

Revelation 2 Jesus Reveals Himself to the Churches, Part 1

Most of us Enjoy getting letters? Friend writes – or today even **opening your email** Facebook –message from a friend- rather than add from a Cruise com

A)Imagine being part of a Church – that received a letter –directly from Jesus. –

B)How exciting would that be.

1)Word gets out – Make sure and be there this

C)Specifically for our Church: WOW!!!! – Sunday: The Pastor is going to read to us a letter that came directly from the Lord.

**ANTICIPATION / EXCITEMENT /
NERVOUSNESS – ALL IN ONE!**

Well that is exactly what we have in Revelation ch.2-3 Jesus wrote specific letters – via apostle John – to seven distinct Churches in Asia Minor

A)and FIVE OF the seven churches have some major problems.

B) Ephesus – They Left their first love.

Pergamos – They were filled with Compromise.

Thyratira – They Tolerated Sin.

Sardis – They were dead.

Laodicea – They were Lukewarm.

C)Notice anything in that list? Here is what I see- Progression of Sin.

1)Usually starts with leaving our first love. – {left not lost} Priorities out of wack - They lost sight of Jesus – Passion for Jesus -

D)In the Case of Ephesus – **Love was replaced by service – Affection was replaced by Activity.**

1)Easy thing to have happen – Jesus commends them for their works and activity but rebukes them for their loss of Affection. – Motions – no heart.

Leaving our first love – opens the door for Compromise – sin of Pergamos.

A)You start making exceptions – you start cutting corners – Devotions get replaced by duties –

B)Start allowing things to come into your life that had been long gone.

C)Compromise usually leads to a Toleration of Sin – you start rationalizing why it is ok – why it is not a big deal.

1)You can still be a Christian and do this or that. –

The Churches of Sardis and Laodicea reveal what usually is the result of that progression of sin. –

A)Sardis had a name that they were alive {Christian-name that speaks of life – But Jesus said – actually dead.

B)Or Laodicea- They thought they had it altogether – Rich – special – Jesus said – You are Lukewarm- and you make me want to Vomit.

C)Ladies how would you feel if your husband came home from work and you had been shopping – New Dress – **Don't I look pretty in this?**

1)Actually honey – You make me want to Vomit! J

So Just sixty years after the birth of the Church – we have seven prominent Churches in Asia Minor – Real problems.

A)Now it is also interesting to note that there were two of the churches did not have problems and did not receive a word of rebuke from Jesus.

B)Smyrna & Philadelphia. – They had needs – but not problems.

C)Church of Smyrna – their need – Heavy persecution:
1)**And Philadelphia** – Need – huge open door but a little strength.

I see an amazing correlation in church history whenever the Church has gone through periods of Persecution, it has always resulted in growth and more open doors for ministry and the spread of the gospel .

So seven churches – 5 with severe problems – and 2 with huge needs.

But this is what we need to understand:

A)The Church – though needy and having problems – Jesus has always been passionate about His bride.

B)And this Wed night – Pastor Jason is going to teach through Ch. 2 Look at 4 churches and the letters that Jesus wrote to them in it's entirety.

C)But for our purpose today: I want to do one simple thing: **I want us to consider – the way that Jesus revealed Himself to each one of these Churches**

1)Start this today: Look at the four churches in Ch. 2 – Finish next weekend by looking at the remaining three.

D)Jesus REVEALS himself to each one of these Churches in a way that **directly corresponds** to their need – or their problem.

1)Great application to us – because this is who Jesus is to us in the midst of our Problems and our Needs.

Ephesus: Problem – Left their first love.

Revelation: Rev 2:1 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

A)Now remember the way that Jesus introduces himself to the Churches is connected to the Revelation of himself that John Saw in ch.1

B)We looked at that last time: **Lamp stands – Churches – Stars = messengers**

C) So the first thing that I want you to see about Jesus in the way that He identifies himself to Ephesus – this church that left its first love. –

1) He identifies Himself as being in their midst.

To me this is huge- so different from how we operate today.

A) See One of the biggest fears that most people have is a fear of rejection. –

Aa) We have all experienced it – Job, team, a relationship, ministry opportunity.

B) Rejection hurts How do you respond to rejection? – we **create our own defense mechanisms.**

C) This was mine! – See growing up my mom drilled into my head that if someone didn't want to be my friend – **the problem was their problem** – not mine because I was a good guy- nice person.

I carried that mentality with me into life – Girl broke up with me – her loss she didn't know what she was missing. – Very Arrogant

A) Friends abandoned me – again the problem was not me – it was them. Their problem.

B) Sports team – Coach didn't pick me – that is because he was **an idiot.**

C) So these words which my mom- drilled into me – which were meant to be positive and helpful –

1) Became my defense mechanism – not really look at myself and my problems.

D) Many of us have the tendency **to react that way-** We want to blame – recoil react – when we are rejected. – **GET EVEN!** Take care of my needs

1) Leads to adultery in marriage, it leads to conflicts in friendships

But that is not the way of the Lord – not what Jesus exemplifies this here- He comes to this church- that has left their first love.

A) Loveless church – going through the motions – they have in one sense rejected Jesus – but He doesn't bail on them.

B) He comes to them – **He is in their midst** – He is seeking to confront and to reconcile –

C) I love this about Jesus – **He is so committed to us!** – Not going to let you get away with things – Loves you too much.

1) **HOUND OF HEAVEN:** pursues you –

2) Jonah – God pursues Him

3) Peter: Jesus wants Peter especially to know – Risen – Personal meeting

Notice also that Jesus holds the {Stars} leaders of the Churches in His hand –

A) What was in those hands – Nail scars -

D) Reminder of His Love – His sacrifice

You here today – left your first love – Heart Cold – motions – routine – **Jesus is in your midst** – He hasn't abandoned you – Loves you.

A) **Pursuing You!** – Message to Ephesus –
Remember: Repent: Return

B) Remember what it was like when you were so in love with Jesus.

1) **Repent:** What has taken his place? Turn from, get rid, put in its proper place

C) **Return:** Do the first works again – Get back to basics – spending time with Him!

Smyrna: Need – Persecuted and suffering.

A) Smyrna was named after the chief product of that city. Smyrna means **MYRRH**.

1) **MYRRH** was an embalming spice used in biblical times.

B) The thing that is very interesting about this burial spice is this:

1) Myrrh is a very sweet fragrance but it **MUST BE CRUSHED** in order to give off its aroma.

C) Appropriate name Because the church there was being crushed through persecution & many were **Martyred for their faith**

A) **Rejection of Emperor Worship – Refused to say : Caesar is Lord**

B) But the More that they suffered / the more they were **“CRUSHED”** the more the fragrance of Christ was given off from their Lives!

1) In fact the Fragrance was so strong that many of their persecutors, many of those who put them to death, became followers of Jesus C.

One of the Greatest Testimonies in the Midst of Suffering that came from that Church – came from its Pastor – POLYCARP

A) **Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John.**

B) **Polycarp was arrested and brought into the Stadium to be burned at the stake.**

As he entered the stadium with his guards, a voice from heaven was heard to say, *“Be strong Polycarp and play the man.”*

Brought before the Tribunal and the crowd, Polycarp refused to deny Christ. then The Governor begged him to consider himself and have pity on his great age, *reproach Christ and I will release you.* Polycarp replied, *“86 years I have served Him and He never once wronged me, how can I blaspheme my King who saved me?”*

The Governor – then threatened w/ fire – to which Polycarp answered –*you threaten me w/ fire which burns for an hour and after is extinguished – but you will have to face the fires of judgement that will burn for eternity unless you repent .*

At that The crowd demanded Polycarp's death, gathering wood for fire and preparing to tie him to the stake. *“Leave me.” He said, “He who will give me strength to sustain the fire will help me not to flinch from the pile.”* **And so they bound him but didn't nail him to the stake. poly carp prayed –**

I thank you lord that you have graciously thought me worthy of this day & of this hour that I may be part of the number of martyrs to die for Christ. **As soon as Polycarp finished his prayer the fire was lit**

A)NOTE: At 90 years old and he said, *“The one who has been faithful to me for 85 years, how can I deny him?”*

B)The People in that Church followed the example of their Pastor and stood in the midst of Persecution.

1)Jesus said of the church of Smyrna: 9 *“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich);*

C)They looked Poor on the outside – but Jesus saw them as being Rich in Faith and Rich in Reward.

HIS REVELATION:v.8 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

A)WHO WAS DEAD - That phrase literally means WHO became dead.

B)To these people who were about to face tremendous suffering and persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ, {Many would die!

1)He reveals Himself to them as the one who became dead.

C)Pregnant w/ meaning: See Jesus went thru the Ultimate Suffering – literally Became dead – Separated from God for us

D)He took our Punishment – so that we could become ALIVE to God – by believing in Him.

APPLICATION: These Christians in Smyrna were going to suffer and die horrible deaths.

A)There may have come that time when they would have asked, “Is it worth it? Why? Why should I die?”

B)They could have thought of a million and one reasons how they could still follow Jesus and somehow rationalize away their denial of Him.

1)Jesus reminds them of how much He loved them and how He suffered for them How became dead for them.

C)Basis of all Christianity starts here: Jesus did for us –

1)I became a Christian because I did not want to go to hell.

D)I became a lover of Jesus and a follower of Jesus – the more I understood How much He loved me and what He did for me.

1)Never the Same! – Ignited a Passion in my heart.

Jesus is reminding them – You are loved! – So much I died for you. But He doesn't stop there.

A)The message of the gospel is not just that Jesus died – Also that He rose – He lives – He is alive.

B)Jesus says: I am the one who became dead – and is Now alive!

1)Living Savior.

C)The basis of Christianity starts with the death of Christ

1)The power to live the Christian life is wrapped up in the Life.

For them to stand in the midst of Persecution? – Jesus is alive – He was with them. Standing with them for them.

A)Same is true for us: Power to live for Christ today- Stand in the face of temptation, persecution, rejection, peer pressure?

B)Jesus is ALIVE ! –His spirit is in You – to empower – to give boldness

1)You rely upon Him – YOU STAND – you rely upon You? Eventually you will fall. –

C)Words of Polycarp: 86 years I have served Jesus and He has never failed me! – He is not going to Now!

D)Suffering today: Jesus wants you to know –He is the one who became dead for you to give you life.

1)He is the one who Rose – To help you live!

Pergamos: Problem – Compromise

“Compromise is a weakening or giving up of our principles or ideals for reasons of expediency.

Expediency is doing or considering what is of selfish use or advantage rather than what is holy, right or just.

Expediency is always based in self-interest.”

The Church in Pergamos was full of Compromise:

A)Pergamos was a dark place – **V.13 You dwell where Satan's throne is! And you have held fast – Didn't deny Christ.**

B)But the problem was they allowed the world to **infiltrate the Church** in the form of Idolatry, sexual immorality and False Doctrine.

C)Compromise is always subtle: Starts small – starts with one thing and leads to many things. -

Consider the Story of the Redwood tree that – Stood for 400 yrs in one of Americas national forest

It survived 14 separate strikes by Lightning – it survived countless earthquakes Violent Storms & other Natural Disasters

Suddenly one day w/ out warning it came crashing down! – was it an over Zealous Lumber jack ? No –

Investigators discovered the cause to be that **Tiny Beetles have found their way inside its trunk** & had begun eating away at its life giving fibers

That mighty tree was weakened from the inside out !!!!

Compromise erodes the foundation of our lives so that we are weakened from the inside –

And Like that Red wood will come Crashing down – W/ out Warning

There was an Absence of Holiness in this Church

If the church marries herself to the spirit of the times, she will find herself a widow in the next generation.

Charles Stanley

His Revelation: 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

A)Remember this was the Trojan sword: Heman Message, Jesus doesn't take compromise lightly

B)The Trojan sword was a huge sword that was used to split an opponent in two with one swipe. –

C)Message: Jesus doesn't compromise – He will come to deal with.

Galatians 6:7-8

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

D)Because Jesus died for you and loves you – He will come like a surgeon to deal with your sin.

1)When He does – Hurts painful – but in the end – Life for you.

E)Jesus essentially issues this warning to this Church: Deal with your sin or I will.

Merciful heart of our Lord – He gives us time to repent: -Never know though when He is going to call that card.

A)If you are living in compromise – hasn't been exposed, Jesus is giving you time to repent – get that out of your life – before He has to.

Thyatira: Problem- They Tolerated Sin. {Tolerated idolatry and sexual immorality.

His Revelation: Rev 2:18 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

Eyes that see what is really going on. {Sees behind the Façade –

A)People in the name of love or Unity will tolerate sin –that is not love at all

B)True love doesn't tolerate Sin!

1John 3:18 “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

C)To love in deed and truth doesn't mean I tolerate it when someone is living in sin - but I confront them

1) question really is do I Love someone enough to confront them

D)Jesus comes to this very sick church and says – I am going to tell it like it is. – Deal with it!

E)But He ALSO reveals himself as the Enduring one. Feet of Bronze – His ability to stand in the fire. Here is why?:

Not everyone in that Church was tolerating the sin.

24 "Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. 25 But hold fast what you have till I come. 26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations. —

A)There was a remnant in that Church – Holding fast – wasn't like they could just go down the street to the next Church – 50miles

B)Sometimes today people too easily run from a problem they are having in a church –because it is so convenient. Rather than endure.

C))Jesus the enduring one wants to show Himself strong on our behalf if we will let Him. – Look to Him.

D)He is the enduring one – Your fire – Jesus is standing with you and He is for you.

E)Personal and practical – You might be living in a family where – Members in your family – tolerating sin

F)You feel all alone – Jesus stands with you. –

So to those who have left their first love: He is in your midst – pursuing you, desiring intimacy with you again.

Suffering: He became dead to give you life and He is alive to help you live.

Compromise: Deal with it or I will and it will hurt.

Tolerating sin: I see through the façade- get real.

Not tolerating: Enduring one.

**Your need: Jesus is Alive and He is with you for you.
Today!**