

## REVELATION, Chapter 2 Jesus' Messages to the Churches



### I. Introduction:

#### A. Facts to Keep in Mind

1. These seven churches are located on the main interconnecting Roman road (a circuit of about 30 to 40 miles) starting at Ephesus, the city closest to Patmos, and moving clockwise, north to Smyrna and Pergamum, and then southeast to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.
2. The book of Revelation clearly indicates the seven letters are addressed to a particular time and place. Yet most commentators agree that all seven cities each received all the letters as well as the whole book! (see 1:11) Also, the “these [things]” of 4:1 directly refer back to the “things which are” of 1:19; the messages to the seven churches.
3. These seven messages transcend time and place. Instead they speak to all Christians in every generation. (see 2:7, 11, 17, 29)
4. The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the word. {AA 585.3}  
The Lord Jesus sent a mighty angel to make plain to John by the use of symbols he things that were to transpire until the coming of Christ. He was bidden to write the instruction in a book for the benefit of the seven churches. This writing we now have preserved in the book of Revelation, but this book is understood by only a very few. It contains the message for the last days, and we are to dwell much upon these prophecies. {13MR 304.1}

EPHESUS: Represents the 1<sup>st</sup> century Church of the Christian era

Smyrna: the church of persecution during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries

Pergamum: the church of compromise of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries

Thyatira: the church of the Middle Ages of the Christian era

Sardis: the Reformation & post-reformation church of the 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries

Philadelphia: the church of missionary movements of the late 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

Laodicea: the church of the Last Days

“We must agree with some modern expositors that these seven churches should be understood as representing seven conditions of the Christian church, in seven periods of time, covering the ground of the entire Christian age.” RH, Oct. 16, 1856. {1BIO 343.4}

#### 5. Parallel messages:

- a. Ephesus & Laodicea; (1st & last), warned about their lovelessness and legalism
- b. Smyrna & Philadelphia; (2<sup>nd</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>), both commended for faithfulness, neither received a rebuke, both opposed, “who call themselves Jews” (2:9 & 3:9)
- c. Pergamum & Sardis; (3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>), both in apostasy, little good is said about them.
- d. Thyatira, (4<sup>th</sup>), middle church, longest message, a divided church.

#### B. Literary form of the Seven Letters:

- First: Address
- Second: Description of Christ
- Third: Christ’s appraisal of the church, “I know”
- Fourth: Exhortation
- Fifth: Call to hear the Spirit
- Sixth: Promise to the overcomer

## II. The Seven Letters

### A. Ephesus, 2:1 – 7; 1<sup>st</sup> century Church

1. Address: "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:
2. Description of Christ:  
The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands,
3. Christ’s appraisal of the church, “I know”  
I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them [to be] false; and you have

perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. 'But I have [this] against you, that you have left your first love.

4. Exhortation:

'Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent. 'Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

5. Call to hear the Spirit:

'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

6. Promise to the overcomer:

To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.'

Nicolaitans: unknown group. Irenaeus and Hippolytus, wrote these were the heretical followers of Nicolas of Antioch. (Acts 6:5) Found in Pergamum with an implied connection with Balaam. Nicolaos, (Gr. *Nikao & laos*) meaning, "the one who conquers the people" and Balaam can be derived from two Hebrew words, *am* (people) and *baal* (from *bela*, "to destroy" or "to swallow"), meaning destruction of the people. Two heretical groups that advocate Christian compromise and that nothing is wrong with a prudent conformity. (Numbers 31)

B. Smyrna, 2:8 – 11; the church of persecution

1. Address: "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

2. Description of Christ:

The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:

3. Christ's appraisal of the church, "I know"

'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

4. Exhortation:

'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

5. Call to hear the Spirit:

'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

6. Promise to the overcomer:  
He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.'

C. Pergamum, 2:12 – 17; the church of compromise

1. Address: "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:
2. Description of Christ:  
The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:
3. Christ's appraisal of the church, "I know"  
'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even 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 you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit [acts of] immorality. 'Thus you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.
4. Exhortation:  
'Repent therefore; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.
5. Call to hear the Spirit:  
'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.
6. Promise to the overcomer:  
To him who overcomes, to him I will give [some] of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

D. Thyatira, 2:18 – 29; the church of the Middle Ages

1. Address: "To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:
2. Description of Christ:  
The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:
3. Christ's appraisal of the church, "I know"  
'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. 'But I have [this] against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit [acts of] immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 'And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality.

'Behold, I will cast her upon a bed [of sickness], and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 'And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

4. Exhortation:

'But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them- -I place no other burden on you. 'Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.

5. Call to hear the Spirit:

'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

6. Promise to the overcomer:

'And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received [authority] from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.