

## ***When Jesus Speaks to His Church*** **Revelation 2:1 – 3:22**

Revelation 1:17-20 = When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man. He laid his right hand on me and said, “Don’t be afraid. I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, but look – I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades. Therefore write what you have seen, what is, and what will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”

Jesus Christ – the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth, the glorified one – speaks directly to John, to preview for him the *apokalupsis* – the Revelation.

- *Write what you have seen* = past things. Revelation 1 – a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- *Write what is* = present things. Revelation 2-3 – the messages to the seven churches. Actual churches, application to our day, because we are living in the *what is*.
- *Write what will take place after this* = the prophetic things. Revelation 4-22 – the future of what will take place following the Second Coming of Jesus.

1. *The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches* – *angelos* = messenger. Possibly each church was assigned a guardian angel (heavenly messenger), but practically each church had a leader (pastor, elder, overseer). Jesus commissioned John to write messages addressed to seven specific church leaders, and these leaders would then share the messages with their church. Every church today will have one common leadership position – a pastor (shepherd), a leader (elder), and an overseer (bishop). Pastors would be the most logical leader to stand before the congregation and deliver a message. The fact that Jesus holds the stars in His “right hand” is significant. The right hand is the position of strength and honor. Jesus Himself is pictured in heaven seated at the “right hand” of God. The Lord Himself protects, upholds, and guides the leaders of the church with His strength and honor.

2. *The seven lampstands are the seven churches* – Revelation 1:10/11 – I heard a voice behind me like a trumpet saying, “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: *Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.*”

- Personal messages to each church:
  - ✓ Ephesus – *Thus says the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who walks among the seven golden lampstands.*
  - ✓ Smyrna – *Thus says the First and the Last, the one who was dead and came to life.*
  - ✓ Pergamum – *Thus says the one who has a sharp, double-edged sword.*
  - ✓ Thyatira – *Thus says the Son of God, the one whose eyes are like a fiery flame and whose feet are like fine bronze.*
  - ✓ Sardis – *Thus says the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.*
  - ✓ Philadelphia – *Thus says the Holy One, the true one, and one who has the key of David, who opens and no one will close, and who closes and no one opens.*
  - ✓ Laodicea – *Thus says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the originator of God’s creation.*
- Practical messages to each church:

- ✓ Ephesus – commended for working hard to maintain doctrinal purity, for persevering and enduring hardship; warned for having “*lost their first love*” and being in danger of church death; challenged to *remember and repent*.
  - ✓ Smyrna – commended for suffering overwhelming persecution, even imprisonment, and yet remaining faith in their witness to Christ; no warning; challenged to “*be faithful to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.*”
  - ✓ Pergamum – commended for holding firm to the faith; warned for compromising with the world, resulting in fading moral purity; challenged to “*repent – otherwise I will come to you quickly.*”
  - ✓ Thyatira – commended for “*your love, faithfulness, service, and endurance*”; warned against embracing heretical doctrines, challenged to hold tightly to doctrinal integrity in order to maintain an authentic reputation.
  - ✓ Sardis – commended for their reputation of spiritual vitality; warned of God’s judgment upon them; challenged to “*be alert, and strengthen what remains and is about to die.*”
  - ✓ Philadelphia – commended for engaging in their open door of missionary work; no warning; challenged to “*hold onto what you have so that no one takes your crown*”
  - ✓ Laodicea – no commendation; warning of being neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm; challenged to be zealous and repent – “*See, I stand at the door and knock.*”
- Powerful messages to each church – “*Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.*”
    - ✓ Ephesus – “*To the one who conquers, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*”
    - ✓ Smyrna – “*The one who conquers will never be harmed by the second death.*”
    - ✓ Pergamum – “*To the one who conquers, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name is inscribed that no one knows except the one who receives it.*”
    - ✓ Thyatira – “*The one who conquers and keeps my works to the end; I will give him authority over the nations.*”
    - ✓ Sardis – “*The one who conquers will be dressed in white clothes, and I will never erase his name from the book of life but will acknowledge his name before my Father and before his angels.*”
    - ✓ Philadelphia – “*The one who conquers I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never go out again. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God – new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God – and my new name.*”
    - ✓ Laodicea – “*To the one who conquers I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*”

#### Challenges and Encouragements:

1. The universal church belongs to Jesus (“*I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it*” – Matthew 16:18) and each individual church holds a unique purpose in its present context (the churches of Acts, Paul’s epistles, and the seven Revelation churches).
2. Great blessings and rewards comes to those who conquers = *nikeo* – overcomes.

Revelation 12:11 – *“They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; for they did not love their lives to the point of death.”*

Romans 8:31-39 – If God is for us, who is against us? He did not even spare his own Son but offered him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything? Who can bring an accusation against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors (*hypernikōmen* = superconquerers) through him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.