assemblies were obviously not the only churches founded by the busy apostles but they were the ones selected by the Lord for encouragement and reproof. The assemblies in that generation represented a good cross-section of the population. The sins mentioned in these seven churches are typical of assemblies in all generations since the first church/assembly meeting started by Jesus on that wonderful Sunday evening 2,000 years ago to celebrate His resurrection. 'When it was evening on the first day of the week, and when the doors were locked where the disciples were assembled for fear of the (religious) Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them and said to them, "Peace be to you." When He had said this, He showed them (the wounds in) His hands and His side. The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be to you. As the Father has sent Me, so I send you." When He said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:19 to 22).

Smyrna and Philadelphia were very good assemblies whose congregations were mostly humble people facing persecution. Sardis and Laodicea were very bad assemblies with many ruling classes who were nominally Christian but lived a pagan lifestyle. The final three assemblies, Ephesus, Pergamum and Thyatira

were partly good and partly bad. Ephesus had orthodox teaching but lost their first love of Jesus. Pergamum was heretic but faithful to the holy name of Jesus. Thyatira was heretic, tolerating Jezebel but growing in zeal for the Lord. Sexual promiscuity was part of their heathen worship and was recognised as part of their festivals. Letters from the apostles made it clear the new Christians had to keep themselves from all illicit sexual activities and from eating food offered to idols. 'Concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written our decision, they should ... keep themselves from food offered to idols, from eating blood, from eating strangled animals and from all sexual immorality' (Acts 21:25).

Sexual immorality is a sin God hates. Tolerating any form of sexual sin, especially within the church is wickedness. God hates all promiscuity, prostitution, adultery, lesbianism, incest, paedophilia, bestiality, transgender, bisexuality and homosexuality so much He regards all of it as an abomination to Him because they are all against nature, they are unnatural and vile sexual activities fuelled purely by lust, not love. Nobody can be a homosexual 'Christian' and expect to be received in heaven unless you give up your sin, repent, stay clean and obey the Lord's commands or He will hold these sins against you on Judgement Day. God did not create mankind for these kinds of sexual sins. He created humanity to procreate by having marriage between one man and one woman for the purpose of raising stable, Godly children and the marriage is supposed to last until one of them passes away (Malachi 2:14 to 16). Anything different to what God intended at creation is wickedness and tolerating or approving any of those sexual sins is something God holds against the perpetrators, plus He holds it against those who approve of such sin. 'If a man lies with another man as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They will surely be put to death and their blood will be upon their own heads ... If a man or woman lies with an animal they will surely be put to death ... If a man takes his sister or stepsister ... it is a shameful thing ... he will bear his iniquity. A man will not take his aunt or his brother's wife ... so I may not vomit you out' (Leviticus 20:13, 15, 17, 19 to 22). 'For this wickedness God gave them up to vile passions. Their women changed the natural function into what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural function of the woman, burned in their lust toward one another, men doing what is inappropriate with other men and receiving the suffering in their bodies as due penalty of their sin ... Those people, who knowing the ordinance of God, which is, those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them' (Romans 1:26, 27 & 32).

'Do you not realise your bodies are members of Jesus? Will you then take the members of Jesus and make them members with a prostitute? Absolutely not! Do you not realise, he who is joined to a prostitute is one body with her? As it is written, "The two will become one flesh." He who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit with Him. Flee all sexual immorality! Every sin a man commits is outside the body but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Do you not understand your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you Whom you have from God? You are not your own for you were bought with a price (the huge price of the shed blood and death of Jesus on the cross). Therefore glorify God in your body and in your Spirit, which belong to God' (1 Corinthians 6:15 to 20). Here is another warning and an example from God regarding the sin of sexual immorality and the judgement from God coming on all those who ignore His instructions. 'There are certain men who crept in secretly, those who were long ago (in ancient past) written about for this condemnation. Ungodly men, perverting the grace of our God into lasciviousness, debauchery and denying our only Master, God and Lord Jesus our Messiah ... Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, in the same way, gave themselves over to sexual immorality and went after strange flesh (homosexuality and other perversions) are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire ... Yet in like manner, in their fantasies they defile the flesh and despise Godly authority ... These people speak evil of whatever things they do not understand. They are like creatures without reason and they are destroyed in their sin. Woe to them ... They are hidden rocky reefs, filthy spots at your festive gatherings intended to enhance pure love but they share your meals without guilt when they feast with you, shepherds (yes, church leaders) who without fear care only about themselves. They are clouds without water carried along by winds, trees without fruit, twice dead (physically and spiritually), plucked up by the roots, savage waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame, wandering stars for whom the blackness of darkness has been reserved forever' (Jude 1:4, 7, 8, 10 to 13). 'They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might' (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

To accept sexual sin in the church will ultimately destroy those within the church unless they repent and turn away from such wickedness. These stern warnings come from God Himself. If people continue to ignore His warnings, they will not be able to plead with God on Judgement Day and say they did not know of their impending eternal doom. Any person who claims to be a Christian, who behaves in a carnal way, who practices, tolerates, engages in, approves of or accepts any form of sexual sin as 'normal' will receive the same penalties as the unsaved wicked who refuse to repent. Attending church cannot save the unclean soul. Only heartfelt repentance can save and cleanse the lost soul. These warnings regarding sexual sin are fundamental truths the world hates to hear about. Even religious people hate to be told they are living in sin if they practice any of these sins. Jesus was persecuted and crucified because He spoke the truth and He

warned us we too would be persecuted, vilified (Acts 7:54), ridiculed (Matthew 27:41) and hated for speaking the truth. "The world does not hate you but it hates Me because I testify about it and say its works are evil ... If the world hates you, you know it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own but because you are not of the world, since I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you ... If they persecuted Me they will also persecute you" (John 7:7; 15:18 to 20). 'Do not be surprised my brothers (and sisters in the faith) if the world hates you' (1 John 3:13). Truly, the world God created and loves so much, actually hates His truth.

Another sin Jesus mentioned He will hold against us on Judgement Day is the sin of unforgiveness. If we refuse to forgive other people then God will not forgive us. 'If you forgive people their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you but if you do not forgive men their sins neither will your Father forgive your sins' (Matthew 6:14 & 15). 'Whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone so your Father Who is in heaven may also forgive you for your sins but if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your sins' (Mark 11:25 & 26). Anything against anyone leaves nothing and nobody out. No matter what anyone has done to us, we must pray and forgive them if we want to be forgiven. Forgiving some people can be very hard but if we want peace and forgiveness from the Lord, we have no choice or Jesus might say to those who refuse to forgive, "His Lord called him in and said, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged Me. You should have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had mercy on you'. His Lord was angry and delivered him to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father will also do to you if you do not each forgive your brother from your hearts for his misdeeds'" (Matthew 18:32 to 35).

The seven assemblies dealt with the difficulties all Christians face. All seven assemblies were given eternal promises to the individuals within the assemblies who overcame the sin, temptations and other difficulties. The promises ranged from receiving white garments to receiving precious stones. The words spoken by Jesus to the seven assemblies included their behaviour, good or bad then Jesus continued with eternal promises. Lifting the veil of our bright future is this imagery of God to assure all believers, no matter how disheartening some of the revelations or personal difficulties may be, we know God is on the Throne and has all power, all knowledge, is all conquering, He knows the future and is fully able to control it. In all that was said to the seven assemblies, the so-called 'rapture' was never mentioned. What Jesus did say was, "Those who endure to the end will be saved." The Bible itself does not mention a 'rapture' anywhere, however there will be an ingathering of righteous disciples from all over the world – after the Great Tribulation. The pre-tribulation or mid-tribulation 'rapture' theory is only an opinion and it should be stated as an opinion and not as an unequivocal teaching of Scripture. It is a false teaching leading millions to believe they can virtually do whatever they want and all will be forgiven when they are 'raptured' off before the 'tribulation'. Jesus made it very clear, the gathering of holy people will come after, not before, not during but after the intense tribulation of the world. What Jesus said was, "Immediately after the oppression or tribulation of those days ... He will send out His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they will gather together His chosen ones from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" (Matthew 24:29 & 31).

We must always be on our guard not to allow our behaviour or our speech to be so carnal, Jesus will hold it against us because that is for all eternity, not just for our time on earth. We must remember this ... we will all have to stand in front of the Great White Throne of Judgement and we will all have to give an account of our lives to our God and Judge. Only repentance and accepting the sacrificial shed blood of Jesus on the cross can give us the only way to avoid being sent to the Lake of Fire. It is time for the world to repent and turn unsaved hearts to God. Let us all walk according to the Scriptural instructions openly laid out for all of us to read and apply goodness to our lives while shunning everything evil. 'Let (Christian) love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil and cling to what is good' (Romans 12:9). 'Beloved, do not imitate evil but do what is good. He who does good is of God. He who does evil has not seen God' (3 John 1:11). 'By your own words you will be justified and by your own words you will be condemned' (Matthew 12:37). 'Therefore we make it our aim, whether at home or away to be well pleasing to God, for we must all be revealed before the Judgment Seat of Jesus so each one of us may receive the rewards for what we have done while in the body, according to what each of us have done, whether good or bad' (2 Corinthians 5:9 & 10).

Amen and God bless you.

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