

REVELATION

Overcoming Conflict & Compromise

Chapter 2 & 3 SEVEN CHURCHES

Pattern in all 7 churches:

1. Characteristics of the Lord
2. Commendation of Christ (except Laodicea)
3. Condemnation of compromise (except Smyrna and Philadelphia)
4. Call to obedience and reward

Chiastic structure:

A – Ephesus

-heading for decline

B – Smyrna

-no criticism in face of Jewish persecution – hang in there!

C – Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis

-Some praise, compromising with culture, idol worship, immorality, or just apathetic in the faith

B1 – Philadelphia

-no criticism in face of Jewish opposition – hang in there!

A1 – Laodicea

-no praise, rebuked for lukewarmness, heading for decline

Pattern of 7's that lead to the end of the world over and over, even in the letters to the 7 churches all start where they are and end with eternal reward or consequence!

EPHESUS

-the one walking around the lampstands – among them! Holds the seven stars – he's in control and intimately knows His church.

-They were good at truth – tested and tried and many false apostles exposed.

-Not good at love – in danger of losing their status as Christ's church – truth without love means nothing! I Cor. 13

-Nicolatians – probably an early Gnostic group against the tenets of Christianity.

- Reward: eat from the tree of life – beckons us back to Genesis 2:8-9 and R. 22:2,14,19
 - *There was a tree in the garden of the Artemis temple in Ephesus – asylum!

SMYRNA

- Jesus is first and last (all beckon us back to chapter 1 designations of Jesus).

-No condemnation

-Persecution was coming from the Jews, synagogue of Satan!

-Impending persecution is temporary – how temporary? Ten days – literally or an OT allusion? Look back to Daniel 1 – Daniel and his three friends were tested for 10 days – they came out better than the rest at the end of the 10 days – so too the Smyrnans!

- Reward: crown of life, victorious over the second death – look to Rev. 20

PERGAMUM

- Jesus is the sharp two-edged sword (again chapter 1 and Hebrews 4)

-Cult religion that worship the image of a serpent – Christians equated it to the serpent (devil) of the garden of Eden.

-Not much known about Antipas – a martyr of Christ.

-Balaam and Balak story found in OT – Num. 22 – 24, death in Num. 31:8 and Num. 31:16.

-Truth of God (the sharp sword) versus the deception of Balaam and Balak. Attempts to get God's people to false worship. Insight into what the Nicolaitan teaching was.

-Reward comes from repentance: two-fold: hidden manna = the manna Moses put in the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 16:32-34) – a benefit pertaining to the future kingdom of glory – you can eat with God of the manna from heaven one day instead of food sacrifice to idols in Balaam's deception. Jesus talks of a banquet table in Matt. 8:11. Jesus is the living bread

-The white stone with engraved name only known to the one who receives it – not entirely known symbol except the WHITE in the context of other uses in Revelation probably refers to holiness, clean, set apart for God's purposes. Generally means God's favor – innocent in trial, admission ticket into an event. A new name is given – like Christian, like Cephas to Peter. Jesus does rename. God renames Abram to Abraham – signifies a special relationship with God. It's a personal, individual call to holiness in the midst of temptation to capitulate to cultures seductions – idol worship, prostitution, meat sacrificed to idols – pagan rituals. Repent, overcome, and a new name and a new ritual in heaven is in store!!!

THYATIRA

- Jesus' eyes are the focus of this church's description of our Lord.

-Home of Lydia in Acts 16:14 – the merchant of purple linen.

-The Lord SEES their love, faith, service and endurance. No mention of WORD!

-A Jezebel-like prophet was problematic. OT Jezebel was a queen who enticed God's people to do wicked things. Sexual immorality, idol worship – food offered to idols.

-Jezebel was King Ahab's wife – killed the Lord's prophets BUT NOT ELIJAH! EVIL!

-God will deal with her and her followers and the next generation after her to continue to do evil – that's the last generation that'll commit this. God's punishment will come!

-To the faithful, they will rule (shepherd) with an iron scepter (Psalm 2:9) – reigning with Christ the great shepherd (see also 12:5, 19:15).

-Morning Star refers to Jesus in particular, in general, to hope. (Rev. 22:16)

-Again this offer ends well for those who listen.

SARDIS

-Jesus holds the seven spirits – the Holy Spirit breathes life into a church body.

-They had reputation for life but were on the verge of being dead – wonder why Jesus comes as one with angels and spirits – to infuse life back into the church.

-Invaders took Sardis twice in its history – by stealth, at night, means.

-Many temples barred worshipers with soiled garments in order not to insult the deity. Many cults mixed together in worship here. Jesus wants white garments for Himself as the one true God!

-Many Greek and Roman cities had citizen roll calls. New citizens added, expelled citizens taken off the books. Book of life in Jewish thought is also closely tied to John's use here in Revelation of those who belong to God belong to His book of life.

*Note: Sardis is harshly criticized! Not under persecution but compromise. Seducing culture got the best of them – a FAIR WARNING TO US AS WELL!

PHILADELPHIA

-Jesus described the one with the key of David (messianic text in Isaiah 22:22). The ruler of the kingdom of David (Jesus) has complete authority.

-While facing Jewish persecution, Jesus wants the Philly group to know who is a 'REAL' Jew, the ones who follow Him. The open door is there's leading into the kingdom of God.

-Great time of testing – generally referring to the end of the world judgment by God on all of creation – they will make it through!

-Isaiah 49:23 and 60:11 – Jewish expectation that in the end time – all nations would bow at their feet – the people of God!

-In Malachi 1:2 – God says He loves Israel, His people, but despises Esau.

-Those who were rejected Jews (God's people) received a place and a new name in God's house – the temple – the pillars! (Isaiah 56:5)

-New Jerusalem is the forever heaven with God place described in Rev. 21. HOLD ON!

LAODICEA

-Jesus, the Amen – truth of God, faithful and true in his witness of who God is.

-Beginning – possibly 'source' of God's new creation

-Water supply was bad – piped in hot from the south, and cold from the north. When it reached the city – it was lukewarm – not useful. He likens the water to a cause to vomit! Jesus calls them as useless as their water supply.

-Laodicea was well-known for its banking industry, medical advancements in eyesight, and textile industry (black wool) as well. Jesus rebukes on these three levels and calls them poor, blind and naked! Spiritual condition that was in contrast to the physical well-being and expertise.

-Jesus offers refined gold – tested and tried, white garments – holy and pure, eye salve – spiritual sight that pulls you out of lukewarmness. Discipline and rebuke is needed to correct the situation (see Hebrews 12).

*Door is closed from the church's side – Jesus stands and knocks – this is not evangelistic, but a call to re-commit one's life to Jesus in fellowship with Him.

-Reward: dining with Jesus once again – the final banquet when all sit around the table with Jesus forever!

-Again, reigning with Jesus on earth and heaven is a common theme throughout Revelation – so the throne is offered as reward

FINAL NOTES

-Notice a final reward in each church is basically HEAVEN and fellowship with Christ forever as those who reign with Him. In each church we are brought to the end of the world as we will continue to do so throughout this book.

-Notice Jesus as the central theme and all his descriptions in chapter 1 are repeated in some form in each of the 7 churches.

*The church was more in danger of compromising their spiritual scruples with culture than it was being persecuted. **WE SHOULD HEED THE SAME WARNINGS!**

-So, the conflict is on! Jesus in chapter 1 is the subject of Revelation and reason why everything else will be written. Jesus' church is addressed in chapter 2 and 3, to commend and condemn and correct as the church faces conflict with its culture (Roman cultural seduction and some Jewish persecution, Roman persecution will follow in the church's history but not as pronounced as here in Revelation as it will later on).

CONFLICT – MAJOR THEM OF REVELATION – conflict between God and Satan and we the church, we the Christians are caught in the midst of that conflict!