

REVELATION

AN INTENSIVE STUDY

1

Lamb and Lion: A Deep Dive into Revelation #2

Review three principles:

Principle #1: Jesus Alone is the true Defining Center The Revelation of Jesus Christ..."

Revelation was **not written** to be an **obscuration** of Jesus, nor a hard, scary puzzle of endless **end-time speculation**. It is the **culmination** [final chapter] of the entire New Testament's consistent focus on **Jesus as the true Messiah of the Old Testament**.

Revelation was not written to show us **the exact details of what the future holds**, but to show us **exactly who holds the details of the future...in nail pierced hands**. **God wins!**

Revelation 1:7

Look!

- He is **coming** with the clouds, and
- **Every eye** will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and
- **All the inhabitants of the earth** will mourn because of Him.

So shall it be! Amen.

"**All the inhabitants of the earth**," or more precisely "**all those who dwell on the earth**" is Revelation's symbolic phrase for all those who, in determined self-sufficient pride, reject and despise the grace and salvation God offers in Christ. **John uses this phrase this way 10 times**, often explaining its unique meaning:

Revelation 13:8

All the inhabitants of the earth will worship the Beast—all whose names are **NOT** written in the Lamb's Book of Life, the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 17:8

"**...The inhabitants of the earth**, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life from the creation of the world, will be astonished when they see the Beast."

This is in contrast, from chapter 4 on, to John's picture of Christ's followers— those "**in Christ**," as already with Christ by faith: as "**those who dwell in heaven**." This is a **theme of the whole New Testament**: Ephesians 2:4-8; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 3:1-3; Hebrews 12:22-24. In NT times, **citizens of Rome** were "Rome-dwellers" with full Rome-rights, **no matter where they lived physically**.

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Principle #2: All the symbols in Revelation are drawn from the Old Testament, but reinterpreted in light of the life, death and resurrection of Christ and applied to His New Covenant community, the Church.

Compare Exodus 19:16 [spoken to literal Israel] “...you will be for Me a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation...” with Revelation 1:5b-6 spoken to the church] “...and has made us to be a Kingdom of priests to serve His God...”

Principle #3: Everything in the OT which was geographically local and physically visible to the Old Covenant people of Israel becomes worldwide and discerned by the Holy Spirit within the New Covenant community of the Church.

By His death on the **Cross**, **Jesus fulfilled** the Covenant with literal Israel and **inaugurated the New Covenant with His world-wide people**—the Church. The **physical realities** of the Old Covenant are now **fulfilled and seen through the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church**.

Revelation 1:9

“I, John, your **brother and companion** in the suffering and Kingdom and patient endurance that are [already] ours in Jesus, was on the **island of Patmos** because of the **Word of God [OT]** and the **testimony of Jesus [emerging NT message]**.”

This is John’s cadence = **Word of God [OT symbol]** to **testimony of Jesus [NT fulfillment in Christ and His Church]**.

The Greek word for **testimony** (marturia) and **witness** (martus) occur frequently in Revelation. They are drawn from **lawcourt imagery**. Often in this earthly courtroom where truth is condemned, **witnessing for Jesus** (Marturia) became **synonymous with martyrdom** (6:9-10).

This is **contrasted** by the verdict of the **heavenly court** room where “**the accuser of the brethren**” is “cast out” [accusations invalidated] and they are **acquitted** of all charges through their **faith in Jesus** and **testimony to that faith** in their lives (Revelation 12:9-11). In reality, **not every witness** (martus) for Jesus is **killed**, but each is **willing to risk it**. **Two** courtrooms (true and counterfeit), **two** verdicts.

Revelation 1:10-11

On the **LORD’s Day** I was **in the Spirit** and **I HEARD** behind me a loud voice like a **trumpet**, which said: “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches:...”

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Revelation 1:12-13

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned **I SAW** seven golden lampstands, and **in the mist of the lampstands** was someone like a **Son of Man**, dressed in a robe reaching down to His feet and a golden sash around His chest.

First John says: **I HEARD**...[OT symbol]; then he says: **I SAW** [NT application].

Not one lampstand with seven lights [**OT sanctuary**], **but seven distinct lampstands**, each one as a light of the world, with the **Son of Man in their midst**.

This is where you will **always find Jesus**: in the **midst of His church**[es].

Revelation 1:14-16 (initial 7-fold vision of risen Christ)

- **His hair** – white (see Daniel 7:9)
- **His eyes** – flame of fire (see Daniel 7:9; 10:6)
- **His feet** like burnished bronze (see Ezekiel 1:7)
- **His voice** like...many waters (Ezekiel 1:23, 43:2)
- **His right hand** – 7 stars (OT place of favor)
- **His mouth** – two edged sword (Isaiah 49:2)
- **His face** – like the sun (Malachi 4:2)

Revelation 1:17-18

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. Then He placed His **right hand** on me and said: “**Do not be afraid**. **I AM** the First and the Last. **I AM** the Living One; **I WAS** dead! Now look! **I AM** alive forever and ever. And **I HOLD** the keys of death and the grave.”

Because Christ is **Co-equal** with the Father, He has **eternal life in Himself**.

Because Christ **died** for us, in our place, He can give **eternal life to us**.

Because He **entered the grave/defeated it**—He **owns the keys to Death/Grave**.

Revelation 1:19-20

Write therefore what you **have seen**, what **is now** and what will **take place later**. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw **in My right hand**, and of the **seven golden lampstands** is this: The seven stars are the **7 angels** [messengers] of the 7 churches, and the seven lampstands are the **seven churches**.

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Revelation 2-3 is ALL in **RED** (quoting Jesus). Key characteristics to watch for:

- To each church He fits the **description of Himself to meet their need**.
- To each church He says: “**I know**...your deeds, your tribulations, your poverty and afflictions, where you live, your perseverance, your love...”
- To each He **gives a promise**, and each promise given here, at beginning, is **fulfilled** for those who overcome in **Revelation 21-22**.

Each letter contains five distinct parts:

- **Characteristic** of Christ that encourages;
- **Commendation** from Christ (except self-sufficient Laodicea)
- **Correction** from Christ (except suffering Smyrna)
- **Counsel** from Christ (Remember...hold fast...repent)
- **Call to listen/overcome** coupled with a promise.

The phrase "**he who overcomes**" is central. **Seventeen times** John uses **various tenses of nikao (to overcome)**. When **nikao** is used in the **seven letters** and in **21:7**, it **never has a direct object**. This implies that **victory is necessary over all the foes of faith in Christ**. **The Greek tense used in all eight of these instances is present-continuous**.

Another Johannine passage helps explain this:

1 John 5:4-5

This is the victory which **continues overcoming the world**, even our faith. And who is the one who **continues overcoming the world**? Only he who **continues believing** that Jesus is the Son of God.

We **continue overcoming** just as we **began overcoming**: through our faith in the prior victory Jesus has achieved on the cross (3:21; cf. 5:5, 12:11). But **when John speaks of Christ's victory all tentativeness disappears**. Christ's victory is absolute; an already accomplished fact. It is the unchangeable victory of the Lamb which gives us our ongoing assurance.

At **no point** does the believer **outgrow** the necessity of this faith-victory. Even when the final plagues begin to fall, the saints are pictured on the sea of glass, they still "**continue overcoming**" by the Lamb's righteousness alone: "Great and marvelous are Thy deeds, **for Thou alone are holy**" (15:2-4; see **Phil 3:8-9**).

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Are the Seven Churches of Revelation 2-3:

1. 7 literal congregations in 1st century Asia Minor?
2. 7 conditions present in the universal church in every age?
3. 7 types of individual Christian experience?
4. 7 broad eras of Christian history from the Cross to the 2nd coming?

Yes!!! The last one is the least precise, but credible.

What Jesus seeks in 7 Churches

- Ephesus: sustained **love for** Christ
- Smyrna: unswerving **trust in** Christ
- Pergamum: uncompromising **witness to** Christ
- Thyatira: determined **purity** of life
- Sardis: honest **authenticity**
- Philadelphia: resilient **tenacity**
- Laodicea: ongoing **humility** (the need to know our need)

Revelation 2:1-2

To the angel of the church in **Ephesus** write:

These are the words of Him who **holds the seven stars in His right hand** and **walks among the 7 golden lampstands**. I know your deeds...[7-fold praise]...

Revelation 2:4-6

Yet I hold this against you: You have **forsaken the love you had at first**. **Remember** from where you have fallen! **Repent** and **do the deeds you did at first**, or **I am coming** to you and will remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the **deeds** of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Christ pictures Himself as the **intimate Sustainer and unifying power** in their midst (2:1). **Seven virtues** are praised before He utters **His one necessary rebuke**. An incipient **disease of the natural heart** is regaining a foothold amidst the Ephesian's zeal and bustle. He declares: ". . . **you have abandoned the love you had at first**" (2:4). **Nothing more and yet everything hangs in the balance**. **Not even zeal for orthodoxy** can **substitute** for a life which is **motivated by love**.

Love responding to love is the **essential characteristic** of a true and living church.

Jesus' **counsel** can be **summarized in three words**: **remember, repent, and repeat**. Jesus **promises to restore** what fallen man first lost, **the tree of life**.

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Revelation 2:8-9

To the angel of the church in **Smyrna** write:

These are the words of Him who is the First and the Last, **who died** and came to life again. I know your afflictions and **your poverty—yet you are rich!** I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Revelation 2:10

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. **Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life."**

Revelation 2:11

Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches:

The one who is victorious will **not be hurt** at all by the **second death**.

Smyrna is the martyr church, and its **theme** is the victory of faith over death. **Death or suffering is mentioned in every verse. Jesus identifies Himself by His resurrection power** (2:8; cf. John 11:25-26). To this church **condemned** by human courts, Jesus only offers **assurance**.

Though this church is **persecuted and poor**, it is **rich in the reckoning of heaven**. Christ promises them acquittal from eternal death: the "**second death**" (cf. 20:6,14; 21:8): "**Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life. . . [You] shall not be hurt by the second death.**"

Revelation 2:12-13

To the angel of the church in **Pergamum** write:

These are the words of Him who has the **sharp, double-edged sword**. **I know where you live—**where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to My name. You did **not renounce your faith in Me**, not even in the days of Antipas, **My faithful witness** who was put to death in your city—where Satan dwells.

Revelation 2:14-15

Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are **some among you** who hold to the **teaching of Balaam**, who taught Balak to **entice** the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality.

Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the **Nicolaitans**.

Revelation 2:16

Repent therefore! Otherwise **I will come to YOU soon** and will **fight against THEM** with the **sword of My mouth**.

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Balaam's strategy/lie: "Just look..." Just indulge the mind, not the body.

But wherever the mind dwells, the feet will soon go. "By beholding we become changed—even into the same image." **Whatever gets our attention, gets us**—and we are not who we think we are or who we project to others; we are truly **what we think about**. Pergamum unrepented always leads to Thyatira:

Revelation 2:18-19

To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

These are the words of **the Son of God**, whose **eyes are like blazing fire** and whose **feet are like burnished bronze**. I know your deeds, your love, faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

Revelation 2:20-21

Nevertheless, I have this against you: **You tolerate that woman Jezebel**, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she **misleads my servants into sexual immorality** and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have **given her time** to repent of her immorality, but **she is unwilling**.

Revelation 2:22-23

So **I will cast her on a bed of suffering**, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. "**I will kill her children with death!**" Then all the churches will know that I am he who **searches hearts and minds**, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

Revelation 2:24-25

Now **I say to the rest of you** in Thyatira, to you who **do not hold to her teaching** and have **not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets**, '**I place no other burden on you, except to hold on to what you have until I come.**'

Sardis—a church of **only external piety and such mediocrity** that no persecution, no heresy is needed to destroy them—just the **continuation of their complacent apathy**. Jesus says: "**You are dead. Wake up!**"

Philadelphia: the **second persecuted congregation**. No rebuke, **only encouragement**. I love this verse:

Revelation 3:8

I know your deeds. **Look! I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut**. I know that you have little strength, yet you have **kept My word** and have **not denied My name**.

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Revelation 3:12

The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in **the temple of My God** (see Revelation 21:22). Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, **the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven** from My God. I will also write on them My new name.

Revelation 3:14-16

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of **the Amen**, the faithful and true Witness, the Ruler of God’s creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. **I wish you were either one or the other!** So, because you are lukewarm—**neither** hot nor cold—I am about to **spit you out of My mouth**.

Revelation 3:17-18

You say, ‘**I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.**’ But **you do not know** that you are **wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked**. I counsel you to **buy from Me gold** refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and **white clothes** to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and **salve to put on your eyes**, so you can see.

Revelation 3:19-21

Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone **hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in** and eat with that person, and they with Me. To the one who **is victorious**, I will give the right to **sit with Me on My throne**, just as **I was victorious** and sat down with My Father on His throne.

The name Laodicea literally means "**the judging of the people.**" Christ's coming in judgment is imminent (3:16). He is **already at the door knocking, seeking entrance to His own church** (3:20). In **Smyrna** Christ saw a **truly "rich" poor church**. In **Laodicea** He sees a **truly "poor" rich church**. They **neither stimulate nor irritate** those around them, so they **nauseate** their Lord.

Christ is about to spew forth the Laodiceans from Himself. Yet they think of themselves as very religious and prosperous and "in need of nothing" (3:17). Their fatal disease is **self-sufficient pride**, so they "**do not know**" the extent of their self-deception and unrighteousness (3:17). **No heresy or gross impurity** is named, yet **Christ's condemnation** of Laodicea is the **most completely negative** of all seven churches. They are judgment-bound and utterly ignorant of their danger.

Historically, Laodicea was a **wealthy banking center, a manufacturing center famous for its black wool garments, and the home of a medical school which produced a curative eye salve.**

Yet Jesus still loves Laodicea (3:19). He died for Laodiceans and in His wounds, they may still find healing. He admonishes them to buy "**gold tried in fire**"--a faith in His riches rather

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than in the gold of men, "**white raiment**"—the covering of His own blood-bought righteousness, infinitely more beautiful than black garments from the looms of Laodicea. The text makes clear that Christ's white garments alone can cover "the shame of their nakedness." The third purchase was to be "eye salve" (see **Ephesians 1:17-18**)—The Holy Spirit.

"If any man hears My voice and opens . . . I will come in" (3:20). With each person Christ takes the initiative; He knocks yet each of us must respond and open the door.

These 7 letters show **there has never been a perfectly sinless church, nor will there ever be. Yet despite the imperfections of His church, Christ is in our midst.**

TRANSITION TO REVELATION 4-22

With Laodicea Christ finishes His assessment of **the faith and love, the false, fainthearted and proud within the church "visible."**

From **chapter 4** on the **imperfections** of the church "visible" are gone. **There is pictured only the church "invisible," the true church composed of those who are faithful unto death** (12:11; 14:12).

The **style shifts** from the **pastoral** to a **symbolic cosmic drama** where everything is universal in scope. All the characters appear **in sharp contrast of true and counterfeit**. The battle wages between **two distinct armies: the arnion** (Lamb), with those who, by faith, " **dwell in heaven**" (12:12; 13:6; 15:1-2; 18:20; 19:1-2) versus **the therion** (beast) who leads the unrepentant "**who dwell on earth**" (6:10; 13:8; 18:8).