

# **Note**

## **Revelation – Part 2 of 15**

### **Summary**

Revelation offers a blessing to those who read and keep the message of this book. It begins with Jesus Christ's messages through John the Apostle to the seven churches in Asia Minor. The messages depict commendations, criticisms, instructions, warnings and promises. Revelation encourages followers of Jesus Christ to remain faithful in the midst of persecutions and trial, as well as extends a message of hope for the eternal future.

# Transcript

## Revelation – Part 2 of 15

Today we look at the easy part of Revelation, chapters 1 to 3, where John writes to seven churches that he used to supervise in the Roman province called Asia, which is now part of Turkey. These were seven real churches with real problems. The entire letter from chapters 1 to 22 was meant for these 7 churches.

But the first 3 chapters refer to their particular problems. There's one big scroll that is called a book. In those days a book was in a scroll form, not in our modern book form, and it was to be read aloud in the various churches. Though each church had their particular problems, they're also to listen to the problems of the other churches and to get the general message of this letter.

Let's look at chapter 1

verse 1: The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,

verse 2: who bore witness to the Word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

verse 3: Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

It begins with an encouragement for this letter to be read aloud to the churches because people didn't have their own Bibles in those days, and the rest hear it, and keep it. I hope you will obey this, for many of you, still do not believe that the Bible should be read aloud or heard aloud. May God help you.

Please don't read the Bible quietly like it's some little secret message. It is a proclamation of truth and also please read the Bible, not chapter by chapter, that's not necessary. Please understand the chapter divisions

were made for you to identify verses easily, not to separate the message of revelation into 22 parts to be read bits and pieces each time. What is worse is reading one chapter only and then jumping to another chapter. Has anybody read a letter that way? When someone sends you a letter, do you read one paragraph, then you go to read another letter from somebody else? I don't know why we do this. You don't get the whole message and you don't get the feel. You divide everything to bits. Even when scripture reading is read, it's broken up that way. All the verse and chapter divisions were not there originally. If it's there it's for convenience, for locating things.

verse 4: John to the seven churches that are in Asia: (note the number 7) Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne,

verse 5: and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

verse 6: and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

It tells us about Jesus, the first born of the dead, and Ruler of the kings of the earth. For those who heard it, they marveled that Jesus, carpenter, now ruler of the kings of the earth. That wasn't even in their mind. That's what He is, King of Kings. And then it talks about him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom. What is this kingdom? Where is this kingdom? It's eternal, it's waiting for you and me. They were always thinking of the Roman empire, now there's another kingdom to think about.

verses 7: Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

Jesus is going to come back in the clouds in a way that every eye will see him. It doesn't matter whether you're on this side of the globe or the other side. He's going to come and all will see, it's not a secret coming.

verse 8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega" says the Lord God, "who is and who was and is to come, the Almighty."

Alpha and Omega is the beginning and the end, Jesus is the beginning and the end. God starts at the beginning, he also has an ending. I hope you know the beginning and ending of God's history.

verse 9: I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

He's suffering, he is being persecuted. And I want you to see the word, patient endurance-that phrase is found over and over, it may actually be the key word in this book. We must patiently endure while we are on this earth so that we will enjoy the eternal kingdom.

verse 12: Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,

verse 13: and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

verse 14: The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire,

verse 15: his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in the furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

verse 16: In his right hand, he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

verse 17: When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not...."

When John was in this island of Patmos, he heard a voice. And when he turned, instead of seeing someone straight away, he saw seven golden lampstands. That's a menorah, the Jewish seven branch lampstand. He saw seven of those lampstands and then he saw someone in the midst of it who was so amazingly glorious like the sun shining in full glory. Son of Man, with a long robe golden sash, hair was white like snow and he knew it was Jesus and he fell at his feet. You must remember John was the beloved apostle, the one who was closest to Jesus, and now when he sees Jesus in His glory, he falls at his feet. This is to help the persecuted Christians realize that this is not the Jesus in the manger anymore. That's no more, it's over. Not Jesus on the cross, that's over. The carpenter's son is over. This is Jesus, glorious like the shining of the sun. He is Jesus.

verse 17: When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last,

verse 18: and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

verse 19: Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

verse 20: As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

So he says, I have the keys of Death and Hades. Don't worry about death, I have the keys of death. And then he says, what are the seven stars? Seven angels. What are the seven lampstands? Seven churches. Many commentators will say the seven stars are metaphorically speaking, pastors. Angels are angels, why do we have to change it? They say, the word is messenger, but it's always translated as angels.

So what's the problem? It's because we do not believe much in the spirit world. Greek thinking. The world we're in is a physical world. There's a world up there that's a spiritual world. But as far as God is concerned, it's all blended together. Satan walks to and fro, you just don't see him. There's an angel in every church watching over the church, you don't see him. There's a whole spirit world we don't see. Pagans know there's a spirit world which is as real to them as the physical world, but in our Greek thinking the spirit world belongs to the spirit realm. That's what the devil wants you to believe. But when they say angel, just believe it, there are angels in the church.

Let's go to chapter 2. The 7 churches are going to be identified and I hope you understand, 7 is a complete number. Though there are 7 real churches they probably tell us that these are the problems of churches throughout. You could fall into one of these categories, as these are the common sins of God's churches.

Church no. 1 - Ephesus

Chapter 2

verse 1: 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.'

Christ walks in the midst of the church. Just as God walked in the Garden of Eden, Christ walks in the midst of His church.

(cont. of v1) "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. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first."

So he tells the Ephesus church that you work hard, you're enduring, you're discerning, you check whether they're real apostles or not. So I want you to notice the word, 'works'. I know your works, not your doctrine. Today, most times when you want to assess the church, we always ask, what are your doctrines. And if the doctrinal statement is fine, we are fine with that church. Well, you will find that of these seven churches, it's mentioned 'I know your works' five times out of the seven. So God is more concerned about your works than your words or your doctrinal statement. If you have the right words and you don't have the right works, it is worthless. It's a document to be thrown into the bin. Good words must produce good works, otherwise it is just for fun and for inflating praise and egos. So please underline all these times you see the word, "I know your works." God knows our works and He is concerned about it.

Now what was wrong with this church? They did everything right. They were hard working, they were enduring, they were suffering, they were discerning. One problem - you have abandoned the love you had at first - v4. What love is? Is this love to God?

But if you look at Ephesians chapter 1 verse 15 which is about this church, Ephesus, it says that they were well known for their love towards the brethren, but now that love has gone. They were very good at checking whether the apostle's doctrines were right, but they lost the love for each other, for the saints.

So I hope you understand what bothers God is not your statements, how discerning you are, but your works. What kind of works, you say. But God says, I have a problem with you. You lost your first love, love to each other. I hope you understand God is going to measure you how you love each other, how you agape, serve each other. They were second generation Christians at this time.

verse 5: Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. (please underline that again) If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

What do you mean by “remove your lampstand”? Lampstand is the church. Take it away. What's the point of having a church that doesn't show love? You preach love, you don't show love. So that's the kind of churches we have today. We preach love, love, love inside the church, then the same people go out into the office, into the world and they look like just like everybody else-selfish, greedy, unconcerned about anyone else.

verse 6: Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

I tried to investigate who are these Nicolaitans and every commentator has a different idea of who the Nicolaitans are. Nobody knows. They are found again in chapter 2:15. The only thing all the commentators agree about the word Nicolaitans is from two Greek words, “Nico” means to overcome and “laitans” is from the word laity, layman. It means the overcomer of the layman. I think that is what Nicolaitans are. They are people who tell others, you're just layman, we are clergy. We know, we do, we are the priest. But early on, God says you are a priest in God's kingdom, we are all priests, we are a royal priesthood because we have the Holy Spirit in us.

So Nicolaitans are basically, I think, people who separate the church into clergy and laity. I think that's why God has destroyed the church more than anything else is this doctrine of clergy and laity, a separation. We are all servants of God, we're all priests.

Ephesus' biggest problem was they lost their love. But they still had some good things. They hated the idea of separating clergy and laity.

Church number 2: in Smyrna

verse 9 and 10. “I know your tribulation and your poverty, (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.”

We see Smyrna was a persecuted and poor but I want you to know that the Smyrna church had no criticism. Every other church, five of them had

criticism, only two did not have. Smyrna did not have any, though they were poor. God had nothing to criticise them except to tell them-hang in there.

It's mentioned here in verse 9, synagogue of Satan. So there was obviously a place that was a synagogue but the doctrines were satanic.

Verse 11, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death."

They were greatly persecuted, their lives were threatened but God said, don't worry, you'll overcome, you will not be hurt by the second death. We have two deaths, the first death is separation from our body; the second death-separation from God forever. So to the church of Smyrna-no criticism; poor, persecuted but they will have eternal life.

Church no. 3: in Pergamum:

verse 13. "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith...."

Pergamum had historically a lot of temples, kind of like the seat of satanic worship, Satan's throne, it says here. So they did not deny the faith, even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells." They were greatly persecuted but they never denied their faith.

verse 14, "But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality."

God says, you have the doctrine of Balaam. Balaam was noted to be a prophet of God who would do anything for money. He led the children of Israel into sexual immorality, permissiveness and into idolatry. There were people in the church who taught very permissive doctrines-what you do with your life, it's okay, you're already forgiven.

Secondly, eat food offered to idols in other words, get involved in idolatry. Yes, you threw the physical idols away, but your idol is something that replaces God. You look to the idol to provide you your happiness, your security, your satisfaction. We do have a lot of idols in the church. God takes care of my eternal future, He's the God of eternal future. Then I've



other gods of happiness, satisfaction, health. The church in Pergamum was full of idolatry.

verse 15. "So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans."

The Ephesians were told God is happy with you because you rejected the Nicolaitans, but here, there were those who accepted the Nicolaitans- the clergy began to separate themselves, so in the church there were the clergy and the layman.

verse 17: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except the one who receives it."

We have no understanding of some of these symbols. What is the white stone on which my name is written? We've to accept that not everything is clear but more than enough will be clear to us. So don't get stumbled on the white stone and spend hours and weeks trying to figure it out. Does it really matter?

Church no. 4: the church in Thyatira

verse 19: "I know your works (please watch again, I know your works), your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first."

He's concerned about their works.

Verse 20: "But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman, Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality, and to eat food sacrificed to idols."

You notice the same doctrine again, brought up repeatedly. This time a lady called Jezebel, don't know if that's her real name or she's called Jezebel because the most wicked woman in the Old Testament is Jezebel. She was teaching the church sexual immorality, and food offered to idols was ok. In other words, you can offer things to your little gods to take care of you while God takes care of your passport to heaven. That's Christianity today. Sexually permissive-everybody is very lax on those things. People

are cohabitating before they get married. The church doesn't bring it up. It's the new norm, that's the way life is.

Idolatry, everybody does it. They trust a lot of things to find happiness, health, security, and meaning in life, but not in God. God is for eternity. Greek thinking - in this world you find your own happiness, in the next God takes care of you. So we have Thyatira - same thing.

verse 26: "The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations."

Now they're being bullied left and right, you keep my works, not my words, you will have authority over the nations. What is all this? I thought I'm going to play a harp in heaven. No no no. You'll be given land, you'll be given property, you'll be given things to rule over, to maximise as Adam was given a garden. You have authority in heaven, not a harp, not a tiny six square feet patch of cloud.

Concerning the 4 churches, you see some of the common sins and some of the ideas implanted in your mind about your life. Prepare for the present persecution and for the eternal future, that's what this book is for. Not a speculation about things, about events, charts about the future.

Church no. 5: Sardis

Chapter 3

verse 1: "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. "'I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

verse 2: Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.'"

This is a very strange church. There are no sins in this church, Sardis, there's no immorality, there's no idolatry. What's their problem? They thought they were alive but they are dead. How do you know they are dead? "Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God." You thought you're alive? You're dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains, it's about to die, for I have not found your doctrines wrong? No! Your works are not complete in the sight of my God.

This is a church that was perfect in every way except no works. They didn't sin, no adultery, no sexual permissiveness, no Nicolaitans, no Jezebel but no works. What does God call it? Dead. You got no works means you're dead. There are too many churches like this. They know the Bible, they are always careful about sin. Only one thing they don't do-no agape love for those in the church and those outside.

Jesus said, What is the great commandment? Love the Lord your God, love your neighbour as yourself. Not complete, they love God but no love towards neighbour. So this was the problem with the church in Sardis. Sounds familiar? God is saying, wake up because they thought they are okay. Too many churches are like that.

No. 6: To the church in Philadelphia:

verse 7: "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.

verse 8: I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name."

Here we see a church that has very little power. But God says, I have the key, I open doors for you. I've set before you an open door and though you have little power, you are using that little power. I hope what you see is a church where there's little power but opportunities to do good. God opens doors for this church to serve God.

You'll find in the Philadelphia church no criticism either, like the Smyrna church. Sometimes we have the wrong idea of success. We look at the churches that are successful but in God's eyes, Philadelphia is a little church with little power but God doesn't criticise it at all.

verse 12: "The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name."

He's already hinting about the future, the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven. When it comes down from heaven, where does it go? Earth. New Jerusalem is not in heaven, but on new earth.

## Church no. 7: Laodicea

verse 14: "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. '"

verse 15: "'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!

verse 16: So because you are lukewarm, and neither cold or hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot or cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

verse 17: For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realising that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.

verse 18: I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see."

This church thought they were rich because they were a very rich church, and they thought they had everything. Notice here, they don't have any real visible sins - no immorality, no idolatry, nothing of that sort. Their problem was, they were lukewarm. They were neither hot nor cold and God says, I can handle the hot, I can handle the cold, but lukewarm-I'll spit you out. Actually it's kind of funny. A lot of us drink lukewarm water, we don't have a problem with it. In fact, that's the kind of water we prefer.

This actually speaks of the hot springs that's found in that part around Laodicea. Up till today, people go there for the hot mineral springs. When the hot water came out and you drank it, it was fine, but by the time it goes down to Laodicea, it became lukewarm. When you drank it, you'll vomit it. If you have tried drinking warm salt water you probably will throw it out.

And that's what God says, you are lukewarm, I'll throw you out. Today, most churches, their goal is, don't be too fanatical, just be okay. But don't be too complacent, just be okay. God says, that's what I can't handle. You know why? Because you get very proud of yourself. This church said, we're fine, we're not fanatical, we're not cold, we're a warm church. When people say warm, just be careful. Lukewarm you got to be careful, God will spit you out. God hates that kind of church.

God said, I'll give you gold-refined, real gold, real riches, not the kind you you think you have. They were famous also for eye ointment in Laodicea,

it helps eye problems and I'll give you that, helps you to see your condition. They didn't realise they had this problem. Lukewarm, a church who thought they were very very well.

Verse 20: "Behold, I stand at the door knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."

This is used in evangelistic sermons to unbelievers. It's used out of context. Here it's to a church telling people in the church, not outside the church, I want to have fellowship with you, I want to come into your heart.

"I'm a Christian, I know God but I don't really walk with God. I don't have fellowship with God, he doesn't really rule my life, he doesn't really control my life. I just want to be the balanced Christian, not too carried away by my faith, by my God. Otherwise people would think I'm fanatical. I'm just that balanced Christian in the eyes of myself, a bit of world, a bit of God and acceptable to all." But God says, No, that's not what I want. I want to come in and I want to sit on the throne of your heart.

verse 21: "The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne."

There will be a throne one day, the Kingdom on earth. I hope you see here the seven churches, their kinds of sins that are common to us. Just look at ourselves in the light of these seven churches. Of course it's written to seven real churches, but there are lessons which show the likes and dislikes of God. God looks for works. We prefer to look for doctrines, God looks on us being all out for Him. We prefer to have one foot in each, the world and God so that the worldly people will have good view of us and God will have a good view of us, and we're in the middle before the throne of Christ. We're spewed out by God.

I hope you will see some valuable lessons at this easy introduction to Revelation. Then from the next lesson, chapter 4 to 22 is a lot of symbols. I'm not saying it's harder but I'm not saying you can understand it just like that. You don't need to understand every thing. Some things will be revealed as the time approaches.

Some people have said these seven churches represent seven ages of church history. I don't agree with it but I'll give you the view. They said the

Ephesian church is like the early church, Apostolic Church. You can take these notes down just for interest, but I don't agree with it. The Smyrna church is the persecuted church during Roman persecution, the suffering church. Then the Pergamon church is the church during Constantine's time, just being accepted by the Emperor. Thyatira was the church of the Dark Ages, Sardis, the church of the reformation, Philadelphia, the church of mission movement, and Laodicea, the present church.

They say, look at the churches around us, so lukewarm. But the biggest church today is in China, not the US, not Europe. The biggest real church is China 80 to 100 million strong and they are not Laodicean, they are persecuted. So this whole theory is wrong because churches are at different stages of church history. Of course the western church had this sequence. If this was for the western church, maybe, but this is not for the western church. This is for the churches and in church history there are some persecuted churches, some complacent churches.

So are we in the Laodicea age? Cannot be. Ask the people in China, ask the people in Iran, are they in the Laodicea age? They are persecuted like Smyrna. So this theory is from a Western viewpoint and even the Westerners don't quite agree on this, but there are a lot of good lessons on how God sees us. God's glasses are very different from our glasses. How are you in the eyes of the wise and holy God who will rule for all eternity? How are you preparing for the New Earth? God bless you.