

Revelation Pastor Lou DeVizia

Revelation 2:1-11 Fellowship Bible Church; Woodbridge, NJ

www.yourfamilychurch.com

Introduction: Chapter 1 ended with an explanation of a "mystery." The Lord Jesus was seen by John in His glory holding seven stars and standing in the midst of seven lampstands. John was plainly told by the Lord that the stars represented the messengers (or "angels") of the seven churches that he had been commissioned to write to (listed in 1:11) and that the lampstands represented those churches themselves. It is possible the messengers of the churches are the churches'™ elders or pastors. Also, the use of seven actual churches of that day may be representative of the entire, complete church - all believers in Christ of the entire church age - as the number seven sometimes can be seen to represent completion, the Lord having created the heavens and the earth in six days and having rested on the seventh, thus seven days completing creation week.

Those verses serve as a perfect segue into Chapters 2-3. Each one of the seven churches receives its own letter addressing its own unique situation. It is interesting to note that these churches of the First Century, although about the same age and in the same part of the world all seem to be in different situations. Collectively, the seven letters to the seven churches can be seen as a complete message to the complete church. Many of the characteristics of each church can exist in churches throughout history and today. The letters should be taken as a great personal warning from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Head of the church, as to how to prepare for His imminent return. He is coming, and the time is near (1:7, 1:3).

Also note that John had been told to write what he had seen, the things which are, and the things which are coming (see 1:19). Chapters 2-3, addressing the church in the church age, can be seen as a record of "the things which are."

1. Verses 1-7 - To the angel of the church of Ephesus: zeal against false teachers, but lost their first love.

- v.1 - Sender (the Lord Jesus) and recipient (the angel of the church of Ephesus) identified.

- vv.2-3 - Jesus knows our works. He was aware of the how the Ephesian church labored for Him, how they endured hardship, and He especially noted that they had stood against false apostles. That much was commended. We must test all teaching and teachers. When they are false they must be corrected and/or rejected.

- v.4 - Though pleased with their resistance of false teachers, Jesus did have something against them: they had left their first love. We know from Christ's™ teaching while He was on earth that we are to love God with all of our hearts, minds, souls, and strength. When we come to faith in Christ, we are responding to His great love in sacrificing Christ for our sins. Love is the ultimate binding tie of the relationship between the redeemed and the Redeemer. In our zeal for doctrinal purity, never forsake love, specifically love for Jesus Christ our Lord.

- v.5 - It takes a good deal of humility to do this, but it is critical that we never forget that passionate, child-like love we had for God when Jesus first saved us! We just wanted to figure out how to worship, praise, serve, tell others... They are called to repent (acknowledge that they have sinned in falling from their first love) and do the first works; this says something critical about love: it is not just a feeling, it is action (works). He does not call them back to a feeling, he calls them back to works. Works of love. In all of their zeal against false apostles (which is good and proper indeed) they had neglected works of love - fellowship, sharing each other's burdens, witnessing, caring for people who needed it, etc. He calls them to repent and come back to this. Twice in this verse He calls them to repentance. If they did not, the consequence was He would remove their lampstand. The lampstand represents the church - the body of believers, their existence as a congregation and their ministry together. This is to say, if they did not get back to their first love, they would eventually cease to be a church. We must never forget what matters to Jesus - the Head of the church - most.

- v.6 - Another commendation: they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans as Jesus did. Who are they? No one can say for sure, but perhaps the meaning of the word (essentially it means "over the laity" or "over the people") gives some insight. Perhaps there were people who unduly lorded authority over others in the church, and the Lord, who is the Head, hated that, as did the Ephesus church. Perhaps this connects to the false apostles they had resisted. Nevertheless, this much is clear: Jesus hated the practice of evil, and we do well to hate it as well. Know His word, love what He loves, hate what He hates.

- v.7 - He speaks to both churches and individuals in churches here. We must humble ourselves, seek Him diligently, be close to Him, respond to what corrects our paths, and overcome the evil of this life.

2. Verses 8-11 - To the angel of the church in Smyrna: persecution and testing.

- v.8 - Again, addressee and Author identified, showing this to be a unique, specific letter.

- vv.9-10 - Here, the church is persecuted and suffering. Apparently the suffering is at the hand of religious Jews who have rejected Christ and are persecuting the Christians (likely a mix of believing Jews and Gentiles). The persecutors likely believe they are serving God, nevertheless they are serving Satan (note that they say they are Jews and are not - they likely had an outward religious form, and were convinced because of religious pedigree that they belonged to the Lord, but they were dead wrong). More suffering would be faced, but the Lord was allowing the faith of the church to be tested. The Lord calls them to be faithful, even to the point of death. This world holds nothing for the Christian. On the other side the crown of life awaited.

NOTE: Real Christianity has, and always will, naturally clash with religion of virtually every kind.

NOTE: They were poor, but they were rich. They were rich in faith, and the reward for enduring would be great. Enduring hardships patiently pleases God.

- v.11 - Again, the promise of escaping what is coming is given to the faithful. The second death is a reference to being cast into Hell at the final judgment, 20:14.