

THE REVELATION OF JESUS: SEVEN LETTERS: I RETURN

One of the most impactful issues that we find in the early chapters of the Book of Revelation is the powerful 'self-revelation' of Jesus...the amazing ways Jesus presents Himself to us.

Here are the 'self-revelations' of Jesus in Revelation 1 (following John's tremendous vision of Jesus).

- ***He is the Alpha and the Omega, who is, who was, and who is to come. (v8)***
- ***He is the first and the last. (v17)***
- ***He is the Living One...He was dead, and He is alive forevermore. (v18)***
- ***He has the keys of death and Hades...(the power of death) (v18)***

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26 NASB

The 'self-revelations' of Jesus in Revelation 2.

- ***He holds the 'stars' in His right hand and He walks among the seven lampstands. (v1)***
- ***He is the first and last who was dead and has come to life. (v8)***
- ***He is the one who has the sharp two-edged sword. (v12)***
- ***He is the Son of God and He has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze. (v18)***

- ***The letter to the Church at Ephesus:***

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

² 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; ³ and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. ⁶ Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will

THE REVELATION OF JESUS: SEVEN LETTERS: I RETURN

***grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.' Revelation 2:1-7
NASB***

- ***John identifies Jesus as the One who holds the churches and the messengers to the churches in His right hand. (The stars are the messengers)***
- ***He is present. He is caring and He wants their best. (v1)***
- ***Jesus tells the church that "He knows their works, their labors, even their endurance and steadfastness.***
- ***He acknowledges their putting evil men; false prophets and apostles, 'to the test' and proving them to be false teachers. (v2)***

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22 NASB

But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 1 John 4:1 NASB

- ***They did all this and yet continued to minister and carry on without giving in or giving up or wearing out.***

⁴ But I have this [one charge to make] against you: that you have left (abandoned) the love that you had at first [you have deserted Me, your first love]. ⁵ Remember then from what heights you have fallen. Repent (change the inner man to meet God's will) and do the works you did previously [when first you knew the Lord], or else I will visit you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you change your mind and repent. Revelation 2:4-5 AMPC

- ***Jesus says that they have left (abandoned) their first love for Him...left it behind...neglected their first love.***
- ***Some translators believe this means that they lost the fervency they had at first.***

THE REVELATION OF JESUS: SEVEN LETTERS: I RETURN

- ***Some say they didn't love like the first churches did in the beginning of the church.***
- ***There are those who feel that Jesus is saying that the Ephesians had lost their fiery inner devotion.***
- ***Others think Jesus is returning to the church and its outward expressions and acts of love; they accuse the church of having a 'lazy love'.***
 - ***Regardless, Jesus says, "Be mindful of your first love...love for Him and love for people, and change your mind, repent and repeAt what you did when you were captured by My love truth.***
 - ***But to their credit, they did hate the work of the Nicolaitans which Jesus hated too.***
 - ***The Nicolaitans pushed the idea that Christians could believe in Jesus and still participate in idolatry and practice immorality...their founder surprisingly was Nicolas of Antioch who was one of the first seven deacons. (see Acts 6:5)***
 - ***In a gross misconception of grace, he thought that the freedom that comes with God's grace forces you to participate in idolatry and to practice sexual promiscuity without a problem.***
- ***He who has an ear to hear what the Spirit says to the churches, let him give heed and respond.***
 - ***Those who have the ear to hear and the heart to heed what is said will be granted to eat the tree of live in the paradise of God.***
 - ***The ones who overcome will taste the one-ness with God that was enjoyed before sin entered the picture.***
- ***The letter to Smyrna:***

⁸ "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: ⁹ 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say 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 cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until 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. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.' Revelation 2:8-11 NASB

- ***Jesus describes Himself as the first and the last who has died and come back to life.***

THE REVELATION OF JESUS: SEVEN LETTERS: I RETURN

- ***Smyrna was a city 35 miles northwest of Ephesus, a rich, fine, beautiful city. There coins read... "The first city of Asia in size and beauty." WM Ramsay***
- ***The Church at Smyrna struggled financially and was blasphemed and persecuted by the synagogue of Satan. These Jewish people denied the deity of Jesus and His resurrection. They considered the miracles of Jesus to be demonic and they were vicious and cruel to the church.***

But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." Matthew 12:24 NASB

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. ⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? ⁴⁷ He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God." ⁴⁸ The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" ⁴⁹ Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. John 8:44-49 NASB

- ***Jesus warns the church that trouble and suffering are coming (including imprisonment).***
- ***Ten days of bad trouble and threatening trials were coming, but being faithful even until death will give them the crown of life.***
- ***This is not the gift of eternal life, but a reward for proving faithful during persecution.***
- ***Overcoming the persecution protects you from the second death.***

¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:14-15 NASB

Note: About twenty years after this letter was written, the congregation at Smyrna had a heroic pastor named Polycarp who was martyred for his faith in Smyrna...Jesus' words... "be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life."

- ***The letter to the church at Pergamum:***

THE REVELATION OF JESUS: SEVEN LETTERS: I RETURN

¹² "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: ¹³ 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. ¹⁵ So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make 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 him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.' Revelation 2:12-17 NASB

- ***Jesus is described as the one who has the sharp two-edged sword...(v12)***
- ***Pergamum is where 'Satan's throne is. (v13)***
 - ***It is the official center of emperor worship in Asia.***
 - ***It is the home of the temple Asclepius, the Greek god of healing symbolized by a 'snake'.***
 - ***Pergamum is also the home of the first Christian martyr in Asia...a man named Antipas was slowly roasted in a bronze kettle until dead.***
 - ***Jesus lauds them for refusing to deny Him even in this trial.***
 - ***But...they tolerated those who taught the ways of Balaam and practiced idolatry and mingled immorality with worship.***
 - ***They also allowed the Nicolaitans to teach and practice their heresies.***

²⁷ "Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸ "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: ²⁹ that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell." Acts 15:27-29 NASB

- ***Jesus says repent...change your mind and change your ways, or else I am coming quickly to make war with the sword of my mouth.***
 - ***He who has an ear...hear and heed! And Jesus promises 'hidden manna' (supernatural sustenance) a white stone with a new name written on it for those who overcome.***

THE REVELATION OF JESUS: SEVEN LETTERS: I RETURN

- ***What is the white stone? Some think it is the admission to the 'banquet'. Some say the word for white can also mean shiny or bright like a jewel or precious stone on which God writes your new name.***

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning. ² The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; and you will be called by a new name which the mouth of the LORD will designate. ³ You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. ⁴ It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken," nor to your land will it any longer be said, "Desolate"; but you will be called, "My delight is in her," and your land, "Married"; for the LORD delights in you, and to Him your land will be married.

⁵ For as a young man marries a virgin, so your sons will marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you. Isaiah 62:2-5 NASB

¹⁵ "You will leave your name for a curse to My chosen ones, and the Lord GOD will slay you. But My servants will be called by another name.

¹⁶ "Because he who is blessed in the earth Will be blessed by the God of truth; and he who swears in the earth will swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hidden from My sight!

¹⁷ "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. Isaiah 65:15-17 NASB