

Revelation- Class 2 (Revelation 2)
“Letters to the Churches -Pt. 1”

Recap:

Last week we discussed the context of the book
Attempting to answer the who, what, where and why
Even though we can pull out timeless truths that impact our lives
This letter was written to a specific audience

The popular belief was that this was written during a time of mass persecution
Their lives were literally on the line to follow Jesus
When it felt like the world was turned upside down
Jesus, would have something to say to His Church
That would bring hope... encouragement... and correction...

John was commanded to write

- The things he has seen (Chapter 1)
- That he currently see’s (Chapters 2-3)
- And will see... (Chapters 4-22)

We ended chapter one with the picture of the glorified Christ
He could had been recorded as doing anything...

- Sharpening a sword
- Sitting restfully on a throne
- Dancing with the angels...
- Making coffee... because... He Brews



We see him in the midst of the Golden Lampstand (the churches vs. 20)

Holding seven stars in His hand which John describes as the seven angels of the churches

Before we dive deeper into the book

I think it is good for us to reflect on the intentional action of Jesus

“Moralistic Therapeutic Deism”



1. A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.¹

Jesus is not a passive observer of His Church as we'll see in Revelation 2-3

Reminder:

This book has caused many debates and it's not simply black and white

Due to how highly symbolic it is, there are many differing thoughts.

For example: we will discuss 4 of the 7 churches tonight

We could look at it as that specific church or symbolically as a church age.

We'll look at it as if Jesus is addressing each specific church

And we'll be cruising at 10,000 feet through this study

That means, each other churches I will mention tonight can be a study on their own

But we will focus on several important factors...

- #1. Greeting to the specific Church
- #2. How Jesus identifies Himself
- #3. Progress Report of the Church
- #4. Correction
- #5. Command from Jesus to the church
- #6. Exhortation
- #7. Promise of Reward.

Location of Churches and Why



¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Moralistic-Therapeutic-Deism.html>

Question of the week: "Who are the angels Jesus is addressing?"

Since this is a symbolic book, it could mean one of many options

1. Guardian angels
 - a. Angels who serve God don't sin. They will not benefit from the blessings or warnings that we'll see in the letters like
 - i. partake of the tree of life ([Rev. 2:7+](#)),
 - ii. cannot be imprisoned by men or killed ([Rev. 2:10-11+](#)),
 - iii. Names written or are not written in the Book of Life ([Rev. 3:5+](#)) nor will they reign over the nations
2. Church Leaders like Bishops
 - i. Church leaders were referenced as elders in the Scriptures
 - ii. Church leadership was always referenced in a plural way
3. The overall spirit of the church
 - i. Never used in Scripture
4. Pastors of the congregations
 - a. Messengers
 - i. Humans referenced as stars before
 1. Genesis 37:9 (ESV), "9 Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me."
 2. Revelation 12:1 (ESV), "1 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."
 3. Daniel 12:3 (NLT), "3 Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever."

Adam Clarke believed the **angel** of each church was its pastor. "*Angel of the Church* here answers exactly to that officer of the synagogue among the Jews called... the messenger of the Church, whose business it was to *read, pray, and teach* in the synagogue." (Clarke)²

There are pro's and con's for each stance but two things truths we can hold on for sure.

1. Christ had a message for His Church
2. Look at which hand Jesus is holding the stars (vs. 20)
 - a. Right hand

² <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/revelation-1/>

- i. symbolic of rulership, authority, and sovereignty.³
- ii. Important to understand that even in correction, they were still in a place of blessing and strength

Pause: Take note at the character of Jesus...

He is not quick to throw away or quit on you, even when you need correction.

He communicates ... **GROWING UP THINKING LIFE IS JUST A TEST**

He communicates that there is still work that needs to be done and I'll be **WITH YOU**

Along the way.

Ephesus: Revelation 2:1-7

Ephesus means "Darling"

Ephesus was massive and known throughout the world

For it's religious diversity, economic stability, and cultural influences.

It was also known for it's grand temple to the Goddess Diana (Fertility)



"The Temple of Artemis was also a major treasury and bank of the ancient world, where merchants, kings, and even cities made deposits, and where their money could be kept safe under the protection of deity." (Longenecker in his commentary on Acts)

We get the first mention of the Church in Ephesus in the book of Acts.

Big name preachers and teachers like: Paul, Priscilla, Aquila, Apollos, and Timothy and John!

Jesus said, you will know someone by their fruits Matthew 7:20...

Paul made his way to Ephesus, and saw the people who believed but lacked fruit.

Acts 19:2, "2 and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

³ <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2015/06/13/what-does-the-right-hand-symbolize-or-mean-in-the-bible/>

He asked have you received the holy spirit? Why?

Because the fruit of the spirit is... Love.

Paul would lay his hands on them and they received the holy spirit...

he taught them and as he was leaving Ephesus he warned the elders...

Acts 20:28-31, "28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. 29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number some will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears..."

Look, I warned you for three years...

there are going to be people who want to take everything the Lord has worked on.

You study, rebuke, encourage, stand up for what is right in the Lord's eyes.

Paul must have had the same zealousness for Ephesus as He did the Corinthian Church

2nd Corinthians 11:2, "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

After 40 years, what happened to the church of Ephesus? How did they do?

Revelation 2:1-3 (ESV), "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. ² 'I know your works, **YOUR TOIL and your **PATIENT ENDURANCE**, and how you **CANNOT BEAR** with those who are evil, but **HAVE TESTED** those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³ I know you are **ENDURING PATIENTLY** and bearing up **FOR MY NAME'S SAKE**, and you have **NOT GROWN WEARY**."**

The key phrase here... "I know your works"

There is no surprise to Jesus of the works and also hidden sin.

This Church on the outside looks good... there's momentum, there's toil... patience

So much patience it's listed TWICE!

They have no tolerance for evil and a diligence to test false teachers....

And they didn't quit... for 40 YEARS! But...

Revelation 2:4 (ESV), "But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first."

The Message: You walked away from...

NKJV: You have left...

This church has a lot of movement... theological excellence... character

But all that good did not cancel the **BAD**

What was the Bad? They left /abandoned their first love
Important to note: They did not lose their first love

Leaving = you know where to find it
Losing= never able to get it again.

"A church has no reason for being a church when she has no love within her heart, or when that love grows cold. Lose love, lose all." (Spurgeon)

Here's a challenge... a push...

You may be sitting at your table thinking, "whew I'm good...I love God!"

Maybe the Ephesian church loved God, intellectually

But a component for loving God is loving one another.

1st John 4:20 (NLT), "If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?"

So what is the Ephesian Church to do?

Revelation 2:5-7 (ESV), "⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place— unless you repent. ⁶ But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

Remember= Present Imperative

- Keep on remembering
- Forgetfulness leads to spiritual decline (Pastor Jon)
- Examen

Repent= Command

- Rethink your thinking.
- Deliberate rejection of sin

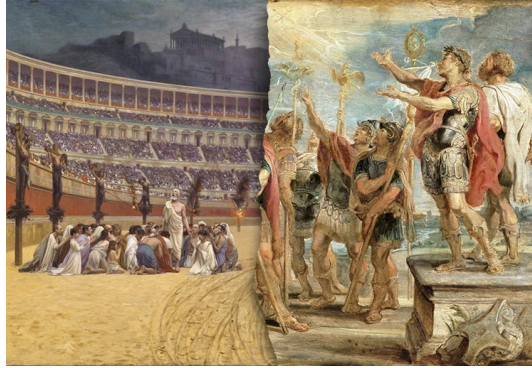
Do the First Works= Command

- An action that you are responsible for
- An command that is possible

Nicolaitans

- Heathenism
- Focused heavily on liberty
- Unrestrained indulgence

Smyrna: Revelation 2:8-11



A wealthy city that practiced Emperor worship

Worshipping the emperor became law as it would show gratitude towards Rome

Roman citizens needed to pinch incense and burn it on the alter to Caesar

By doing so they would be given a certificate stating they did their religious duty

Trouble would come if one were not to worship the emperor

Smyrna comes from the word *myrrh*,

a sweet-smelling perfume used in embalming dead bodies.

The importance of Jesus identifying himself as the one who came to life

The pastor of the church at that time: Polycarp

He entered the arena. The pro-consul gave him the choice of cursing the name of Christ and making sacrifice to Caesar or death. "Eighty and six years have I served Him," said Polycarp, "and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" The pro-consul threatened him with burning. Polycarp replied, "You threaten me with the fire that burns for a time and is quickly quenched, for you do not know the fire which awaits the wicked in the judgment to come and in everlasting punishment. Why are you waiting? Come do what you will." And he remained unmovable. So the crowds came flocking with their sticks from the workshops, from the baths and the Jews, even although they were breaking the Sabbath law by carrying such burdens, were foremost in the clamor and bringing wood for the fire. They were going to bind him to the stake. "Leave me as I am," he said, "for He who gives me power to endure the fire will grant me to remain in the flames unmoved, even without the security you will give by binding." So they left him loosely in the flames and there he died for Christ.



Revelation 2:8-9, ⁸ “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

Because He is ALIVE- Whatever season of life you are going through...

*Jesus is STILL King, the fulfilled Promise, is STILL ruling and reigning
Death, Hell, and the grave are STILL defeated
God is STILL in control and gets the final word
Demons STILL tremble at the name of Jesus*

*The disqualified are STILL qualified to be children of God because of Christ
Even though the world may mock Christ, every KNEE will still bow
And every tongue will STILL confess
Jesus is STILL coming back!*

*You STILL have access to God to pour out your heart
Even when you mess up, He is STILL with you... never leaving nor forsaking
He is STILL working in and through you, faithful to complete what He started*

*Your calling, anointing, your God given purpose has not changed
You are STILL more than conqueror through Christ Jesus
The peace only Jesus offers is STILL available to you in your crises*

The Good news is STILL Good even when your world, season in life, or circumstances are not.

Revelation 2:9 (ESV), ⁹ “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Don't miss it...

Jesus says, “I know... you works... your tribulation... and poverty... and the blasphemy”
Jesus is in the know of what this Church is encountering.
The injustice, the pain, the tears, the penny pinching, the nightmare they are living
He even knows the people who are causing the pain.

Revelation 2:10 (ESV), ¹⁰ Do not fear any of those things which **you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**

If I were receiving this letter

I would have hoped to have heard, “you're all done suffering now.”

Nope... he writes,

“DON’T BE AFRAID” because there is more to come...

Written in the Greek: Passive

[Psalm 56:11](#), "In God I have put my trust, I will not be afraid."

Be of good cheer. He's overcome the world, [John 16:33](#).

Be faithful, even to the point of death.

The victor’s crown...

it’s like winning a medal at the Olympics...

They may take their lives, but these people are walking into heaven with crowns.

Jesus said, don’t fear those who can kill the flesh,

but fear the one who can destroy the soul.

When was the last time you encouraged yourself?

This drama... this pain... worth it when I get that bling in heaven!

It’s because this was written to a culture that emphasized crowns

Caesars / pagan gods / champions wore crowns

They understood the importance and specialness of a crown.

Revelation 2:11, “11 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Those who are victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

The second death...

The first death is only physical, the second is spiritual and eternal

Many theologians believe that after Jesus rules for 1000 years

He will resurrect those who did not believe in Him,

every knee will bow and confess that Jesus is Lord...

and He will separate the sheep from the goats.

Revelation 20:6... but those faithful unto death will not face the second death. we will live because Jesus is alive!

Pergamos: Revelation 2:12-17



Pergamos comes from the word “perverted marriage”

Some theories

- Huge altar to Zeus was located here
- Believed to be the center of Pagan religions
- Location of Babylonian Priests
- Center for emperor worship

Revelation 2:12-13, ¹² “And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³ “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”

Even though their church was built in the center of a pagan culture

Jesus stated that He knew their works and they held fast to Jesus’ name.

They didn’t deny the faith!

But... The problem Jesus had with the church was for holding the doctrine of Balaam.

In a nutshell... Balaam found a way to stumble Israel and that was to entice them

Into sexual sin with gentile women.

The idea here is that though they stayed the course

COMPROMISE crept into their church

Marrying the faith of Christ with the culture of pagan practices.

On top of that they became like the Nicolaitans...

Traditionally believed to approve orgies and

Are they disqualified?

Revelation 2:16-17, ¹⁶ Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. ¹⁷ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”

A white stone

- could be a ticket to a banquet
- a sign of friendship
- evidence of having been counted
- or as a sign of acquittal in a court of law.

New name:

- Pet name
- Your name is there, your seat is reserved.

Thyatira: Revelation 2:18-29

Not much is known about this church or location

It wasn't big and wealthy, nor was it the center of religious diversity

The biggest issue of that day was the cost to follow Jesus

Their culture had guilds, which had its own idol.

In order to have a business, have a job, have a place of safety

They needed to choose participate in the guilds idol worship

Or go broke and choose to be faithful to Jesus.

Revelation 2:18, "To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze."

Jesus would refer to Himself for the first time as The Son of God

As opposed to the Son of Man, because He came to clean house...

the fire and the bronze were speaking of judgement.

brass is pure and highly refined in the fire.

- *Steadfastness*
- strongest known metal in the ancient world
- strong and unmovable.

Even as He is dressed and ready to judge He does something interesting

He sees the good in this church first...

Revelation 2:19, "I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first."

I think it's interesting that He would spend time talking about the good things

Because many people think that God is out to get them...

that God only sees the bad that you do but as we see in Scripture

God sees, knows, remembers, the good that you do.

Hebrews 6:10, "God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them."

Even though He may remember...

there is nothing that we deserve, but He blesses us through His grace.

You are paying the cost! Though you have no outward persecution

You have inward compromise.

He continues His message to the church.

Revelation 2:20, “Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.”

There was a woman who was calling herself a prophetess.
and her teaching was leading many astray,
here’s the gospel but did you know...
it’s ok to be sexually immoral, it’s ok to be eat food sacrificed to idols...
She lead the church astray so much that Jesus would compare her to Jezebel...
You remember Jezebel who was evil and manipulative.

Brings me to a very important point... when it comes to the word of God...
You have a responsibility to search out the scriptures to see if it is true.
To be a Berean...

Revelation 2:21-22, “I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.”

Immorality is not only speaking of Physical immorality
But also speaking of spiritual immorality, she was introducing idolatry.
Also look how Jesus said, I have given her time...
Many people think that Jesus
doesn’t care or won’t judge because He’s not doing anything.
But the judgement of the Lord is like two gears...
even though they are taking their time.
They will grind thoroughly

Revelation 2:23, “I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. 24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan’s so-called deep secrets, ‘I will not impose any other burden on you, 25 except to hold on to what you have until I come.’”

Children= those that have followed her