

Have No Fear, The End is Near

A Practical Discussion on the
Book of Revelation

9.23.09

Letters to the 7 Churches

- Why these churches?
 - Practically, these were easy churches for John's letter to reach
 - They were the "hub" of Christianity at that time
 - They are case studies
 - "Seven" reflects that they also stand for all churches throughout history
- Each one addressed according to its needs
- Jesus knows each church well
- The pluses and minuses of these churches can be found in our own churches today

Letter Format – 7 elements

- Address
- Identification of Jesus
- Claim of knowledge: "I know"
- Evaluation
- Promise or Threat
- Promise to "him who overcomes"
- "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Ephesus

- Revelation 2:1 "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. 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. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵ Remember therefore from where 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 you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

Ephesus

- Christ's authority in view
- The church has purity of doctrine
 - Zealous rejection of false doctrine, heresy
 - i.e., the Nicolaitans
- But loss of "first love"
- Called to repent or he will remove their lampstand
- Promise of the "tree of life"

Smyrna

- Revelation 2:8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. ⁹ "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. ¹⁰ Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. 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.'

Smyrna

- Christ as victor over death
- A severely persecuted church
- Enduring a synagogue that rejected the Gospel
- Call to remain faithful, even in the face of death
- “Ten Days” – allusion to Daniel 1
- “second death” – lake of fire (Rev. 20)
- Promise of the crown of life
 - “Crown” was significant in Smyrna

Pergamum

- Revelation 2:12: "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. ¹³ "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 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. ¹⁵ So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war 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 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 that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

Pergamum

- Christ as the One whose words are powerful
- “Satan’s throne” – a center for emperor worship and other pagan influences
- Some in the church are giving in to those pagan influences
- Call to repent, or truth will conquer them
- Promise of “hidden manna” and “a white stone”
 - Manna – an unending supply of nourishment
 - White stone – symbol of purity

Summary

- To Ephesus – Doctrinal purity without love is meaningless (1 Cor. 13)
- To Smyrna – Remain faithful to the end
- To Pergamum – Seek purity of faith
- To all three: Jesus knows your situation and He has a message for you!