

REVELATION (CH. 2)

The goal of the messages of Jesus to the seven first-century churches was to challenge, encourage, warn and build up believers and churches throughout church history including our day of 2020.

The value of these messages for churches today includes: 1). A revelation of what Jesus Himself **loves** and **values** in His churches as well as what He **hates** and **condemns**. 2). Identifies the consequences of **disobedience** and **spiritual neglect** as well as the **rewards** of spiritual alertness, diligence and **faithfulness to Christ**. 3). **A standard** by which any church or individual may judge their "**true**" spiritual condition in relation to God. 4). An example of Satan's methods for attacking and working against the Church and individual Christians (Judges 3:7).

How can the Church and "you" avoid spiritual decline and the resulting judgment by Christ? (a) First and most importantly churches (you) must be **willing** to "*hear what His Spirit says*" (2:5-7, 16-17, 21), which means they (you) must **listen** and **respond with obedience** to God's "direct" message. The Word of Jesus Christ must always be the Church's **guide** (1:1-5). (b) Churches (you) must continually **examine** their (your) spiritual condition in relation to God and **His standards**. When necessary, they (you) must **correct** their (your) actions and their (your) degree of toleration of worldly and immoral beliefs and behavior among their members (2:4, 14-15, 20; 20:1-3, 14-17). Spiritual decline can be **stopped** and **corrected** in any church or individual if there is **sincere repentance** and a sincere return to the **original love**, truth, purity and power of Jesus Christ and his biblical revelation (2:5-7, 16-17; 3:1-3, 15-22).

DO NOT CONFUSE THE CHURCH WITH A BUILDING, IT'S YOU!

When you think about a church, you've got to get your mind away from a physical structure, the building, and into the reality of what a church is. A church is a gathering of people made up of the same spiritual DNA and what makes up that DNA determines the **individual's survivability**, which makes/determines a **churches survivability**.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 "*For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.*"

The Church of Smyrna: The Persecuted Church (Revelation 2:8-11)

Smyrna, like Ephesus, was a beautiful city, including having wealth and commercial greatness." (Barclay) Smyrna was a city deeply committed to idolatry (many Greek gods including Zeus) and the worship of the Roman Emperors.

1.) Jesus wants to remind you of who "He is" in your life (vs.8) "*First and the Last*" is to put Himself on level ground with God the Father as being divine, eternal, and authoritative. He is even able to have control over life and death which brings great encouragement to those who suffer for the cause of Christ.

2.) Jesus wants to remind you of what "He knows" about your life (vs.9) Jesus sees when you are being persecuted for acknowledging Him, when people get angry because of your faith in Jesus and the Bible. When you stand against the standards of this world know for sure you will be cursed and ridiculed but know Jesus sees and understands what you are going through.

3.) Jesus wants to remind you of what "He's doing" with your life (vs.10) Although things were really difficult for the Smyrna Christians, Jesus warned them it's going to get worst. The 10 days most likely (unsure though) refers to the time period from when the first persecutions began under Nero in 54 A.D. thru to the 10th wave of persecutions in 284 A.D. under the emperor Diocletian. The Christians in Smyrna suffered greatly. Christians are not promised to be kept from persecution, but we are kept in—or through—persecution. Jesus never leaves us or forsakes us; therefore, we can say, "*I will not fear; what can man do to me?*" (Hebrews 13:5-6)

4.) Jesus want to remind you of what "He has" for your life (vs.10b-11) Jesus promises the **crown of life** to those who remain loyal.

James 1:12 "*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*"

Jesus promises the believers of the church at Smyrna that the second death—the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14)—will not harm them. God's people's final home is heaven (John 14:1–3).

The Church of Pergamos: The Compromising Church (Revelation 2:12-17)

Pergamos welcomed you to a city and a culture of paganism and compromise. As a Christian, it was a tough place to be if you were spiritually weak of heart and faith.

*“To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: **These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.**”*

1.) Jesus Requires You to “Be Prepared” (vs.12) *“The sharp two-edged sword”* is the Word of God. In one direction it exposes the human heart and mind in judgment. In the other direction there is forgiveness, salvation and healing. (Hebrews 4:12)

2 Corinthians 13:5 *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed you are disqualified.”*

Politics mingled with paganism explains why Pergamos was so anti-Christian and anti-christ and violent toward the church. **See any similarity growing here in America?** Is your faith strong enough to stand against persecution? Get Ready, it's here! Prepare Yourself!

2.) Jesus Requires You to “Be True” (vss. 14-16) The doctrine of Balaam: Balaam told King Balak how to get the Israelites to commit sin by enticing them with “spiritually approved of – sexual immorality” and foods sacrificed to idols. (Numbers 31:16)

There will always be temptation and the one who is the tempter (physically, spiritually) always. But no tempter or temptress can make you sin. **YOU DECIDE TO SIN AGAINST GOD.** You decide, after looking at the temptation, to think about it just a lil'. Then after you have entertained the sin, it then sticks in your head - when that happens, you have now set yourself up for the act. The result will be painful at the least. (James 1:13-15)

1 John 2:15-17 *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”*

The Disciples of Nicolas were a group who had infiltrated the church causing division an compromise. They completely agreed with a saying we are all familiar with; *“When in Rome, Do as the Romans Do”* or *“What Happen in Vegas Stays in Vegas.”* It's been dressed up today and we call it; Situational Ethics.

Be Aware of Becoming a Stumbling Block to Someone, there is a price to pay! *“But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone hung around your neck.”* Mark 9:42 (NLT)

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. . . You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. . . So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” Galatians 5:1, 13, 16-18 (NIV)

3.) Jesus Wants You to “Be Encouraged” (vs.17) *“To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat.”* This is not a prize to the person who overcomes, this word implies that every true child of God will overcome into that true Christian, Jesus will give *“the gift of Hidden Manna.”* (see John 6:28-35)

“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.” The idea or act of receiving a “white stone” was given to the accused by the judge or council. The white stone was proof positive that you had been acquitted of charges brought against you and that your name was cleared.

With the acquittal came a “clear slate” and “a new name” and a “new beginning” = celebrating one's “new life.”

A Mark of Ownership: What marks you today? / Who marks you today?

What say you? Do you fit into any of these Churches?