

## THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation: 1:17-2:7 | Session 4 | Notes

The characteristics of Jesus presented in Revelation 1 are those we have not fully seen elsewhere in Scripture. At His first coming, Jesus came to His people, born of a virgin; announced as the One who would “Save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Jesus came to “Seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10; Matthew 15:24). He referred to himself as the “Bread of Life” (John 6:35), the “Light of the world” (John 8:12), the “Door of the sheep (Israel)” (John 10:7), the “Good Shepherd (to Israel)” (John 10:11), and “The Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6). These were earthly features of Jesus.

At His second coming His attributes are no longer earthly, but heavenly. He is not returning at His second coming as a lowly humble servant, rather,

*His head and hair will be white like wool, as white as snow; his eyes will be a flame of fire; his feet like brass, as if burned in a furnace, and his voice as powerful as the sound of many waters. Out of his mouth will come a sharp two-edged sword, and his face will be as bright as the Sun when it shines in all its strength. (Revelation 1:14-16).*

The purpose of the two-edged sword is found in Revelation 19:15, “*And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he will rule them with a rod of iron...*” More about that when we get to chapter 19 (see also 19:21).

This is Jesus Christ the Almighty, coming as King of kings, as the Almighty Judge and Ruler over all. At the first coming the shepherds rejoiced at the sight of the Christ; But seeing the vision of His second coming John *fell at his feet as dead*.

Verses 17, 18—

Jesus, the Almighty Judge speaks to John who is lying prostrate before him, **Fear not**. What greater words could John hear from the mouth of the King of kings? Although He is ready to Judge the earth, His grace shines forth to John and implores him to be not afraid? If this were John the apostle, he should have recognized Jesus, but in His glorified state (see description above) perhaps not.

Therefore, Jesus must assure him, John, **I am the first and the last**: it is me, **he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore**. This is the resurrected Christ, the One who holds **the keys of hell** (Literally, Hades, or the grave) **and death**. He is LORD over all. The apostle Paul said this in Romans 14:9 “*For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*”

Verse 19—

Based on the following statement, John is writing this introduction after he has already seen the Revelation. He is commanded by Jesus to **Write the things which thou hast seen**, past tense, that is, the entire Revelation he has already seen.

We also know this introduction is written after the fact because of 1:2, where it says John *bare record...of all the things he saw*.

He is to **write the things which are**, literally *what they signify*. (Greek, *eisi* = *what they signify*) **and, The things which shall be hereafter**, or as Daniel 10:14 says, "in the latter days." John is instructed to write one account of the future. This entire book is prophetic and keep in mind it is one record, one Revelation, and one prophecy (Rev. 1:1-3). Verse 19 is a description of the one Revelation, not three as some erroneously think.

Verse 20—

In vs. 16 Jesus held **seven stars in his right hand**, he says it's a **mystery** that He will now reveal. **The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.**

**Angels.** We have to always stop and consider this word when we read it in scripture. The word angel in the Greek is *angelos*. Literally, it means *messenger, envoy, or one who is sent*. It does not always mean "*an angelic being*."

The word *angelos* is used 186 times in the New Testament and sometimes it is translated as *messenger*. For example, *angelos* in Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2, Luke 7:27, it is used of John the Baptist, "*Behold, I send my messenger (angelos) before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.*" In Luke 7:24, *messengers (angelos)* came to Jesus to ask if He was the Christ. In Luke 9:52 Jesus sends *messengers (angelos)* into a village of the Samaritans. The book of James recounts the Old Testament account of Rahab who had *received the messengers (angelos)...that is the spies* (James 2:25).

Therefore, **angels of the seven churches** does not require them to be created heavenly beings as we might think.

**Churches.** Let's review the word, **churches** as we see it in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. The word is always translated from the Greek word, *ekklesia*, meaning the congregation or assembly. Therefore, our assumption is that the **seven churches** are seven assemblies of Jews, or the assembly of the Lord's people (which is always Israel). Something that should seal the deal for us that the **seven churches** we are about to read about are Jewish is that in 2:9, and 3:9 the word *synagogue* is used, **the synagogue of Satan**. That term is *used in opposition to the*

*other assemblies (i.e., synagogues)*<sup>1</sup>. The seven churches in Revelation are seven Jewish synagogues!

Let's look then again, with this in mind, at the word **angel** as it is used in regards to the seven Jewish synagogues? We have already seen the word means messenger, and the messenger can be human. While not mentioned in the Bible, but is found in Jewish texts, writings, and traditions, in Judaism and specifically in the *synagogue* there is a leader called the *Shaliach Tzibur*. Literally, this leader is referred to as the *messenger of the community*. Jews would know this very well.

“A SHALIACH TZIBUR (שליח ציבור) — literally “messenger of the community” — refers to anyone who leads services in the synagogue, not necessarily someone professionally trained or specifically hired for the job. Shaliach Tzibur is the term used to refer to in the Talmud and later Jewish legal codes<sup>2</sup> as prayer leader. In theory, anyone can serve in this position, but the Shulchan Aruch (a text of Jewish law) states that a Shaliach Tzibur must be one who is “fit” — that is, free of sin, possessing a good reputation, humble, acceptable to the community, skilled at chanting, and who is well versed in sacred texts.”<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, my assumption (which is becoming more solid) is that the seven churches are seven synagogues, and the angel of the churches are men: the *messengers of the community—the leaders of the congregation* in each of the synagogues. All of this put together lends more sense to the passages we are about to read and keeps our interpretation consistent, that Revelation is not about the church or body of Christ as we refer to it today.

In truth, English translations have misled us to a degree with their one-fits-all translation of *angelos*, and *ekklesia*.

**For further study on your own:** There are multiple expressions contained in the seven letters to the seven assemblies that are actual scenes and circumstances described in various parts of the book.<sup>4</sup>

Compare	With
Revelation 2:3	Revelation 13:10; 14:12
Revelation 2:9,10	Revelation 13:5-8
Revelation 2:13	Revelation 8:2; 16:10
Revelation 2:16	Revelation 19:21
Revelation 2:18	Revelation 19:15

<sup>1</sup> Literally, “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are (of the synagogue of the) Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan”

<sup>2</sup> Documents which discuss the specific laws and requirements of prayer at length. The Talmud is the central text and primary source of Jewish religious law.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-cantor/>

<sup>4</sup> E.W. Bullinger lists nine such instances.

Revelation 2:20-23	Revelation 17:2,4; 18:3
Revelation 3:3	Revelation 16:15
Revelation 3:12	Revelation 21:2
Revelation 3:21	Revelation 20:4

Chapter 2 and 3 contain the seven letters which will find their true interpretation and fulfillment during the Day of the Lord (The Tribulation) by the people on the Earth during that Day: that is, by Israel and those who latch on to Israel and embrace the Law and Jesus as Messiah. If we don't interpret this correctly from the beginning, we are going to make a mess of the rest of the book.

If we say these letters are addressed to the body of Christ then all that Paul wrote in his epistles are to be found wanting, because as we about to see, there is nothing in the letters to the **seven churches** about Christianity as we call our faith today, or our standing in Christ (i.e., we are washed, sanctified, justified, complete, perfect). There is nothing in these letters which harmonize with the apostle Paul who states, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus..."*, rather the seven letters are filled with *warnings, reproof, and promises given only to those who overcome and endure to the end*. These letters are very Jewish in nature, and very *works* based; there is no grace in them.

These letters are not written for those in the dispensation of grace; we must rightly divide and assign them to assemblies in a dispensation to follow, after the body of Christ has been raptured.

Jesus also refers back to the **seven candlesticks** of verse 12, the **mystery** of the candlesticks **which John** saw, they are the **seven churches**.

Chapter 2:1—

**Unto the angel**, that is the Jewish messenger **of the church of Ephesus** (the Jewish assembly as we have already discussed) **write; These things saith he...** the **he** is Jesus as He was described in 1:13ff who was in the *midst of the seven golden candlesticks (the seven assemblies)*.

Verse 2—

**I know thy works**, in the dispensation of the Law, this is always how God dealt with Israel, by their works (all seven letters in Revelation begin with works)<sup>5</sup>. In the Tribulation, grace (where works are not allowed) will no longer be offered. Anyone on earth during the Tribulation cannot and will not be saved by grace through faith. The prophet Isaiah presents a picture of the Day of the Lord:

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<sup>5</sup> Revelation 2:2,9,13,19; 3:1,8 15

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For, behold, the LORD will come with fire,  
And with his chariots like a whirlwind,  
To render his anger with fury,  
And his rebuke with flames of fire.  
For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh:  
And the slain of the LORD shall be many...

...**For I know their works** and their thoughts:  
It shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues;  
And they shall come, and see my glory.<sup>6</sup>

**And thy labour, and thy patience.** This will be necessary in the Tribulation. The patience of the saints is referred to in Revelation 14:12, "*They that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*" This is what Jesus commends the assembly in Ephesus, **how thou canst not bear them which are evil...tried false apostles...found them liars** (Greek: *pseudes*: fake).

Verse 3—

This assembly of Jews have enduring **patience** and have not grown weary in their labor. The Jews in this assembly sound faithful...

Verse 4—

**Nevertheless, I have something against thee...thou hast left thy first love.** They had love for the Lord a first, but it appears to be waning.

Verse 5—

**Remember...from whence you have fallen, and repent.** When Paul wrote to the Ephesian church, he told them they were *blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, in Christ (Ephesians 1:3)*. These blessings were a gift from God to the Ephesians.

If this Revelation letter was written to a church in the dispensation of grace then this command to **repent** would not make sense, especially in light of Romans 11:29, "*For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*"<sup>7</sup>

**Do the first works; or else.** For this assembly, works are required for the Lord to return. **I will come...will remove thy candlestick...except thou repent.** Where is any assurance of salvation here? There is none. Repentance is **the first work**, and just like in the early chapters of the book of Acts it was required as the one condition for a national blessing of Israel, and proclaimed by John the Baptist, Matthew 3:2; Jesus, Matthew 4:17; and Peter, Acts 2:38.

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<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 66:15,16,18.

<sup>7</sup> ESV and other modern translations in Romans 11:29 use, incorrectly, the word irrevocable in place of *without repentance*.

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Repentance was always the **first work** of Israel and was a condition of the Law and for God's blessing on them; Leviticus 26:40-42; Deuteronomy 30:1-3; Daniel 9:3,4; Zechariah 1:3.

Verse 6—

**Thou hatest the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.** The Nicolaitans are also mentioned in verse 15. During the Day of the Lord the meaning of the Nicolaitans will be known. Otherwise, there is no meaning we can connect to this group (presumably a group of people).

Verse 7—

**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.** Jesus used this phrase six times in the Gospels; eight times it is used in Revelation. Chapter 19:10 says the *testimony of the Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy*. Evidently, Jesus exhorts them to hear the words of the prophecy of the book of Revelation.

**To him that overcometh.** While the idea of being an overcomer has crept into our Christian language, the apostle Paul never referred to believers in the body of Christ as *overcomers*. There is not even a hint that believers in the dispensation of grace have to overcome. Those who are "complete in him" have no other needs (Colossians 2:10).

The admonishment to *overcome* fits perfectly in this Day of the Lord scenario where Israel will have to do works, and overcome the *beast/antichrist*. They will need to *endure to the end*.

The recipients of the seven letters will be Jews living in the prophetic days we will read about as we study this book of Revelation. They will be the special *overcomers* of the specific form of evil that is about to unfold in this book. Jesus prophesied of those who would endure, during the Day of the Lord, to the end (Matthew 24:13). The promise for *overcoming* is to **eat of the tree of life...in the paradise of God** (Revelation 22.2). The Paradise of God likely refers to the future New Earth, when the curse of the old will be removed.

We will see that all seven assemblies will receive a Promise for *overcoming*.