

Revelation 2

The letters written to the seven churches can and most certainly should be seen as letters to the church today as well. Christians are not above the law of God, however they still must follow the commands of Scripture. There are certain items that each letter will have in common: God's reference to Himself, a particular sin, and a specific blessing. The first church that the Lord speaks to is the church of Ephesus.

v. 1-7 – To the church in Ephesus.

- God refers to Himself here as, *The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands*. God here is showing that He has ultimate power and authority. He holds the stars in his hand. These stars as we learned earlier are the angels of the churches. He holds these angels in His hand expressing His true authority and power. Not only does the Lord Christ hold the angels but also walks among the churches. In this verse the Lord is assuring His people that they will never be alone.
- The first sin that is brought before the people is the sin of **IDOLATRY**. The members of the church of Ephesus have fallen away from the way of the Lord. They once had Christ and Gospel as their first love, but since have fallen away and found other things allowing them to become more important than Christ and His Gospel. From this sin, all of the others will naturally flow.
- The Lord will give *to eat of the tree of life*, to those who conquer. We are made conquerors in Christ through the cross. This verse shows that if we do not reject Him or fall away from Him, we will one day eat from the tree of life. This tree of life is situated in the Paradise of God which is the New Heaven and the New Earth according to chapter 21.

v. 8-11 – To the church in *Smyrna*

- Here God refers to Himself as *the first and the last, who died and came to life*. By this the Christian is able to see that God has all things in control. He existed before the world was created and will exist after all things are destroyed. But not only this, He also has conquered the powers of death by dying and rising again. All things are subject to the power and authority of Christ our risen savior.
- Sin #2 is the sin of **NOT FEARING OR REVERING GOD**. When Christ is no longer first in a person's life, all of their problems seem insurmountable. However when Christ is the focus of life, then even the most horrible of circumstances are bearable in life.
 - A brief side note here is to the use of the number TEN. Historically the number TEN is used to show a time of intensity. It can be used for a time of intense joy or as it is used here for a time of intense pain and suffering.
- The blessing found in this section is that those who conquer, hold fast to the end, will not have to suffer *the second death*. The first death would be what one would expect, the loss of life in this world and resting the body in a grave. The second death however goes deeper than this physical death and portrays the eternal death that those who deny Christ will suffer. The second death is an eternity of going through the dying process without ever actually dying. This is an eternity of suffering and pain, agony and distress. For the one who conquers this death does not apply. The only thing that applies to this person is the inevitable first death and the eternal life with Christ in heaven.

v. 12-17 – to the church in *Pergamum*

- God is the one who possesses the *sharp double-edged sword*. Here we see that the one who is speaking was referred to earlier as the Son of Man in 1:16. The sword indicates the action of judgment that will be exercised upon the world. The Son of Man will be the one to Judge under the authority of the Father. All fall under the judgment of God, including the church. The fact that the sword has two sharp edges shows that the sword has two purposes. Just as the sword is used to judge the lives and deeds of the people, it is also used to protect and defend the children of God.
- The area of Pergamos is known as a very ungodly and even Satan loving land. The third sin is the sin of **SERVING TWO GODS**. Many from this church and this land were worshipping Balaam and following the lifestyle of the Nicolaitans, a very immoral group. The Nicolaitans were a sect that

was spreading heresy. They taught that a person did not have to repent and that they could sin as much as they wanted and still go to heaven. Scripture says that one cannot have two masters.¹

- The reference to Antipas needs brief discussion. Antipas is believed, according to legend, to have been a faithful witness of Christ who was roasted in a large bronze pot over a fire in the streets of the city. He is thought to have been a very respected man in the community which had the potential to shake the believers' faith and cause them to fall away.
- The blessing for those who conquer in this church is that *God will provide manna and a white stone*. These both are very significant. The manna is a little more obvious. The manna is symbolic of the promise of heaven a place where there will be no hunger or thirst because everything will be completely provided for us. The manna is also a reminder that Christ, the One who will provide for us, is the very bread of life that unites the church. The white stone is a bit more difficult and provides a glimpse into the thought process of the early church. The white stone was thrown by judges to offer the verdict of innocence. This white stone offered on our behalf shows that in Christ, the Son of Man, believers have received the mark of innocence. The stone will have written on it a name that will be our new name. In Baptism we have received a new name a His Dear Children. Here we recall the events of our baptism as we look forward to being united with Christ in His kingdom. The name on the stone also provides evidence that the innocence is more than a corporate innocence but a very individual and personal matter.

v. 18-29 – to the church in *Thyatira*

- God refers to Himself here as *the Son of God...with eyes like a flame of fire ...feet like burnished bronze*. Again Christ draws our attention back to chapter one and the description of Himself as the Son of Man. In chapter one the Son of Man possesses these exact characteristics. The fiery eyes indicate anger and displeasure over the evils in the world. The fire also shows the authority and power that He has to exercise judgment over those who are against the Lamb. The concept of bronze feet is also symbolic. This symbolizes stability and fortitude to overcome the adversary. It will be as if Christ simply walked on Satan and his agents to completely annihilate them.
- The sin is that of following the teachings of Jezebel. The sin here is the **ACCEPTANCE OF OTHER GODS AS THE REAL AND ONLY TRUE GOD**. As Christians we must stress the preeminence of God as the only true God. Those who commit acts and speak words that confuse who the only true God is, are guilty of this sin.
- To those who conquer God will give *authority over the nations and the morning star*. The authority over the nations is something that only God can give. The Son of Man here is showing that He truly is God and have the authority to give this over to those who conquer. Nations will be subject to the authority of Christ that we will proclaim. The morning star is the last star to be seen in the morning. This star will be given to those who hold fast to the teachings of the Gospel. The importance of the morning star symbolizes the resurrection of Christ. Christ is truly that start that was still shining as the sun came up on Easter morning.

Questions to Ponder

1. List the names God uses to refer to Himself in this chapter. What do these different names mean.?
2. List the blessings that God promises to pour out upon the faithful. What significance do these blessings have for you today?
3. How do these sins, referred to in chapter two, reveal themselves in the world today? Or do they?

¹ Matthew 6:24