



REVELATIONS FROM CRISES

REVELATION 2

William D. Watley, New Seasons Press, All Rights Reserved.

Introduction to Chapter: Revelation 1: 14-18 (Vision of the Risen Christ)

His head and hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze; refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword....Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

His head and his hair were white as white wool, (Daniel 7: 9)
His eyes were like flames of fire (Daniel 10:6)
His feet were like burnished bronze (Daniel 10: 6; Ezekiel 1: 7)
His voice like the sound of many waters (Ezekiel 43: 2)
In his right hand he held seven stars (The church)
And from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword (Isaiah 11: 4, 49: 12)
And his face was like the sun shining (Exodus 34: 29; Matthew 17:2)

Jesus Christ Speaks to the Church

With the exception of the Church of Laodicea, each of the letters to the seven Churches open with a description of the Risen Christ from chapter 1:

To the angel of the Church of Ephesus write: The words of him who *holds the seven stars in his right hand.*

To the angel of the Church in Smyrna, write: The words of *the words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.*

To the angel of the Church in Pergamum write: The words of him *who has the sharp two-edged sword.*

To the angel of the Church in Thyatira write: The words of the Son of God, *who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished Bronze.*

To the angel of the Church in Sardis, write: The words of him *who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.*

To the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write: The words of the holy one, the true one, *who has the key of David, who opens and no one can shut, who shuts and no one opens.* (Isaiah 22: 22)

Lessons for the Church of Jesus Christ

All true churches of Christ reflect his glory, revelation and manifestation
No one church has all of the glory, essence, revelation and manifestation of Christ
The most successful trick of the Adversary is to create division among churches regarding the superiority of their share of the glory, essence, revelation and manifestation of Christ
Churches can have the revelation and manifestation of Christ and still be in error

and imperfect in their practice and teaching

Christ will discipline and correct erroneous teaching and practice

Imperfect churches can still have enough of the revelation and manifestation of Christ to be instruments of salvation

Points to Ponder:

What kind of message do you think Christ would have for our church today if he were to write us?

What characteristics of the seven churches (good and bad) that Christ addresses in the Book of Revelation do we see in our own church?

How do you (individually) and how do we (as a community of faith) correct what is bad and strengthen what is good?

Verses 1-7, The Church in Ephesus

The City of Ephesus

In time of John Ephesus was the greatest harbor in Asia and gateway to Asia

Greatest and wealthiest city in Asia

Self-governing free city and no Roman troops stationed there

Temple of Artemis (Diana), one of seven wonders of ancient world

Center of pagan superstition; Ephesian amulets and charms

Ephesus and early Christianity

Paul stayed longer in Ephesus than anywhere else and was especially close to the members of that congregation (Acts 19-20)

Paul's preaching created such a stir that a riot broke out in Ephesus

Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos were also together in Ephesus (Acts 18: 19, 24-26)

Timothy is associated with Ephesus and is regarded as its first bishop (I Tim. 1: 3)

The apostle John was leading figure in Ephesus. Legend is that he brought Mary the Lord's mother there and that she was buried there.

Message to the Church in Ephesus

Great opposition and strongholds require toil and patient endurance as distinct from approaches such as to name it and claim it, or praise solves all problems

The necessity of tests

The Scripture test

The Experience test

The Fruit test

The Time test

Loss of first love

Loss of fire

Loss of love for Christ

Loss of Christ mission for Christ church

Loss of hunger for the new

Loss of love for one another

The Way to Restoration

Remember! (Example of Prodigal son)

Repent! Take Responsibility

Do! No real repentance without action

The penalty of failure to act

Church without glory, revelation, manifestation, essence of Christ

Church that has lost its place as a voice to be taken seriously

Church with vibrant past, but weak present and doubtful future

Nicolaitans

Nicolaus in Acts 6: 5 ??

Tolerance of pagan practices and immorality
 Greatest threat to integrity of faith came from inside (false teachings, compromise) rather than outside the church

Ears to Hear

Holy Spirit still speaks: Clearly
 Consistently
 Creatively

Verses 8-11, The Church in Smyrna

The City of Smyrna

If Ephesus was largest city in Asia, Smyrna was known as the most lovely.
 It was also a free city and the first to erect a temple to the goddess Roma
 It claimed to be the birthplace of Homer and had a number of temples erected to pagan deities (Cybele, Zeus, Apollo, Nemesis, Aphrodite)
 It had a magnificent stadium and was known for its annual yearly games, similar to our Olympics

Message to the Church in Smyrna

Poverty

Church in Smyrna was poor because a number of its members came from lower socio-economic classes
 Church in Smyrna was poor because of confiscation of property and goods as a result of persecution.

Persecution

Large population of Jews who were particularly hostile to the faith (synagogue of Satan)
 Church Father Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna was martyred there, Saturday, February 23, 155AD
 Religious terrorism can be some of the most intolerant, vicious and violent because it is justified by the highest possible authority—the misrepresentation of God

Imprisonment for ten days

Expression, which means for short-lived duration

Charges against Christians

1. Sacramental language misinterpreted as cannibalism
2. Agape (Love) Feasts accused of being sexual orgies
3. "Tampering with family relationships" because sometimes families split because of the faith
4. Atheism because there were no images of gods
5. Treason and political disloyalty because of refusal to say "Caesar is Lord."
6. Incendiaries because of prediction that world would end in flames

Admonition and Promise

Faithfulness to death (not just natural but violent, premature, painful)
 death

Crown of life

Not diadema but stephanos; not royal but victorious
 Royalty can be inherited but one is victorious over some opposing force

Life (Eternal as distinct from dying and temporary)

Freedom from second death

Eternal damnation and suffering (Revelation 20: 14-15)

A surprising missing word: Reprimand

Verses 12-17, The Church in Pergamum

The City of Pergamum

Center of culture with famous library of 200,000 parchments; second only to the unique library of Alexandria

Custodian of Greek culture with two great temples to Zeus and Asclepius

Asclepius (healing) Symbol was serpent

Administrative center of Asia and thus center of Caesar worship in the province of Asia

Message to the Church in Pergamum

Satan's throne and Antipas my witness

Caesar worship

Antipas unknown to us but known by Christ

Witness can be translated as martyr: Christianity at great cost

Balaam and Nicolaitans

Lessening of standards and compromise with the world

Most common word for Christian in New Testament is hagios (different, separate)

Sword of my mouth

Word of God (Hebrews 4: 12; Ephesians 6: 17)

Hidden manna

Manna in the desert

Bread of the sacrament or Christ himself

White stone

Judicial system: black stone for guilt; white stone for acquittal

Roman tesserae (little tablet made of wood, metal or stone that bestowed privilege)

Great houses bestowed tesserae for free gifts to dependents for food or money

Tesserae bestowed upon winners in athletic games for free entry

Tesserae given to gladiators who retired in honor

Pagan amulets with name of deity that gave protective power

Verses 18-29, Church in Thyatira

Not a major city like Ephesus, Sardis or Pergamum

Central industry was textiles

(Home of Lydia, the seller of purple whom Paul converted in Acts 16: 4)

Strong trade guilds or unions

Message to the Church in Thyatira

Longest of the seven letters

Risen Christ

Eyes of flame that penetrate

Feet of brass that are firm

Last works are greater

Not facing persecution, but growing church

Growing church is not always healthy church

The woman Jezebel

Identity unknown

Jezebel in scripture (I Kings 16-18)

Corrupted faith of Israel with false gods known as the Baals

Urged compromise with practices of guilds such as allowing participation in trade guild meals, which were sometimes

drunken orgies and where food sacrificed to idols was eaten

Major problem in life of early church (Paul, I Corinthians 8-10)

Threat of accommodation still with us

Word of Christ regarding accommodation

Those who accommodate with suffer the wrath of Christ

Resistance to accommodation

Hold fast to the truth until the Lord comes

Promise to those who are undergoing trial—the Lord will come!

When the Lord comes those who are faithful will receive authority; first will be last and the last first

Morning star

Daniel 12: 3

Revelation 22: 16 (Jesus, the bright and morning star)

We shall enjoy the Lord forever