

REVELATION

CHAPTER 2

That which follows is from the One who:

A. Holds the Seven Stars in His right hand

Rev 1:20

Stars - messengers (ministers) of the Seven Churches

What does God tell us about His relationship with the Stars?

1. Angels

Dan 12:1; Job 38:4-7; Isa 14:13

2. Stars in the heavens

Ezk 28:18

Ps 147:4

He knows each & every one of them

He knows their name! He named them

He placed them in the expanse Isa 40:26

He placed them so they might give light

Jer 31:35

Isa 13:10-11

He stops them from shining -

speaking by means of their

absence Ezk 32:7

Does He have a similar relationship with the shepherds of His Flock?

B. Walks among the Seven Golden Lampstands

Rev 1:12-13, 20

Churches (individual believers when gathered - Mt 18:20)

1. Jesus is not speaking as One from heaven He is in their midst! He has never left. He shares in our experiences.

Even when we have fallen, He does not leave us.

2. Corporate - revelation

He cares about the local "bodies of Christ"

a. not just the perfect ones

b. if it's a church - He is in its midst.

Thoughts Concerning The Seven Letters

1. Taking a "futuristic approach" to the book:

a. The Seven Letters appear to present the progression of the Church Age from Ephesus, being characteristic of the Apostolic Period in general, downward to the climaxing in Laodicea, which is the final state of apostasy in the Church.

b. Many also believe that the Churches were chosen because they represent the basic type of church in each of the consecutive ages that will exist.

2. There are similarities when comparing the Letters:

a. Each message begins with "I know your..." (deeds being the most common facet)

- b. Each offers a promise “to him that overcomes”
- c. Each has the same concluding sentence – “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”
- d. Each letter contains a description of the Lord
- 3. Most of the letters contain words of warning while all contain words of promise.
- 4. In General, these messages are letters of reproof, rebuke, and reassurance.

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS Vs 1 – 7

Note:

- 1. Paul had ministered for three years in this city. Acts 19:1-20:1
 - a. His ministry had produced widespread effects. Acts 19:10-12; 18-20 20:17-21
 - b. His preaching of the gospel had affected the worship of Diana (Artemis) Acts 19:23-41
 Note: The temple of Diana which had been built in Ephesus was considered to be one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

- 2. Timothy had been left in Ephesus by Paul to strengthen the church and correct the strange doctrines that were being taught there. 1 Tim 1:3
- 3. The Church Fathers tell us that the Apostle John settled to minister in Ephesus upon being released from Patmos.

Jesus Christ is said to be the One who holds the “messengers” of these churches in His right hand, a place of sovereign protection and Divine authority over them and He is a continuous presence throughout the entire Church Age.

Vs 2 – 3 He knows:

- 1. Their deeds (labor) and toil
- 2. Their perseverance (patience)
- 3. Their response to those who are evil
- 4. Their response to those who are in theological error
- 5. That their labors are motivated “for My Names’ sake” and they have not grown weary

Vs 4 – 5 Their fatal flaw - They have left their first love!

By Interpretation – What is the Biblical History of the Church at Ephesus?

- 1. Their defect was a matter of heart, rather than head or will.
The love that they once had, had grown cold.

2. Thirty years prior to John's writing, the Apostle Paul described this Church's condition.
Eph 1:15-16
3. The Apostolic Church began as a post-Pentecost Church.
Acts 2:41-43
It was characterized by love and devotion –
 - a. for Christ, Himself
 - b. to the Word of God
 - c. to the saints by seeking fellowship with them
 - d. to the promise of Christ's soon appearing
2 Tim 4:8
4. The Church of Ephesus is now, at the time of John's writing, a "2nd generation church".
They apparently continued the motion but had lost the motivation.

Note: Our affections end up determining our actions.

1 Tim 6:10; 1 Jn 2:15; 5:21; Matt 10:37; 1 Cor 7:34
To correct any departure from God, the first step is to go back to the place of departure.

Their sin results in a warning from the Lord.

The church (body) will cease to exist if they do not "repent".

(See notes on repentance contained in our 2nd Peter, chapter 3 verse 9 study).

Failure to repent results in temporal judgment.

Vs 6 This church is commended for hating the enemies of the truth.
To love all is often unbiblical!

The church of Pergamum had those who embraced these same false teachers at a later date.

Rev 2:15

Oh that we might take a stand and hate more.

Ps 139:21-22

What God hates, the Christian ought to hate as well.

The modern tendency to blur distinctions of moral and theological truth has led the Church and its' people down the path to where we find ourselves today.

When becoming Christian becomes popular, the conscience of the Church quickly blurs.

When there is no difference between being a part of the church and being a part of the world, maintaining biblical doctrine becomes difficult.

Replacing the Bible with Psychology and/or philosophy (paperback Christianity) often becomes the beginning of the end

Note: We are not sure who the Nicolaitians were. Some believe that they were followers of Nicolas (possibly the same man named in Acts 6:5).

The early Church Fathers mentioned a sect which advocated "license" in the area of conduct that were known by this name.

Vs 7 Hearing followed by action is what God is desiring (demanding- their lampstand will be removed.)

Rom 10:13-14

Though the message is directed to the church and the church's continuation is determined by its response; the ultimate effect will be upon the individuals who make up the church.

Overcomers will be recognized!

As to the Tree of Life – it is first found in the Garden of Eden, (Gen 3:22), and is later found in the new Jerusalem.

Rev 22:2

From Revelation, chapter 22, it would appear that prospering in the millennium is the result that overcomers can anticipate.

Elsewhere all true Christians are said to be overcomers.

1 Jn 5:4-5

THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA – Vs 8 – 11

The apostolic church of the first century with all the power and prestige brought to it by the apostolic presence was replaced by a suffering church

that continued until Constantine reigned in the beginning of the 4th century.

Jesus Christ describes Himself as the eternal God who has always existed in

The past and will always exist in the future. He is also the One "who became

Dead" and He is the one who lives because of His own resurrection.

Vs 9 He assures them that He knows of their oppression by their enemies and their abject poverty (having been robbed of their goods in the process of their persecution.)

He reminds them that they have actually become rich.

2 Cor 6:10

Their persecutors were dominated by hostile Jews empowered by Satan, himself.

Rom 2:28-29

Being a Jew was of no benefit in the sight of God if not accompanied by faith.

Rom 4:12

Vs 10 – 11 Their present persecution (95-96 AD) is only the forerunner of that which is going to come.

The devil will yet cast some from within the church into prison doing all that is in his power to stamp out their testimony.

1. God will allow this. Job 1:8-13a; 2:1-7
2. It will be a test. Jas 1:2-3; 1 Pet 4:12-14
1 Pet 1:6-7 (Heb 11:17)
3. It will last but 10 days; a long time from the human's perspective, but a moment in the eternal plan of God (about 200 years).

4. That which God requires – Be faithful until death!

Note: It is not difficult to understand why the ungodly suffer, but why the Godly Lord!

There are many reasons given in the Bible for suffering:

- a. discipline
1 Cor 11:30-32; Heb 12:3-13
- b. preventive action
2 Cor 12:7
- c. as a teaching method
Heb 5:8
- d. development
Rom 5:3-5
- e. bear a better testimony for Christ
Acts 9:6
- f. many cases are left unexplained.
Death often ends up being the fruit of belief.

Heb 11:35-40

5. The Crown of Life – The glories of eternal life are in contrast to the trials of martyrdom. Note: There are other Crowns listed as rewards for the overcomers:

- a. for those who exercise self-control
1 Cor 9:24-27
- b. for those who minister in the lives of other believers
1 Thes 3:19-20
- c. for those who have lived in a state of expecting His appearing

2Tim 4:8; 1 Jn 3:2-3

d. for shepherds who have cared for
God's flock - 1 Pet 5:1-4
in contrast to false shepherds- Ezk 34:1-10

Vs 11 He who overcomes – shall not be hurt by the second death.
Rev 20:6
(The Second death is described in Rev 20:14)

THE CHURCH IN PERGAMUM – Vs 12-17

Vs 12 Christ has the sword, the two-edged one, the sharp one.
(The Word of God) Rev 1:16; 2:12,16; 19:15,21; Heb 4:12
(The Word of God is that which will judge. Jn 12:47-48)

As to the sword being double edged:

1. It separates the vessels of grace from condemnation.
It cuts loose the chains of sin which bind us.
2. This same word becomes the means of condemnation
for those who reject the grace of God.

Vs 13 Pergamum is said to be the place where Satan's throne is...where Satan dwells..

The people of this city worshipped two successive religions which used the serpent as a symbol. The first referred to its deity as the serpent god.

1. Asklepios was the god of healing. Snakes and the handling of reptiles was central to the worship.
A Pergamum coin shows the emperor Caracalla standing with a spear in one hand before a great serpent entwined around a branch.
Another archeological find describes the same god enthroned with a staff in one hand and the other on the head of a serpent.
2. An altar to Zeus was discovered in 1871. This altar bears the inscription dedicating it to "Zeus the Savior".

Christ commends them that in spite of their evil environment the Christians have held fast to His Name and not denied the faith.

Eph 4:4-6

These believers were holding fast even though one of theirs, Antipas, had been killed.

Heb 12:3-4

Pergamum also became involved with emperor worship (imperial cult) during the Roman period. Tradition says that Antipas died by burning in a brazen bull during Domitians' reign.

Vs 14-15

Rebuke for Compromise

Vs 14

First area of Compromise – held the teaching of Balaam
Num 31:13-16 followed by
Num 25:1-15

The reference may well mean that the believers of Pergamum were joining themselves with the pagan citizens of the city.

To allow yourselves to be “unequally yoked” with unbelievers in any way will take its toll over time.

2 Cor 6:14-18

A prime example is that of Solomon's experience.

1 Kg 11:1-8

Note: The “teaching of Balaam” is different than
“the way of Balaam” which is selling one's
prophetic gift for money.

2 Pet 2:15; Num 22:7, 15-22; Jude 11

Vs 15

The Second Area Requiring Rebuke

Rejection of the teaching of the Nicolaitians Rev 2:6 has
reversed to acceptance of it.

A believer and/or a church can never let go, compromise, and accept
wrong teaching.

It never goes away; hundreds of years later the threat remains as Strong
as it was in the beginning.

Vs 16

The God-given Requirement – Repent or Face Temporal
Judgment.

This Church has positioned itself so that Jesus Christ becomes its foe.
That which can correct, The Word of God, becomes that which
condemns.

There is no alternative to compromise with the truth except that of
Divine judgment.

The apostasy which is seen in its early stage in this Church will grow into
the future apostate Church found in Rev 17.

Vs 17

To him that overcometh...

1. hidden manna

a. manna is traceable to the book of Exodus.

God provided manna for the Israelites sustenance.

Ex 16:1-12, 32-35; Heb 9:4

b. Jesus spoke of Himself as the manna which the Father sent from Heaven which provides so sufficiently that those who receive it will never hunger again.

Jn 6:48-51

>Christ is the manna (food) that sustains believers eternally.

Jn 6:27

>He is the only manna that satisfies the spiritual hunger of man.

Jn 6:35

aa. He is hidden from the unsaved who are said to "not know God"

1 Jn 4:7-10

bb. He is known by us in part now.

We will know Him in a fuller sense when He comes for us.

1 Jn 3:1-2

An overcomer will know Him as He can be known.

2. White Stone – Several possibilities are given but no conclusion is possible.

a. Taken from the Roman custom of wearing a white amulet inscribed with the name of a god. Worn in such a way that only the wearer knows the name inscribed.

b. The white stone may be similar to the stone found on the high priest's headdress.

Ex 28:36-38

c. It may be similar to the stones which God wrote His moral law on.

Ex 31:18; 32:16; Jer 31:33

d. No definitive explanation really satisfies – the significance has been lost to the generation that received the revelation.

3. A new name written

Isa 56:5; 62:2-4; 65:15-16; Rev 3:12; 14:1; 22:1-4

Whatever the meaning of the white stone or the name that is written, it seems to signify Christ's favor to the overcomers and is recorded as a motivation to those who find themselves in an historical situation where a decision must be made to stand on the truth and separate from the compromisers that surround them.

THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA – Vs 18-29

Vs 18 To this church the one speaking is the "Son of God" rather than the "Son of Man" (Rev 1:13)

1. Son of God –

- a. Christ referred to Himself as "Son of Man" far more often than He did "Son of God".
- b. He accepted the title whenever it was used by others and the fact that He declared Himself to be so became the basis for the Jewish leaders to charge Him with blasphemy in His trial.

Lk 22:67-71

c. Also note: Jn 10:31-33

- d. As the "Son of God" in John's gospel >He has life in Himself just as the Father does.

Jn 5:26

- >He must be honored in the same way as the Father is.

Jn 5:23

- >On the Divine side He has a Father and on the human side He has a God.

Jn 20:17

e. Christ's resurrection declares His Deity – Rom 1:1-4

2. Son of Man –

- a. Christ almost universally referred to Himself by this title

Matthew – 30 times

Mark – 15 times

Luke – 25 times

John – 12 times

- b. Hebrews tells us why the title Heb 2:17-18 along with Mk 10:45

One would suppose that Christ used this name because it is appropriate for the situation that the Church of Thyatira has put herself in.

See the notes on Rev 1:14-15 concerning His eyes and His feet

Vs 19 Christ commends the Church for her deeds, love, faith, service, and perseverance, and that they are increasing over time unlike the Church in Ephesus.
Rev 2:4-5

Note: When considering the Indictment, this Church is considered to be the Church of the Middle Ages.

1. This Church sought to combine Christianity with the pagan religions it came in contact with, absorbing the ceremonies of these religions into Christianity.
2. They began exalting Mary to the role of deity and that of co-redeemer, teaching that intercession to God must be made through her.
3. Idols in the form of religious statues were introduced.
4. Turning observances into sacraments began.

Heb 10:1-18

Vs 20 Indictment – Thyatira had a Jezebel

1. The Jezebel she was named after is found in:

1 Kgs 16:28-22:40

a. She was responsible for killing Naboth for possession of his vineyard

1 Kg 21:1-16

b. She killed practically all the prophets of the Lord and did what she could to kill the prophet Elijah.

1 Kg 19:2

c. She was so wicked that God determined that a special death was warranted for her.

1 Kg 21:23; 2 Kg 9:22-37

2. The Jezebel of John's day

a. calls herself a "prophetess"

Historical Note:

There are several women called "prophetess" in the OT

Ex 15:20; Jdg 4:4; 2Kg22:14; Neh 6:14; Is 8:3; Lk 2:36

This ministry is seen continuing into the NT church times.

Acts 2:17; 21:9; 1 Cor 11:5.

The function of a prophetess does not appear to be any different when comparing the two testaments.

b. John's problem with Jezebel is not that she calls herself a prophetess, but rather that she teaches and thereby leads John's bond-servants astray; the result

being:

>they commit acts of immorality (associated with idol worship).

The word for committing adultery is used rather than the one for fornication; this not being the word John uses throughout the book may mean that violation of the marriage covenant.

>eat things sacrificed to idols

1 Cor 8:1-3; 10:25-33; Rom 14:1-23

Vs 21 Christ had given Jezebel time to repent. 2 Pet 3:9-10 and she does not want to repent.

Vs 22 Rather than dispose of her, God uses her to purge the church of those who would join her in her bed.

Joshua 2:20 – 3:1

Tribulation is what awaits the Church and her people when they sin; and repentance is the only acceptable solution for the fallen people of God.

Vs 23 The consequence for the Churches' sin will extend down to her children – those who are reached by her.

The judgment will be so dramatic that all the Churches will know that Christ is the One who searches hearts and minds.

Vs 24-25 Exhortation to the godly remnant

The evil character of the followers of Jezebel is such that they are apparently beyond the point of being retrieved.

1 Jn 5:16-17

To the rest, what you have, hold fast.

Vs 26 The invitation found in this letter is directed to Believers, who meet 2 requirements:

1. He who overcomes - found in every letter

2. He who keeps my deeds until the end - found only in this letter

Continuing in the "Works of God" appears to be a requirement if one hopes to reign with Christ.

Jn 6:28-29

The Apostle John further tells us what such a continuation looks like.

1 Jn 3:2-3

Consider 2 Tim 2:11-13; Rev 20:4; while these passages clearly state that believers reign with Christ, Rev 2:26 may not.

A proposition that might be considered!

1. All who believe go to heaven.
2. Those who are unfaithful will not share in the millennial reign of Christ at all.
3. Those who "pass the test" will participate in the 1000 years, ruling with and for Christ.

Note: As to God's focus throughout the 1000 year reign, see my notes.

Vs 27

Quotation taken from Ps 2:1-9

1. The world rulers will rebel against God and His anointed King. Vs 1-3
2. God has decreed that King Jesus be established on Mt Zion. Vs 4-6
3. Jesus was "begotten" by the Father, that He might reign over the peoples of the earth. Vs 7-8
Acts 13:26-39; Heb 1:5; 5:5-6; Phil 2:5-11
4. The first time He came, He came lowly and riding on a donkey.

The second time He comes, He will come in power and great glory. Vs 9

Rev 19:11-21

Vs 28

Verse 26 "To Him I will give authority over the nations", as a quotation from Ps 2:8, is a reference to Christ reigning, not believers!

If the intent is to speak of believers reigning, then 2 things are said of them:

1. They will be given authority over the nations
 2. They will be given the "morning star"
- If the first refers to Christ, then the second stands alone as a promise to him who overcomes, who keeps Christ's deeds.

Morning Star:

2 Pet 1:16-19

When the morning star arises in our hearts, Jer 31:31-34 will be fulfilled.

Rev 22:16

Jn 14:21

Final Thought:

Is there a difference in glory, star from star?

1 Cor 15:39 - 41

Is there a difference between those who "know" Jesus
in eternity?