

What Does Jesus Know About and Say to You?

Revelation 2-3

Covenant Church
Pastor Zack Phillips
Sunday, May 5, 2019

Rev 2:1 – 3:21

1 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are 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. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. 3 I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. 6 Yet this is to your credit: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.

8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of the first and the last, who was dead and came to life:

9 “I know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich. I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have affliction. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Whoever conquers will not be harmed by the second death.

12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword:

13 “I know where you are living, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives. 14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication. 15 So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and make war against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.

18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze:

19 “I know your works—your love, faith, service, and patient endurance. I know that your last works

are greater than the first. 20 But I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication. 22 Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings; 23 and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve. 24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call ‘the deep things of Satan,’ to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden; 25 only hold fast to what you have until I come. 26 To everyone who conquers and continues to do my works to the end,

I will give authority over the nations;
27 to rule them with an iron rod,
as when clay pots—
28 even as I also received authority from my Father. To the one who conquers I will also give the morning star. 29 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

3:1 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars:

“I know your works; you have a name of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God. 3 Remember then what you received and heard; obey it, and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. 4 Yet you have still a few persons in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes; they will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. 5 If you conquer, you will be clothed like them in white robes, and I will not blot your name out of the book of life; I will confess your name before my Father and before his angels. 6 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:
These are 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:

8 “I know your works. Look, 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. 9 I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying—I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. 11 I am coming soon; hold fast to what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. 12 If you conquer, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God; you will never go out of it. I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. 13 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

14 “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God’s creation:

15 “I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. 16 So,

because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 For you say, ‘I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.’ You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich; and white robes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen; and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore, and repent. 20 Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. 21 To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”

Introduction

[S]ince seven is a very special number, meaning complete, all-inclusive, it appears that, by identifying just seven churches, John wishes to suggest that the messages are intended for all churches, wherever they may be located.¹

Pattern for the messages:

1. Address to the church’s angel
2. Thus says [Jesus] (description mostly using images from chapter 1): I know...
3. Commendation (for all but Laodicea)
4. Condemnation (for all but Smyrna and Philadelphia)
5. Exhortation/ challenge/ warning (using repent for all but Smyrna and Philadelphia)
6. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”
7. Reward for he who conquers

Church	From	Commendation	Condemnation ²	Promise
Ephesus	him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands	works, toil and patient endurance; not tolerating evildoers; discerning false apostles	“abandoning their first zestful love of Christ”	Tree of life in Paradise
Smyrna	the first and the last, who was dead and came to life	affliction and your poverty, enduring the synagogue of Satan	<i>None</i>	No harm from the second death
Pergamum	him who has the sharp two-edged sword	holding fast to Jesus’ name, no denying faith when persecuted	“being indifferent to heretical teaching”	Hidden manna and white stone

¹ Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 29.

² All quotations/characterizations are from Eugene H. Peterson, *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988, 52.

Thyatira	the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze	love, faith, service, patient endurance; last works are greater than first works	“being tolerant of immorality”	Authority over the nations and morning star (cf. 22:16)
Sardis	him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars	a few who have not soiled their clothes	“being apathetic”	White robes and name in book of life
Philadelphia	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:	works; kept Jesus’ word of patient endurance and not denied his name	<i>None</i>	Pillar in God’s temple and names written on them
Laodicea	the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God’s creation	<i>None</i>	“letting luxurious riches substitute for life in the Spirit”	Place with Jesus on his throne

1. Jesus Knows You—And Speaks A Word For You

Rom 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

2. What Is That Word for You? For Us?

Isaiah 6:10 (KJV) Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

“Listening is the common task of the church. Churches are listening posts.”³

John 16:13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

[W]hile all churches get their identity from Christ, each congregational identity is partial: each church is defined by only a piece of the vision. No single congregation exhibits the wholeness of Christ. It is not possible to look at any one instance of the church and find an entire representation of Christ, although we very certainly can be led to that wholeness as we listen to what “the Spirit says to the church” and respond in worship.⁴

3. “Conquering”

³ Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*, 48.

⁴ Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*, 47.