

Book of Revelation—Chapter 2

Messages from the Lord to: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, & Thyatira

I. Additional Scriptures/Notes...

Chapters 2 & 3... “Before the Lord could give the churches encouragement, He had to give them an examination. He could then confirm them in their strengths, correct them in their weaknesses, and comfort them in their fears. The primary purpose of the letters, therefore, was to *prepare* the congregations for the conflict that lay before them” [David Roper, Truth for Today Commentary, *Revelation 1-11*, p., 106].

2:4... Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love—“In 96 A.D. the Christians at Ephesus still had many noble qualities (not standing with the Nicolaitans, discerning false teachers, being faithful to Jesus’ name), but their first love they had abandoned (Revelation 2:4). Love being greatest of all Christian qualities (Colossians 3:14; 1 Corinthians 13:13), this defect would be fatal unless they repented. The Lord’s appraisal was that He would disown them” [Hugo McCord, *The Royal Route of Revelation*, p. 20]. ||||| “It has been suggested that there may be a connection between Jesus’ commendation and His condemnation of this congregation—that their zeal had deteriorated into a hypocritical, judgmental spirit. This scenario is probably not the case, since Jesus commended their zeal. It is true, however, that Christians must ever guard against allowing their love for truth to develop into a hypercritical, faultfinding spirit” [David Roper, p. 113].

2:9... ...the synagogue of Satan—“Here is an indeed regrettable fact highlighted: among the greatest opponents of the church across the first three hundred years of its existence were the Jews. ... The Jews served as allies for the Romans in persecuting the Christians” [W.B. West, *Revelation through First Century Glasses*, p. 43].

2:13... I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is—“The Lord speaks of Satan’s seat or throne because there was a very large imperial cult in Pergamum. The worship of the Roman emperor was rampant as well as the worship of other pagan gods” [W.B. West, p. 45]. ||||| “According to some writers, it was the center of Roman provincial government in Asia and was responsible for the enforcement of emperor worship. Civic pride alone would have put constant pressure on every citizen to acknowledge the lordship of the emperor” [David Roper, p. 130].

2:17... ...To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna--“The word ‘hidden’ may imply that the blessings of a Christian are hidden from the world—in the sense that the world does not receive them, recognize them, or respect them” [David Roper, p., 139].

2:20... ...thou sufferest that woman Jezebel...--“...there is a clear case here of a dissolute woman having usurped the principal authority of a church. The word Jezebel ‘is not a figurative term for a party or a movement; it designates an actual person (Rev. 2:2f), her followers being distinguished from her.’ Whatever her actual name might have been, the Lord called her ‘Jezebel,’ after the ‘wicked queen of that name who tried to establish an idolatrous cult in the place of the worship of Yahweh and was herself accused of whoredom and witchcraft (2 Kings 9:22)” [Coffman].

2:21-23... “The Lord had this stern warning to Jezebel and her followers because of the tremendous damage they were doing in the church. The Lord would not allow the Thyatirans to compromise with her or allow her to continue, so destructive were her

doctrines. The Lord's patience had run out" [W.B. West, p. 47]. |||| "In this warning, Jesus used a play on words: Jezebel had enticed Christians into a bed of fornication; Jesus would cast her and her followers into a bed of tribulation.. Notice, however, the qualification **unless they repent**. Our gracious Lord always adds that provision. The requirement to repent of **HER deeds** rather than 'their deeds' is unusual. Since they were going along with Jezebel, Jesus was making them responsible for all she did" [David Roper, p. 147].

2:26... ..And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations—"There is an echo here of our Lord's great parable in Luke 20:13-17, wherein the faithful servants were promised rulership over 'five cities' and over 'ten cities.' The manner of the Christian's authority over nations does not appear in this promise, but it is evident subsequently in the prophecy (Rev. 20:4)" [Coffman].

2:27... And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter...-- "The reference to ruling **with a rod of iron** is from Psalm 2, a Messianic psalm which speaks of Jesus' authority (consider Psalm 2:9 in the context of the entire psalm). Jesus was promising that those who kept His deeds, that is, obeyed Him, would share in His **rule** and would share ultimately in His victory over evil. It was a dazzling prospect for this obscure church in an insignificant town" [David Roper, p. 150].

II. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: **The Period of the Church.**

III. Summary.

John is told to write down a message from the Lord Jesus to the church at Ephesus. All seven of the churches of Asia will receive a message from the Lord. The form of each of the individual messages is similar. At the beginning of each message some part of the vision of Jesus walking among the seven lampstands (churches, 1:20) is used to individualize the message to the particular congregation, in the form of a greeting. Jesus will then commend, reprimand, or do both as is demanded by the spiritual condition of the individual congregations. If repentance is needed, He will make plain what needs to be changed. In closing the messages, He challenges all to HEAR and pronounces blessings on those who do. **Ephesus** is commended highly for their patient endurance and for standing strongly against false teachers. However, Jesus could see a fatal flaw in the hearts of the brethren at Ephesus. They had left their **FIRST** love. Brother Roper suggests that Acts 19:10, 19-20 gives an indication of the degree of love these Christians had at the beginning. Something had happened to diminish that degree of love seen in those earlier days. Jesus demands (v. 5b) a return to the earlier position. Following this reprimand, Jesus again commends them for hating the same thing He hates, which suggests to us another important way we can draw close to the Lord. Then there is the beautiful figure of the **TREE OF LIFE** in the Paradise of God for those who hear and overcome.

Smyrna is encouraged by the reminder that they serve a Lord who died and has come back to life. This great church was truly **POOR** as the world measures wealth; however, our Lord judges them to be **RICH** spiritually! He lets them know that He is aware of the horrible treatment they are receiving at the hands of the Jews, the "synagogue of Satan." There will be further trials for a limited time (ten days is not literal), but those who remain faithful will be richly rewarded with the crown of life! What wonderful news to know that there is a way to avoid "the second death"!!!

Pergamos, was precious to the Lord--because they did not deny Him. This was so even in the place where Satan’s throne was located, and thus Christians were having to pay a high price for loyalty to Jesus. One of their own, **Antipas**, had paid with his life. However, at the same time, there were two sources of error in this church which would have to be removed or the church would be judged by the Lord. Hidden manna and a white stone of honor are the prizes for hearing and overcoming.

Thyatira is highly commended for her good works which were increasing, rather than receding. However, this church had its Jezebel who was spreading a message which would lead the congregation toward unfaithfulness to the Lord. She had to be stopped! To the faithful ones in Thyatira, Jesus demands HOLDING FAST. To the over-comer will be given power over the nations (cf., 20:4), AND the glorious “Morning Star” (cf., 22:16).

IV. Outline.

1. EPHESUS: “The Church that Left Its First Love” (Revelation 2:1-7).
2. SMYRNA: “The Poor/Rich Church” (8-11).
3. PERGAMOS: “The Church Dwelling in Satan’s Headquarters” (12-17).
4. THYATIRA: “The Church with Problems from Within” (18-29).

V. Questions.

True or False

01. _____ Jesus promised to those Christians at Thyatira who were not following Jezebel, the morning star.
02. _____ Jesus loved the doctrine (teaching) of the Nicolaitans.
03. _____ Pergamos was the location of “Satan’s seat.”
04. _____ Jesus said that some at Smyrna who claimed to be Jews were really the synagogue of Satan.
05. _____ Jesus had nothing negative to say about the church at Ephesus.

Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)

06. _____ What is likely symbolized by the phrase—MORNING STAR: (a) the sun; (b) Jesus Christ, Himself; (c) long life. Cf., Revelation 22:16.
07. _____ The sin of the church at Thyatira was in: (a) being filled with pride; (b) allowing Jezebel to teach and seduce; (c) their lukewarmness.
08. _____ Which passage(s) in addition to Revelation 2:14, mention(s) Balaam: (a) Numbers 22; (b) 2 Peter 2:15; (c) Jude 11; (d) all of the above; (e) none of the above.
09. _____ The LAST WORKS of which church were more than the first: (a) Ephesus; (b) Smyrna; (c) Pergamos; (d) Thyatira.
10. _____ If the church at Ephesus did not remember, repent, and do the first works, the Lord would: (a) fight against them with the sword; (b) kill her children with death; (c) remove her candlestick.

Fill in the Blanks

11. How many of the churches mentioned in chapter two did Jesus have something against?

12. _____ therefore from whence thou art fallen, and _____ and do the _____ works.
13. ...He that _____ shall not be hurt of the _____ death.
14. Antipas was a member of the church at _____.
15. **But that which _____, hold _____ till I come.**

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week's handout

ANSWERS to Revelation 1 Questions... [(1) False, 19; (2) True, 1; (3) True, 9; (4) False, 8; (5) True, 13; (6) c, 20; (7) a, 16; (8) c, 5; (9) b, 9; (10) b, 1; (11) Patmos, 9; (12) stars, candlesticks, 20; (13) seven, 4,11,12,13,16,20; (14) flame, fire, 14; (15) every, eye, 7.]

VII. Lessons & Applications.

1. **...These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks** (Revelation 2:1). Jesus does provide the meaning of the symbols: STARS and CANDLESTICKS in 1:20. However, there still is lacking complete understanding of the “stars” because the original Greek word here can mean “angels” or simply “messengers.” Most take the meaning to be messengers, and then comes the discussion of who constitutes the “messengers” of the seven churches. That will likely be discussed for a long time, but the general point being made by Jesus (and the more important focus for us), in this message of comfort to the church at Ephesus is that Jesus is **nearby them**, He is **concerned for them**, He **cares**, He **knows their condition**. I would submit that He also cares for churches today that are striving to follow His will!
2. **Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love** (Revelation 2:4). Cf., discussion under SUMMARY above. Even though the saints at Ephesus were doing well in the area of sound teaching, their service was fatally flawed in that it was done without proper love. The same preacher who worked with them for three years (Acts 20:31), wrote words of warning about the proper motivation in doing the Lord’s will (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). It was a most serious matter to leave out love; a matter from which our Lord demanded repentance (v. 5).
3. **...remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent** (Revelation 2:5). The candlestick (lampstand) represents the church (1:20), thus these haunting words suggest a state of being out of fellowship with the Lord Jesus is possible for a congregation of the Lord’s church. Though we understand that we will be judged as INDIVIDUALS on Judgment Day (2 Corinthians 5:10 et.al.), churches obviously can reach a sad state of being out of fellowship with the Lord while the earth still stands.
4. **But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate** (Revelation 2:6). Not only is it important to have love as the proper motivation for our service to the Lord, it is also important for us to HATE the same things the Lord hates! One brother has written a book (commenting on Revelation via a series of questions and answers) which he titles: *The Lamb/The Lion*. Jesus is BOTH the Lamb and the Lion (Revelation 5:5, 8). There is BOTH the good and severe aspect of the Lord (Romans 11:22); there is such a thing as the terror of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:11). False teaching which leads souls away from the Lord is something the Lord hates, and so should we!
5. **...to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God ... shall not be hurt of the second death ... to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, ... power over the nations ... the morning star** (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 28). **Blessings to the OVERCOMERS!** All of these wonderful things will be the reward to the saint who remains faithful to the Lord. If we cannot be persuaded to do right and stay right by these promises, what would it take???

6. **I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich** (Revelation 2:9). Smyrna: “The Poor, Rich Church!” They were POOR in worldly treasure, but RICH in heavenly treasure (cf., Matthew 6:20).
7. **I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan** (Revelation 2:9). Those who were claiming to be Jews were claiming to be God’s own people—that is what they thought; Jesus says they were NOT His, but rather were with the adversary, Satan. To me it is a sad thought that so many religious groups today are totally convinced that they are God’s faithful ones, but actually are opposing His doctrine and would be given the same title this ancient group were given.
8. **I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith,...** (Revelation 2:13). It is a tremendous source of hope and encouragement that we can take the lesson from the church at Pergamos that it is possible to be faithful to the Lord even in the most difficult location imaginable. We are not limited as to where we may choose to live. Actually whatever place we should choose is a place that desperately needs a faithful Christian to live there so as to present to the other residents the saving message of the gospel and to establish there a church of the Lord!
9. **I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Rev 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols** (Revelation 2:19-20). Stacking up multitudinous good works will not erase the responsibility we have to be faithful to the doctrine of Christ (cf., 2 John 9-11).
10. **But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden** (Revelation 2:24). I have heard it argued (?) that the expression here: **“I will put upon you none other burden,”** is Jesus giving the faithful ones at Thyatira the “OK” to remain in this congregation, even if the guilty ones do not repent. When I hear such, my eyes wander back up to verse 5 and conclude, personally, that there will come a time when the spiritual adultery Jesus describes in such a negative way here will cause Him to remove their lampstand if they do not repent (else Jesus would be a respecter of persons, cf., Acts 10:34-35). If no repentance is forthcoming, the faithful ones need to leave such a group and find another or start another, if they wish to maintain fellowship with the Lord.

VIII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.

F G B G O D O F A S T G R A D E A T H E
 E E P D E R S A Z X S L W E D N N V F R
 W D E N I E D S B G T O Y H R M T U I O
 M J R T Y D N B G T R R F Y C D I S Z A
 Q W G X H E D T R F V Y M G T G P Y U M
 K L A I Y E P H E S U S F V N C A X S W
 Q A M Z X F A Y D S W E D J C V S F R T
 Y H O V F R T A N H Y U T M E U H K M U
 X S S V A Z I T S E E S F V B Z E N N H
 Y U I O E R E I C B A D E S S X E Q A Z
 C D E R V R N R T C R H N U M D H B R Z
 N C X S W E C A D E R A B B N C E D E Q
 R A L Z X R E P E N T V N A B G R B S L
 L E F O R T G B R I H S H G T M D B I X
 Y Z I Q T W S X A Y V Y A E L E D C S V
 B B G N Y H U L M P T L E T T O E V T V
 A C X Z S Q O W S H V R B M A N N A K I
 B U J M N C Y D G R G F V C D N W D X Z
 X S W E I C V I B Y S T A R D N H Y S Z
 C C D N R V M B G T Y V F R Q A Z D R L

[The words (or word locaters) listed below are to be found in the text of our lesson. They also are found in the puzzle above. This is just one more way to reinforce what you have studied from the text. Why not read the whole verse where the word is found one more time as you do the puzzle? Thank you for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. Let's desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow (1 Pet 2:2). DRL]

Revelation 2	
Ephesus	manna
patience	Thyatira
repent	few
Nicolaitans	Jezebel
Smyrna	reins
death	fast
Pergamos	star
denied	ear
Antipas	
Satan	

I have composed a Crossword Puzzle on the content of Revelation 2, to see it, click [H-E-R-E](#).